

The Church at Philadelphia

How It All Ends

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Bible Text: Revelation 3:7-13

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Revelation 3:7,

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.”

So we have this introduction of Jesus, “He that is holy, he that is true.” Alright, he that is holy, I mean, aren’t there many things in the Bible called holy? For instance, look at chapter 5:8, “And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” So, doesn’t that kind of make the people of God holy? If you look at 14:10, it talks about the holy angels, chapter 11:2, holy prophets and we are known as saints which comes from the same word “holy.” Probably, the main difference between these two is that there is one that is holy and because we are associated with him, we are holy.

Take that in. We’re going to talk more about that in chapter 4. Look at chapter 4:4, please. “And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.” Please notice what they’re saying in 4:8, “And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” Well, so we have beasts and elders in the heavens saying the Lord is holy and they’re saying he’s Lord God Almighty and they’re saying he is and was and is to come.

Right away, none of us in this audience today would argue that this is dealing with a particular reference to God Almighty, God the Father, if you want to break it down and pick one of the people out of the Trinity. We probably say this is God the Father. And you’re going to find out in chapter 4, we do have two people in the book of Revelation in the throne room. There is one sitting on the throne and then there is a lamb.

So, we do have God the Father and God the Son present in the throne room. How does that work? Well, it happens one other place in Scripture and we keep going back to it in the book of Revelation. What place in Scripture do we have one on the throne and one being brought to him? Does anyone remember? (...) Close. We are going to talk about that in a couple of weeks probably, but that's not what I'm thinking. Remember the vision of the Son of man in Revelation 1 comes from this place also. Daniel 7. Thanks Mike. So Daniel 7, you have the picture of the Son of man being brought to God, the Ancient of Days, seated on the throne and here we're going to see that again in chapter 4 of Revelation. I'm telling you, Revelation is great when you realize it's not new material. It's just being retaken out of the Old Testament. I know I say it every week, you're probably getting tired of hearing it but I've got to keep saying it.

So, when we say he that is holy, we see in chapter 4 that Lord God Almighty is holy so are there two "hes" that are holy? Now, we know the answer. I mean, we've been in school. Maybe you've been in church just a little while. The truth is, we believe that Jesus Christ is the same substance as God the Father. They are not the same people but they are the same God and so we have many who are made holy because of the holy one but there's only one holy one. That's important.

What does "holy" mean? We're going to talk about that probably in chapter 4. Quickly, right off the bat, someone would say it means "without sin." That is a result of what holy really means. Holy does not mean without sin but it is a result of what it does mean.

So, "he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth and shutteth and no man openeth." So, he that hath the key of David, what are we talking about? Brother James, would you please go to the slide that has Isaiah 22 on it? Please notice what he says in verse 7 and then notice what he borrows from in Isaiah 22. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah... And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." Well, the key keeper had around his neck a particular, you might call it, a chain or whatever and he had the key. Well, in this case, it was a guy called Eliakim and he was the son of Hilkiyah. Hilkiyah was the high priest back in the days of Hezekiah the king. So you have the high priest and then you have his successor, Eliakim.

Eliakim, it was said that he had the key to the house of David. What does that mean? Well, apparently around his neck he had access to where the king lived. He had access to where the king lived and so if you had the key of the house of David, you could go anywhere you wanted to, basically, but in particular, you could go before the king anytime your desired. You have the key and so Christ is saying, "I have the control of the access to God. I have control of the access to God. I have the ability to open and shut."

We could guess, a lot of commentators guess but why would we want to guess when Isaiah told us what it meant? You know? What fun is guessing? Let's find out what the Bible says about itself and so, Jesus is saying, "I'm going to write you as the one who has the key." Now, please notice how he uses this key image all through this short letter to

the church of Philadelphia. Look at verse 7, “I have this key and I open doors that no one can shut and I shut doors that no one can open.” Verse 8, “I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word.” So, he talks about having this key, he opens doors that no one can shut in verse 7, he shuts doors that no man can open in verse 7. He says, “I am the one who controls things around here. I have the access before the Father.”

That does sound like John, though. Wasn't John the one who recorded Jesus? Here he is recording Jesus. In John 14:6, John was recording Jesus when he said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except...” remember that? So, this is not new material. Not new.

Verse 9, “I will make them...say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.” So, apparently these keys are going to make the enemies of the people of God come and bow down before them.

