

Revelation 3:1-6

If we were living at the time Revelation was written and we left Thyatira and traveled 25-30 miles southeast, we would come to the great valley of the river Hermus. If we stood in that valley and looked to the north end, we would notice a series of projecting hills and one of them would really stand out to us. It is a 1500 foot mountain-type hill. As we would gaze up at it, we would see a city on top of this mountain, which at one time was the wealthiest and most secure city in the world. **Today the city is called Salihli, but in John's day it was named Sardis.**

Sardis was a city known for its industry and wealth. **It was particularly known for its woolen trade. Historians say that the art of dyeing wool actually originated from Sardis.** This city was a great clothing manufacturer, something Jesus Christ clearly points out in this letter (3:4, 5).

There are two major historical events which are critical to us understanding this message:

- 1) The capture of the city by the Persians in 549 B.C. - Croesus, the king of Lydia attacked Cyrus the king of Persia and was defeated. Croesus returned to Sardis and felt very secure, but Cyrus pursued him and lay siege to the city.
- 2) The capture of the city by military rebels in 218 B.C. - Antiochus the Great used a band of sure-footed mountain climbers and rebels from Crete to enter and conquer the city.

The common denominator of both captures is that the leaders and the people of the city thought they were such a strong fortress that they did not even place guards at posts to watch for enemies. In both instances, the city was captured by pure neglect. Either due to laziness or a distorted sense of false security, the residents of Saris though they were so secure that they no longer needed to watch or work and that mindset eventually led to their destruction.

In A.D. 17 a severe earthquake did great damage to Sardis. Partially through donations of Tiberius, the Roman emperor, the city was rebuilt. In appreciation for his contributions, a coin was minted with his picture on it and the inscription "Caesarean Sardis." **The city featured a religious temple to the Greek goddess, Cybele, who is elsewhere known as Artemis, who supposedly had the power to restore the dead to life.** This was an evil religion and it will become critical to this message by Jesus Christ.

Apparently this city mentality had crept into the church. Some in the church believed they were so secure that they did not even need to work on anything in their own lives. They thought they had arrived at a spiritual level that didn't need any more attention and from Christ's viewpoint this was not a life producing church, it was more like a dead corpse. There are nine points of communication that Christ has for this church:

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POINT OF COMMUNICATION #1 – Christ’s address to the specific angel and church. **3:1a**

As we have repeated said, each church is specific and each church has a specific angel. Dr. Walter Scott makes an interesting observation when he says that he believes that this idea includes the entire ministry and history of the church (*Revelation*, p. 92).

What this would mean is that this angelic being would work in harmony with Jesus Christ in regard to what a specific church becomes and accomplishes.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #2 – Christ’s command for John to write to the specific church. **3:1b**

We keep repeating this because Jesus Christ keeps repeating this. It is the written Word of God that becomes critical to every church. The common point to see is that no matter what the problem or pressure of a specific church, it was the written Word of God that had the power to transform things.

There is no gimmick, no program, no course, no entertainment that will ever replace the written Word of God. God takes His written Word seriously and so should every local church. It is pleasing to Jesus Christ when God’s written Word is highly esteemed and carefully taught.

What we see in this church is that reviving a dead spiritual life comes through the written Word of God. It is the written Word of God that can revive any church.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #3 – Christ’s identification of the specific feature . concerning Himself. **3:1c**

Jesus Christ presents Himself as the One who has “the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars.” As we have previously stated, what this means is that Jesus Christ wants His church to know that He has total and complete control over the entire Spirit world. **The seven Spirits refers to the seven distinct ministries of the Holy Spirit, which originate at the throne of God (Rev. 1:4; 4:5) and the sevens stars refer to the seven angels (Rev. 1:20). Jesus Christ is informing His church that He controls all Spirit being things connected to the church.** The Holy Spirit and the angels operate only by authorization of Jesus Christ.

This church was not being led and developed by the Holy Spirit and this is exactly what the church needed. Jesus Christ wanted the church to clearly understand that He is the only One who can authorize the Holy Spirit and angels to accomplish powerful things. Anything that happens in connection with the church is controlled by Jesus Christ. He can unleash the power of the Holy Spirit in all of His ministries and He can authorize angels to do a variety of things.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #4 – Christ’s assessment of things negative in the church. **3:1d-2**

He opens with the verb “I know” which means He has full knowledge of everything happening in the church. He saw everything and there wasn’t much of anything that He saw that was positive.

Toward the end of the 2nd century, a bishop named Melito wrote one of the first known commentaries on Revelation. In discussing this church he said that there did not seem to be a problem of persecution, no infiltration of false doctrine, and no deep secrets of Satan. The church appeared to be a normal congregation to the eyes of others, but not to the eyes of Jesus Christ. One could go to church and appear to be so spiritual and actually hide reality from family and friends, but no one can hide from the eyes of Jesus Christ when He says, "I know."

Now from Christ's perspective, this church had a serious deception problem, it had the Divine name or title that they were a church that was alive, but they did not have the spiritual life or power of believers. They had a reputation, without reality. They were superficial. There was a huge contrast between what the people continually said about the church and what Jesus Christ continually said about the church.

Since Jesus Christ controls all spiritual forces connected to the church, the Holy Spirit and the angels, He was certainly in a position to say, "You have no life power and are dead." He was not authorizing the Holy Spirit or the angels to do anything positive. This church was dead. This church had no spiritual power and the Holy Spirit wasn't producing anything in this church. The vital, vibrant spiritual life was gone and it was more like a morgue or depressing cemetery. Truth is many churches rely on their past reputation and are as dead as they can be.

This had nothing to do with their numbers, or their age; it has to do with the authorized presence and power of God. Jesus Christ is telling this church that My analysis is you continually say you are alive, but I am telling you that you are continually dead. The verbs "have a name," "are alive" and "are dead" are all present tense which means the action is continual. These people continually told others they were a church where God was really working, when, in fact, God wasn't working there at all.

Just because a person or church or group claims they are really right with God does not mean they really are. We live in a time when many churches are thriving in numbers. There are massive multi-million dollar facilities which feature people who go to church who say they are alive unto God. But when you carefully look for the dynamic of spiritual power, it isn't there. When you look for numbers who love to reverence God, and carefully understand the written Scriptures, or who pray, you discover what is being said isn't squaring with the Word of God. J. Vernon McGee said this is a "frightful picture" of the church today; it has a spiritual name but it is spiritually dead. William R. Newell said in 1935 that most members in most churches were marked by a "crass ignorance of the Word of God" which proves most have "sunk into spiritual death" (*Revelation*, p. 63). Just because a church features big bands and big names does not mean it is spiritually alive. I am convinced that many "Christian Broadcasting Networks" that claim to be so alive for God are from Christ's perspective spiritually dead. It is the same problem of Sardis.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #5 – Christ’s command for immediate change. **3:2-3**

There are five commands that Christ gives to this church, which clearly suggest He is demanding immediate action and change in view of the fact that this was a dead church:

Command #1 - The command to wake up. **3:2a**

This command is just the opposite of being asleep. **The idea here is it is time to become spiritually alert and awake as opposed to staying spiritually asleep.**

This command would certainly hit home to the people of this church and city because this was precisely the issue that caused the city to previously fall. Sardis had been considered to be an impregnable citadel, incapable of capture. In fact, the people were so lackadaisical that they did not even look out for enemies. Dr. Warren Wiersbe said, “No friction usually means no motion” (*Be Victorious*, p. 38). When a church stops looking out for enemies, it will find itself in big trouble.

This command of Jesus Christ is a command for this church to wake up to their true spiritual condition, which was one of being dead. This church apparently lived on its past glory and needed to realize it was a dead church. So Christ says “wake up.”

It is a very dangerous thing to fall asleep while in warfare. If a Roman soldier fell asleep on duty, he was immediately executed - usually bound and burned. If we fall asleep in our own spiritual warfare we can get burned. Sin can quickly creep into our lives and take us captive. We need to wake up.

Command #2 - The command to strengthen the things that remain. **3:2b**

Apparently there were a few remaining graces in the church that had not yet been eliminated. The word “strengthen” (στηριζω) is one that means to establish something firmly (*Greek Lexicon*, p. 418). **The aorist tense of the verb establishes the urgency of immediately responding to the command.**

There were things in this church that were worthwhile elements that remained from the healthier days of the church. Jesus Christ commands that this church get back to the vitality and life it once had by holding fast and tight to the good things still in the church. **This would require an honest evaluation of where the church actually was in their relationship to God.**

In fact, the words “I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of God,” indicate that this church had not fulfilled its purpose. The word “completed” means that this church was not filling up or fulfilling the expectations and responsibilities that Jesus Christ had for this church before His own Father. This had not become the complete church Christ wanted. **They had the name that they were believers in a church, but they were not becoming mature believers.**

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This presents an important point. Many take the position it is enough just to be a Christian on your way to heaven. You don't really need to carefully study the Word of God or the doctrines of God. All you need to do is go to church and that is enough. Apparently not so in the eyes of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ wants His people and His church becoming complete. He wants us growing in our knowledge of Him and His Word. The entire heartbeat of the New Testament is for the believer to grow through the Word and doctrines of God (I Corinthians 3:1-2; Ephesians 1:15-19; Colossians 1:9-11; I Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:11-14).