Then in verse 10 we really need to talk because he says he has a key to a door and then in verse 10, “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” So, we have this Christ who holds the key and he says, “Because you've kept the word of my patience, I will keep you from the hour of temptation which shall try them and come upon all the face of the earth.” Now, here's the fact, what are there 80 people, 90 people in here today, most of you are wondering what that means or you're wondering what I'm going to say it means. That's the fact. Okay, so we're going to cut to the chase here in a few minutes because there has been some teaching on this in the last month or so here at Berean, would you agree? Yeah. I mean, we've been talking about this a little bit in our study through Mark 13.

Incidentally, you need to know, for those of you who are new maybe to the church, Pastor Shawn didn't sit back in his office and think, “Let me get controversial. I've got to think of something controversial. Let's see here. Ah, end times. Let's preach on something controversial and I'm going to do end times.” Well, the fact is, that wasn't planned. He preached through Mark and eventually when you preach through Mark, you've got to get to chapter 13. Alright, that's just the science of it all. It comes after 12. Then in the evenings, you elaborate on some of the stuff that you cause in the mornings and get people thinking and they start emailing and all of a sudden, we're teaching, I think, week four of end time stuff tonight.

Now, if you're bored by it, you need to understand that you have a problem. Okay? It's not that God wrote a boring book, it's because you've decided there is a part of it that is not fun. That's the problem. See, you only have one book in the entire Bible that promises a blessing to the person that reads it. It's this book. That's chapter 1:3. Is that in your Bible? No one pen-knifed that out of their Bible. Look at 1:3, “Blessed is he that reads and they that hear the words of prophecy and keep those things which are written there for the time is at hand.” So whether or not you walk out that door in 27 minutes

disagreeing with me is not the issue. The issue is: do you believe that you have God's truth. That's the issue.

Alright, back to chapter 3. But there are requirements that you read here and keep the sayings in the book. Seems to me if you're supposed to keep it, you're supposed to understand it. I've never been able to keep a rule that I didn't know what the person was saying. Ever. You have to be at such-and-such a place, doing such-and-such a thing, in such-and-such a uniform. I can't do that if I don't know what he's saying. So, it's very difficult to say, "Ah, it doesn't really matter what it means. We won't be here anyway." That's not a good, careful understanding of Scripture. We've got to be able to say, "I may not understand it all but I will do my best to understand it."

Then, remember I keep going back to this: you and I can disagree. Let's just pick on you, Gene. You're up here, you're a good looking bald guy, I'm a good looking bald guy, we'll talk to you, alright? You and I can disagree but we can't disagree and both be right. We can disagree and both be wrong but you and I can't disagree and both be right so let's not fool ourselves with this post-modern nonsense of walking out the door and saying, "You know, I think we're saying the same thing." That's how people do it when they don't like being in fights or arguments but it's not honest to look at someone who says, for instance, "I believe you get saved by being baptized," and you look at them and say, "Well, you know, I think we're saying the same thing here." No, you're not. So, at least, let's be honest enough to say that sometimes we're not going to agree and when we disagree, we cannot both be right. It's possible that I'm wrong, but if we disagree, we cannot both be right. It might be that we're both wrong. Now, having said that: let's understand that God did mean one thing when he wrote his Bible. My job as a pastor is to try to figure out what that is and relay it and see if we come to the same understanding.

Now, let us move forward after that tirade. Let's look at verse 8, "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." Alright, let's talk. You've got to see something here before we move forward. If you don't see a parallel that's about to take place between verse 8 and verse 10, you're probably going to leave here saying, "I didn't get nothing out of that." So, help me out here. Verse 8, you have kept the word, now what is promised? Verse 8, for those who keep the word? What is promised? Just look in verse 8, what is promised? It's as plain as the big nose on my face. An open door. In verse 8 Christ promises an open door to those who have kept the word of his patience. Do you see that?

Alright, look at verse 10, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Now, verse 9, I'll grant you, there is something involved there and we need to find out what it is but what we do need to realize is that whatever verse 8 and whatever verse 10 are talking about, it's probably the same thing. I'll keep you; I'll give an open door. Verse 10, you've kept my patience, I'll keep you. I'll give you a way of escape is sort of the idea there.

Alright, so let's acquaint you with a piece of technology known as SermonAudio.com. On Thursday afternoon, the pastors of Berean gathered in that room right behind Jim there in the library and we gathered around a microphone for 57 minutes and talked about verse 10. Now, I'm not going to rehearse all that. For one thing, that would bore me to rehearse all that so if you want more discussion on this, I would recommend that you listen to that but I am going to give you the spirit of what we talked about there.

First of all, verse 10 is pretty important. The reason it's important to me is because it's a big part of my history. I believed certain things about verse 10 for a long time. People I've read have believed certain things about verse 10 for a long time and truly I think I would be handling this incorrectly, I would be handling this completely wrong and misusing your time this morning if I just tip-toed around the bush and said, "Well, it's 10:28. We'll handle part 2 next week." I really don't think that's a good use of time. So, I understand you're going to leave here today with some questions unanswered about the church of Philadelphia but I, at least, want you to know about verse 10.

The fact is, it is a major verse used by many good, Bible believing, Spirit filled, fundamentalist Christians, like you and I, who believe that it means that they will not be here for any part of the tribulation period. Now, why is that in verse 10? Well, because there are a few things said. It says "you have kept the word of my patience. I will keep thee from," that has the idea of guarding outside of. The whole word behind "from" there is the Greek word ek, epsilon, kappa. It comes from the first part of ekklesia. It's the word behind what in the New Testament, folks? Church. It's an assembly called out or called out is simply the etymology behind ekklesia. Ek/out, klesia/called. So, ekklesia/called out. When you apply that to a group of people who are assembling, it means that they are called out of where they were to assemble. The word here, ek, means out. It really looks like, based on verse 10, that those who keep the word of patience will be guarded outside of the hour of temptation that shall try them that come upon all of them that dwell upon the face of the earth.

Well, there are a few things that we need to first of all understand. No, that's not an appropriate way to begin that. There are a few things that are assumed in the statement that says Revelation 3:10 guarantees that those who are saved will not be a part of the tribulation period. There are two major assumptions: 1. is that it is a promise to all believers. In verse 10, it is anything but a promise to all believers. In verse 10 it says "because you've kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth." There appears to be a stipulation. If this is an escape before the tribulation period, it means that we are talking about, to some people who are believers, who have kept the word of Christ's patience or have kept Christ's word in his patience.

Now, it does definitely appear to be a promise to the entire church there in Philadelphia because in verse 8 he says, "you have kept the word of my patience." But what it doesn't appear to be is a promise to all believers. I'm saying that if the pre-tribulation belief, the pre-tribulation rapture belief is in this verse, then we have to assume that it is for all believers who keep the word of his patience. Chapter 2:18, "And unto the angel of the

church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants.” Hold on, who is she seducing? Christ’s servants. “To commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation,” hang on. Context is a killer here. We’ve got to remember this. Who are the ones that were seduced to commit fornication with this Jezebel? The servants of Christ who are promised that if they don’t repent of this, they will get what? Not just great tribulation, friend, but that is exactly what the text says, but the great tribulation John talks about.

Hang on: lest you think, hang on now, this is really important, lest you think that he’s just talking about great tribulation like, “Man, that was a great bike ride. Great dinner. My wife’s a great cook.” All that stuff, lest you think that that’s what he’s using the word “great,” hang on, hold your place here and look at chapter 7. Please look at verse 9, “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” So, they’re worshipping God. Verse 11, “And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God.” I can’t wait to talk about that verse. Verse 13, here’s what they said, “And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes?” Which ones? The ones of verse 9 that couldn’t be numbered. Verse 14, “And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me,” one of the elders, one of the 24 elders, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Know this: John didn’t have two great tribulations in the book of Revelation.

So the assumption, let’s talk about that a minute. Greg up here said he can’t come out if he didn’t go into it so here’s the fact: either these are people that went in and came out or they weren’t saved, went in, got saved and came out. But chapter 2 of Revelation in verse 22 promises, promises that unrepentant servants of Christ will get great tribulation. If chapter 3:10 is talking about a rapture of the church from the earth, a catching away, removal from the planet, it is only a proof text for a partial rapture. I have many reasons why I don’t believe in a partial rapture. Many reasons. But there are two reasons why I don’t believe chapter 3:10 is talking about a pre-tribulation rapture and you just heard one of them. For one thing, it’s not a promise to the entire body of saints.