Now one of the obvious problems in this church of Sardis was that Jesus Christ said that most people were wearing “soiled garments” (3:4). This is a metaphorical picture of a spiritual life that is not pure but is stained with filth.

The only other reference to this in the book of Revelation is in Revelation 14:4 in which the word “defiled” is the same Greek verb. In that text, the reference is to sexual relationships which are immoral. It is very possible that some of the people in this church were drifting into areas of sexual immorality by participating in immoral idolatrous worship. The believer who does this is not complete in the sight of God and is not pure.

Certain observations we may make concerning this command:

- 1) Jesus Christ is very patient with the people in His church - He gives His people time to change.
- 2) Jesus Christ does expect His church to change and become complete - He demands change.
- 3) Jesus Christ does own even the worst believers - even the most soiled are His.

Command #3 - The command to remember . **3:3a**

Christ commands His church to remember two things: 1) Remember what you have received ; 2) Remember what you have heard .

The Greek verb “received” is perfect tense, indicating they did receive Jesus Christ at some point in the past and continued to be believers right to the present. These people truly had trusted Jesus Christ as Savior. They did really receive Him and they still had Christ at the present time. They hadn't lost Him.

The Greek verb “heard” is aorist tense, meaning they needed to immediately look back to the specific apostolic instruction which had been given to them at some specific time in the past. Apostolic doctrine had been deposited in this church and this church needed to get back to it.

Years ago a minister visited this church and after the service said, we used to carefully teach the Scriptures and doctrine in our church, but if we did that today many people would leave. Truth is many might leave, but Jesus Christ's presence and power would return.

Command #4 - The command to keep. **3:3b**

Jesus Christ is commanding that these believers in this church “keep” the things they had heard. Since there is no stated object of what to keep, we must figure it out from the context. The point of the context is to keep and guard the truth and doctrines that originally had been taught to the church.

As we have observed, the apostle who really took the Gospel and Word of God to Asia was Paul, and one chapter in the Bible that vividly presents this is Acts 19. During Paul’s ministry, he carefully taught the Word of God and these believers had given up their lustful, idolatrous worship (Acts 19:26-27). The essence of the Pauline challenge in Asia was to turn from their former lustful lifestyle and walk in the ways of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:17-24). These believers needed get back to this focus.

Command #5 - The command to repent. **3:3c**

Christ commands the people of this church to change their thinking right now. The aorist tense means this was to be one point in time action. **Do not overlook this point; the thing that brings a church to repentance is remembering the Word of God.** It is not man’s manipulation that brings about repentance or a change of thinking; it is remembering the Word of God.

Here is a very simple formula for getting a dead church or dead spiritual life back on track:

- 1) Wake up - admit and see the reality of the deadness of the spirituality.
- 2) Strengthen things that remain - strengthen the things that are Biblically right.
- 3) Remember the Word of God - come hear it, read it, heed it.
- 4) Start guarding the Word and doctrines of God - believe truth, protect truth, defend truth.
- 5) Repent of any sin - if you know it is sinful change your thinking right now.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #6 – Christ promises judgment for persistent disobedience. **3:3d**

Now Christ was aware that some in the church may decide they were not going to change. As Thomas said, He anticipated that the church would not accept His terms for restoration (Vol. 1, p. 252). He says if you do not respond to My commands, “I will come as a thief.” **Now when a thief comes, the end result is unexpected devastation and loss.** Christ is promising a very unexpected destructive judgment that would bring about major devastation and loss.

What Jesus Christ is warning here is that if the individual or church refuses to respond and deal with their soiled garment problem, He will pay this church a surprise, unannounced visit and will bring to that church unexpected devastation and judgment.

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It is very possible that Christ is referring to a judgment of spiritual weakness, physical sickness, or even death. We do not believe He is speaking about the Rapture or His Second Coming. The Rapture is not conditioned by the repentance or faithfulness of the church. Fact is, when the Rapture does occur, there will be many carnal and fleshly believers who will face Jesus Christ and be totally ashamed (I John 2:28). Furthermore, the threat of Christ's Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation is no threat for the Church Age believer. We believe this is a specific judgment Jesus Christ would bring upon this church.