Take that with the church of Thyatira and you have, no kidding, believers going into great tribulation who are unrepentant. Do they either go into the great tribulation because they’re unrepentant or do they go into the tribulation because they lose their salvation and are left behind at the rapture? Oh, if you’re going to pick choice #2, you’re sitting in the

wrong church again. We're facing a conundrum if you want to say it's a pre-trib rapture of the entire body of believers known as the church.

Chapter 3:10. Another assumption, listen to the statement and then we're going to come back and show you the second assumption. Chapter 3:10, the statement is: that I am giving two assumptions then, chapter 3:10 is a proof text for a full pre-tribulation snatching away of the believers from planet earth. There are two assumptions in that statement. The first one, I've already shared with you: 1. is that it is for all believers in the text in chapter 2 clearly says that it is not. Next, we are assuming that being kept from an hour of temptation means that you're being taken from the planet.

Alright, so this is John recording Jesus' words, using the phrase "keep from"...hold your place here, look at John 17:1, "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." Look at verse 4, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Now, you want to talk about something to talk about, how about that right there? He said that we shared glory before the world was.

I want to just share a Scripture with you if I could. Remember Isaiah 48, God said, "I am the Lord. I will not share my glory with another." Do you all remember that? That must mean that Jesus is God because God doesn't share his glory and here we have Jesus saying in verse 5, "Restored me the glory that we shared before the world was." Now, that's not what I wanted you to see but that's some good stuff. You could stop right there and go outside and run around a while, couldn't you, on that stuff. That's good.

Verse 6, "I have manifested thy name," verse 7, "Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee." Look at verse 9, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." He's talking about who in particular, please? Anyone? The disciples. Yes, that's right.

Now, if we could notice, please, verse 11, "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world." I'm leaving the world but these are in the world, Lord. Look at verse 14, "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Look at verse 15, please, very, very, very, very important, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Or if you have a newer translation like a New King James or an ESV in your lap that says "the evil one." Let me read that again, Jesus said, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." Same phrase, folks, "keep from." Revelation 3:10, "keep you from the hour of temptation." John 17:15, "keep from the evil one." Keep from the evil one. Revelation 3:10, "keep him from the hour of temptation."

Got a question for you: in John 17:15, is it necessary from Jesus' perspective for his disciples to be removed from the world to be kept from the evil one? Disciples of Christ not to be removed from the world, being kept from the evil one. Chapter 3:10 of

Revelation, “they kept the word of your patience, you’ll keep them from the hour of temptation that shall try them.” I want to know, since I think these are parallel: what is the hour of temptation that shall come upon all those who dwell on the earth? I want to know. Now, I have a choice: I can guess or I can find out what God says about it. The antichrist, okay, look at verse 5, “There is given unto him mouths speaking great things and blasphemies and power was given unto him to continue 42 months and he opened his mouth and blasphemy against God,” verse 7, “it was given unto him to make war with the saints.” With the saints? The beast to make war with the saints?

Remember, if we have just this verse, we have to pick: are they saints that were saved after this pre-tribulation rapture or are they saints that were never raptured? And if they were saints that were never raptured, it’s because they weren’t promised the rapture? Or is it because they missed the rapture because they were unfaithful? Well, let’s be loud about what Scripture says and silent about what it doesn’t say. Look at verse 8, “And all that dwell upon the earth,” what was chapter 3:10? A promise to be kept from the hour of temptation that shall try all them that dwell on the face of the earth. Yes? “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him.” Who is him? The beast. That’s right. “Whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

So we have an hour of temptation here in the very same book ten chapters later and it tells us what the hour of temptation is. So you have a choice: either they were kept from the evil one while being on the earth, all saints were because their names are in the Lamb’s book of life, chapter 13:8 or this is a group of people that were left behind at the pre-tribulation rapture that we’re trying to prove out of chapter 3:10.

Here’s my bottom line, friends. Here’s what I believe and we’ll open it up: I believe that Revelation 3:10 is not necessarily a promise for a whole hog pre-tribulation rapture of the church. For two reasons: 1. there is no need to believe that in order to be kept from the hour of temptation you have to be removed from the earth. Christ said that it was possible to be kept from the evil one without being removed from the earth. 2. We are told that it is a conditional protection during that hour for those who have not committed adultery with whomever Jezebel is in chapter 2 and chapter 3, kept the word of his patience.