The idea of coming as a thief has great meaning for those who lived in Sardis. It was their lack of being alert and awake that led to their overthrow. Christ says to these believers, if you do not change, I will Personally come and do some very devastating things to you and your church.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #7 – Christ's assessment of things positive in the church.
3:4

There were still some people in the church who were faithful. There were a "few," not many, who truly were living a life that was not defiled by immoral behavior or false doctrine. Christ says to them that when He comes to His judgment, they will continue to walk in the same purity in which they presently had. In fact, the word "walk" is present tense which would refer to a continual and habitual walk.

Christ is promising that when He comes to judge a church, those who are faithful will continue to be strengthened and will grow and become pure and mature.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #8 – Christ's message to the unbeliever. **3:5**

There are three wonderful promises that Jesus Christ gives to the one who "overcomes," that is the one who believes on Him (I John 5:5). These are wonderful promises and not intimidating threats:

Wonderful Promise #1 - The one who believes will be clothed in Christ's righteousness.

The idea of being clothed in "white garments" is being clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ (Revelation 7:14).

Wonderful Promise #2 - The one who believes has eternal security.

The idea of "erasing names" from a book is something clearly understood by those living in the days of John. In Roman cities, there was a census book that contained the names of all of the citizens. If the citizen did something against Rome, their name was removed and they were no longer subject to the benefits and blessings of citizenship.

The promise here is that if you will believe on Jesus Christ, He will not ever erase your name from the book of life, no matter how filthy the clothing. This is a great promise of eternal security.

Wonderful Promise #3 - The one who believes will have a glorious eternal introduction .

Jesus Christ promises that He will Personally introduce those who have believed on Him to His Father and His holy angels. He will Personally confess that this believer belongs to God. Peter referred to this as an abundant entrance into heaven (II Peter 1:10-11).

Jesus warned that there will be many who did not really believe on Him and enter into a relationship with God through the narrow gate, who He will not introduce to His Father (Matthew 7:13,22-23). But every believer in Jesus Christ will receive these blessings.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #9 – Christ’s message to the believer . **3:6**

The believer needs to hear what the Spirit says to the church through the written Word of God, and specifically we must protect the doctrinal and moral purity of our own lives and the life of the church. We must continually stay awake and keep learning and growing for God. We must not allow ourselves to get lulled into sleep.

Historically - Sardis was a literal church with a literal problem of deadness. Archeologists have discovered that the church building was located right next to an idolatrous temple. The greatness of the city and the church are now gone and all that is left is a memory that at one time there was a church with life. According to Sadan Gokovali, the church remained active until A.D. 1517 and then it disappeared (p. 44).

Prophetically - The time period that this church fits is A.D. 1517-1790. This is clearly a time in which the church had become dead. It was this reality that led Martin Luther to march up to the door of Wittenberg on October 31, 1517 and nail his 95 theses to the door. In fact, when we think of the term Protestant Reformation, we think that the nature of the “protest” was due to the deadness of orthodox religion. In the period ranging from A.D. 1750-1790, another deadness came to the church, a dead Protestantism. This is the time period of various confessions and creeds which eventually led to a dead orthodoxy of religious activity. There is a similarity between the church of Sardis and this time period.

Representatively - Sardis is a church that represents the sleeping and sinful church that is dying because they no longer are producing the Biblical righteousness consistent with their name. This type of church needs to wake up to the reality that Jesus Christ is monitoring the church and unless it gets back to its focus on His Word, He will bring judgment against it. An undisciplined church is moving toward the discipline of Jesus Christ.

Individually - Sardis represents individuals who go to church who have a name that says they are Christian, but they do not have an active and alive spiritual life. They have fallen asleep in carnality and sin and they are dead and Jesus says, repent or else you’ll face Me and My judgment.

Revelation 3:7-13

If we left Sardis in the days of the Apostle John and traveled some 20-25 miles to the southeast, we would come to one of the great cultural cities in New Testament times. Today it is called Alasehir but in John's day it was called Philadelphia. Of all of the cities, Philadelphia was the greatest for influencing Asia with its focus on Greek culture. It was called the "little Athens."

There are four historical facts that are critical to this Biblical text:

Historical Fact #1 - The name of the city. **3:7**

The man who ruled from Pergamum approximately 150 years before Christ was Attalus the second. He was the one who founded the city of Philadelphia. Attalus had a brother, whose name was Eumenes, whom he loved, and when he founded the city, he named it in dedication to his brother because **Philadelphia means "love of brother" or "brotherly love."**

Historical Fact #2 - The outreach of the city. **3:8**

The sole purpose that Attalus had for founding the city was that it might become a missionary headquarters for spreading the Greek culture and language to other areas of the world. When Christ says that He has "put before you an open door," He would have immediately had the attention of the believers living in this city because this city was known for its open door policy in regard to spreading Greek culture, thought and religion.

Historical Fact #3 - The problem of the city. **3:12b**

Philadelphia had a major cosmological problem in that it was an area known for earthquakes. Strabo describes the city as one "full of earthquakes." Philadelphia sat on a geological fault. In Philadelphia, earthquake tremors were, as one writer said, an everyday occurrence. Most of the people lived outside the city because they were afraid of being hit by falling masonry. Whenever an earthquake did hit, the people got out of the city areas as quickly as possible. This is very important to **verse 12**, which promises that "he will not go out from it anymore." This is a definite historical matter, which the people of Philadelphia could easily relate, for it meant safety.

Historical Fact #4 - The renaming of the city. **3:12c**

Philadelphia had been renamed two times in history and ironically both renamings took place after rebuilding the city after an earthquake. Tiberius changed the name to Neocaesarea - the new city of Caesar. Vespasian changed the name to Flavia after the Flavian Dynasty. In both cases the people were not antagonistic to the name change, but it did ultimately revert back to its original name - Philadelphia. The people living in this city literally knew what it was like to have a new name, and to actually have a permanent name would mean you would never have to fear being destroyed or conquered again. It would mean great stability.

Of all the churches, this one is viewed most favorably by Jesus Christ. David Jeremiah said had he lived in the first century, this would have been the church he would want his membership (*Escape the Coming Night*, p. 71). This was a great church, not a church of big names like Ephesus or a church of big numbers like Laodicea, but a church of amazing power and blessing. **There are eight points of communication Christ presents to this church which are glorious:**

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #1 – Christ’s address to the specific angel and church.
3:7a

Again we see that this church was unique in its specific angel and location. It is interesting that here is the only church of the seven churches which actually has a city in the United States named after it. William Penn, an English Quaker, founded the city in 1681 and named it after this church.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #2 – Christ’s command for John to write to this church.
3:7b

Philadelphia is a church highly esteemed by God and by Jesus Christ and yet it was still in need of understanding the written Word of God. No matter how loving or how dedicated a church is to God’s Word, it still needs more of God’s written Word. All of the churches in the Church Age, no matter how positive or negative, need an understanding of God’s written Word.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #3 – Christ’s identification of a specific features concerning Himself. **3:7c-g**

It is quite evident that Jesus Christ relates differently to each church, depending on the condition of the church. To this church in Philadelphia there are five descriptions He gives of Himself:

Description #1 - Jesus Christ is holy. **3:7c**

The Greek text literally could be read, “He who is ‘the Holy One’” (ο αγιος). This title is often used for God and it certainly sets Him apart in His purity and majesty. Jesus Christ is Holy in everything He is. He is Holy God and He is the One monitoring the church.

Description #2 - Jesus Christ is true. **3:7d**

The Greek text literally could be read, “He is ‘the true One’” (ο αληθινος). This word emphasizes that Jesus Christ is true with no phony or false imperfections. He is real as opposed to being unreal. He has genuineness to Him. He is always true because He is true.

These two concepts imply that this little church in Philadelphia is being addressed by great Deity and Majesty. The Holy God and the only True God is intimately connected to this church.

Description #3 - Jesus Christ has the key of David. **3:7e**

The “key of David” imagery and the opening and closing of doors are taken from Isaiah 22:22. In that context, Shebna (22:15) was a proud foreigner, who apparently had become very important to Judah second only to the king. God promises that He would give up his position to Eliakim (22:20), who would have great charge over the governmental leadership of Judah. The one with the key of David had God’s governmental control and power over God’s people.

This is precisely Christ’s point. He is of the Davidic line and He has all governmental control over God’s program and God’s people. He holds the “key of David” which means He is the One who can unlock the blessings of God for His people.

It is interesting that many Biblical scholars believe that Shebna (Isaiah 22:15-25) is a prophetic picture of the Antichrist and that Eliakim is a prophetic picture of Christ displacing the Antichrist.

Description #4 - Jesus Christ opens a door no one can close. **3:7f**

This refers to the fact that Jesus Christ has total sovereignty in being able to grant blessings and opportunities to an individual and a church. The Apostle Paul actually stayed in Ephesus because of the amazing door that had been opened for Him by God for ministry (I Cor. 16:8-9). When one analyzes what Paul says in I Corinthians, he had opposition, but he also had tremendous opportunity. Christ was informing this church that He was opening doors of ministry and opportunity for them that no one could shut.

Description #5 - Jesus Christ shuts a door no one can open. **3:7g**

The point here is that Jesus Christ has total sovereignty in being able to not grant blessings and opportunities to an individual and church. Christ can unlock God’s treasury of blessings to a church and He also can shut a church down.

For the church of Philadelphia, God had opened a door of ministry and blessing that no power on earth or hell could shut.

In summary, the essence of this description is that Jesus Christ is the Holy, True God and He is the One who sovereignly controls the entire effectiveness of the program of God in regard to a church. He has power to open and close doors on whomever He wishes and whenever He wishes. **The power and ability to truly get God’s job done in the church lies with Jesus Christ and not us.**

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #4 – Christ assesses things positive in the church. **3:8**

He begins with the “I know” (οἶδα) formula which stresses that He has full knowledge. There are actually four positive realities He knew about this church:

Positive Reality #1 - Jesus Christ had full knowledge of their works. **3:8a**

The noun “works” (τὰ ἔργα) is plural and articular. What this means is that the people of this church did various things at church and they took their work seriously.

Positive Reality #2 - Jesus Christ had full knowledge of their strength size. **3:8b**

The words “little power” are significant. The word “little” (μικρῶν) is the word from which we get our English word “microscopic.” It is a word that refers to something very small. **It can refer to something that is small in stature, rank, quantity or influence in both size and time.** (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 293). The word “power” (δυναμῖν) refers to something that is strong, mighty and powerful (*Ibid.*, p. 123).

When we combine these two words, Jesus Christ is saying to this church that He knew that of all of the seven churches, this church of Philadelphia was small in numbers and in dollars. William Newell said it did not have the energy of a church like Ephesus, but the truth is it was a church much better than Ephesus. Not being a massive mega church may be a wonderful positive blessing of God.

Positive Reality #3 - Jesus Christ had full knowledge of their commitment to God’s Word. **3:8c**

What this church was known for was its dedication to the written Word of God. They “kept” it, which means they guarded it and preserved it with a watchful eye (*Ibid.*, p. 445). This church was totally dedicated to carefully understanding God’s written Word. This church was known by Jesus Christ as a church that protected God’s written Word and doctrines.

The fact is, if you are a church known for carefully teaching the Scriptures, you will probably not win popularity contests or draw massive numbers of people. What we see here is that it is not programs, gimmicks, bands, plays, entertainment, contests, publicity, money or size that gains the great favor and blessings of Jesus Christ. It is its focus on the written Word of God.

Positive Reality #4 - Jesus Christ had full knowledge of their non-denial of His name. **3:8d**

These believers guarded the Scriptures and they defended the name of Jesus Christ. They defended the fact that Jesus Christ is God; He is the only Savior and He is the Jewish Messiah. This church would not budge in its defense of the name of Jesus Christ. The name of Jesus Christ was never treated lightly in this church. There is no other name under heaven that can save from sins and this church defended this and would not deny it no matter what.

The great lesson we must see from this assessment of Jesus Christ is that in the mind of God, **quantity has nothing to do with quality**.

In fact, when Jesus Christ was here on earth He called His flock a “little flock” (Luke 12:32) and when He left this earth He left behind 120 disciples (Acts 1:15) who turned the world upside down.

Most who would have looked at this church of Philadelphia would not have seen an impressive church. There weren't large numbers of people or dollars comparatively speaking. But this church was a spiritual powerhouse because of its commitment to the Word of God and its defense of the name of Jesus Christ.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #5 – Christ promises special blessings to this church.
3:8-10

There are three very special blessings He promises to this church in Philadelphia:

Special Blessing #1 - Christ promises the blessing of an open uncloseable door. **3:8**

What He promises to this church is a continuation of what He promised in **verse 7**. What Christ is promising here is that He was opening the door for this little church to have a great spiritual impact and great spiritual blessings. This church would continue to exist; it would be enabled by Him to accomplish a great deal and it would be very effective. This church would be an unstoppable force where God's Word would be mightily blessed. This church that appeared to be so small would have unstoppable power.

If Jesus Christ chooses to bless a church because of its commitment to the Word of God and because of its defense of Him and His name, no one will be able to shut it down.

Special Blessing #2 - Christ promises the blessing of Jewish recognition . **3:9**

It is predicted in many passages that one day all nations of the world will pay homage to Israel, but in this text, Jesus says one day Israel will pay homage to the Church.

As an additional blessing to this church for its guarding of God's Word, God would use it to impact the Jewish world. It is possible that some Jews would come into the church realizing that this church had a special connection with God, and it is also possible that there would come a day when Jewish non-believers would bow in submission to the fact that this church was loved and blessed by Jesus Christ.

Obviously numerous Jews were saying they were right with God and were of the synagogue of Satan which denied Jesus Christ. Christ calls them liars and promises His faithful church that one day they will acknowledge the truth that God's church was loved and blessed by Him.

Special Blessing #3 - Christ promises the blessing of future deliverance . **3:10**

Because this church had “kept the word of My perseverance”, which means they guarded the Word of God no matter what they faced, no matter what the trial or test, they were focused on knowing God’s written Word, Christ promises that He will do something very special for them.

The third amazing blessing promised to this church is that they would be kept “out of” a very devastating judgment that would come upon and against the whole world. The judgment that is futuristically promised to hit the whole world is “the Great Tribulation” (Revelation 6-19).

We may easily prove that this is a reference to the Great Tribulation by offering four evidences:

(Evidence #1) - The scope of the trial is universal. It is not an isolated judgment, but a judgment aimed at the “whole world,” when all humanity is experiencing this ferocious judgment of God.

(Evidence #2) - The time of the trial is specific. The noun “hour” contains the article “the.” This informs us that Jesus is speaking of a specific time of universal trouble. We know from other Scriptures that the Great Tribulation is a specific time oriented period of judgment and this point is stressed in both the O.T. and the N.T. (Daniel 9:24-27; Revelation 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5).

(Evidence #3) - The recipients of the trial are specifically identified. This trial is aimed at “those who dwell on the earth.” This phrase is used some ten plus times in Revelation and in each instance it refers to all unbelievers who are in the Great Tribulation (Revelation 6:10; 8:13; 11:10 (twice)*; 13:8*, 12, 14 (twice); 17:2, 8*).

(Evidence #4) - The content of the trial is consistent with the Great Tribulation. Revelation 6-19 describes a judgment of God which will come against this earth, the likes of which has never been equaled in history at any time. This description presents a time when God is pouring out His wrath on a God-mocking, Christ-rejecting world (Revelation 6:16-17).

Now the main question is what did Jesus Christ mean when He said that He would “keep you from the hour of testing?” There have been about four views as to what this means:

- 1) Christ is promising that believers won’t go through the same kind of trials as unbelievers.
- 2) Christ is promising that believers will be protected through the Great Tribulation.
- 3) Christ is promising that believers will be taken out before the severe part of the Tribulation.
- 4) Christ is promising that believers will be removed and raptured before the Tribulation occurs.

We reject the first three interpretations and believe **the promise that Jesus Christ is making to this church of Philadelphia is that it will be kept out of the time frame of the Great Tribulation.**

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View one is easily refuted because Christ is not talking about normal trials of life and the truth is we do suffer similar trials as unbelievers. Believers lose health, jobs, promotions, and positions. They have to pay bills and go to funerals. Christians are not kept from normal trials of life.

View two is also easily refuted because it is very clear that believers in the Tribulation are not protected; they are martyred in great numbers (Revelation 6:9-11).

View three is also easily refuted by the fact that when Jesus Christ used the identical construction “out of the hour” (εκ της ωρας) in His prayer in John 12:27, He was praying that if it were possible that He should be completely delivered from the time and agony of the cross. He was not praying that He would go into the time of agony and come out of it; He was praying that He would never enter it.

The only view that can be Biblically, theologically and grammatically supported is the view that Christ is promising these believers that they will be raptured before the Great Tribulation begins.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #6 – Christ presents a special incentive for faithfulness.
3:11

Because Christ had promised so many wonderful things to this church, He did not want them becoming lax. So He gives them two incentives:

Incentive #1 - Jesus Christ is coming quickly . **3:11a**

God always wants His people looking for and expecting His imminent return.

Incentive #2 - Hold fast to you focus on God’s Word so you do not lose your crown. **3:11b**

What Christ is saying here is you cannot lose any of these promises, but you can lose your rewards. The word “crown” is stephanos, which is the victor’s wreath. Christ wanted to be able to stand these believers up and honor them as being dedicated to His Word and His name. We may win or lose reward by our commitment or lack of commitment to the Word of God.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #7 – Christ’s message to the unbeliever . **3:12**

There is a glorious message presented by Jesus Christ to the one who will believe on Him.

Blessing #1 - He will have an eternal privileged position - “pillar in the temple of My God.”

Blessing #2 - He will have eternal safety - “go out no more.”

Blessing #3 - He will have eternal identity - “new name” for God.

Blessing #4 - He will have eternal residency - he will be in the new Jerusalem. Those faithful will reign in this new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1-2; Zechariah 3:7).

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #8 – Christ’s message to the believer . **3:13**

The one with ears needs to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches - guard the Word of God and defend the name of Jesus Christ. Stay committed to the written Word and you’ll earn the crown.

Historically - Philadelphia was a literal church who was given the literal promises for her faithfulness. God did literally give Philadelphia an open door that no amount of persecution or pressure has ever been able to close. In the Middle Ages (14th century) this church stood against the Muslim influence and Mohammad. Many cities fell but not Philadelphia. According to history, Philadelphia became the strong point of defense for Asian Christianity and to this very day there is a strong church of about 1000 believers that still holds a defense for the Word of God and a testimony for the Christian faith. This church was of great importance until the 19th century.

Prophetically - Philadelphia represents the historical time period of A.D. 1790 to the present time. During this era, God started massive revivals and opened great doors of spiritual advancement. Men like George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, the Wesley brothers, Charles Spurgeon, D. L. Moody, C. I. Scofield and Lewis Sperry Chafer were mightily used by God to get a focus on the Word of God, and God opened many amazing doors of opportunity and those doors have never been fully closed to this day.

Representatively - Philadelphia represents any church in any age where the people are very serious to guard and protect the Word of God and defend the testimony of Jesus Christ. This church represents those churches that are not massive in numbers but are effective and impacting with their open doors. The message to this type of church is to hold fast to these objectives and there will be great rewards. This is a representative church of one that will not go into the Great Tribulation and also a representation of the church truly devoted to the Word of God that is not a mega church.

Individually - The church is made up of individuals who need to stay committed to carefully guarding and understanding the written Scriptures, and one who stays committed to defending the name of Jesus Christ. Those who stay faithful to these objectives are promised great reward. Not only will the believer miss the Great Tribulation but may truly lay up treasures in heaven.

THE DEFENSE OF THE PRETRIBULATION RAPTURE

The “Pretribulation View” holds to the position that **the Church, in its entirety, will be raptured before the Tribulation** begins. This means that the Church will be raptured before Daniel’s seventieth week (**Daniel 9:26-27**) and before the revealing of the Antichrist (**II Thess. 2:1-8**). This is the teaching that **Christ will come for His Church before the Tribulation** and meet them in the air and then **after the Tribulation He will come with His Church** to the earth to reign.

We dogmatically hold to this view for it is the easiest to defend Biblically and we base this on nine key proofs:

(Proof #1) - The Church is not related to anything that pertains to the Tribulation.

The greatest text of Scripture which describes with great detail the Great Tribulation is **Revelation 6-19**. If the Church were connected to the Tribulation, there would certainly be some direct reference to it in some of these chapters. It cannot be a mere coincidence that no references whatsoever are found between **Revelation 4:1-19:7**. The reason for this is that the Church is not in the Tribulation, but has been raptured before the Tribulation.

(Proof #2) - The Tribulation, in its entirety, is classified as a time of wrath (**Rev. 6:16-17**) and it is specifically stated in Church instruction that the Church is not destined to wrath (**I Thessalonians 5:9**).

The context of **I Thessalonians 5:9** is important. Paul had just completed informing the believers that they should be comforted with truth about the Rapture (**I Thessalonians 4:17-18**). Paul specifically placed this event prior to his discussion of “the day of the Lord” (**5:2**), which is the Great Tribulation. In this very context, he states, “God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Then he says we are to “encourage one another” with this truth (**5:11**). What truth? The truth that we are going to be raptured and will not enter the time of wrath, known as the “day of the Lord.”

(Proof #3) - The Church cannot be related to any ministry taking place in the Tribulation.

We know that very early in the Tribulation period, 144,000 Jewish missionaries are sealed - 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes (**Revelation 7:4-8**). We also know that this same group shows up later in the Tribulation (**Revelation 14:1**). Now one key purpose for this protected group of Jewish evangelists is to proclaim the “Gospel of the Kingdom” to the whole world (**Matthew 24:14**). In other words, these Jewish missionaries will be proclaiming to the whole world that Jesus Christ is going to return at the end of the seven years and will establish His Kingdom for Israel. Now here is the point. Why would God have to single out 144,000 Jewish evangelists to do this job if there were churches all over the world? Why would God need a special force if local churches who knew the Bible were in existence? The answer is - the Church is gone from the earth. The Church has been raptured before the Tribulation and therefore the 144,000 are needed.

(Proof #4) - The Church is not found related to other believers during the Tribulation.

There are several groups of people who may be classified as being saved in the Tribulation. There are the 144,000 (**Revelation 7:1-8; 14:1**). There are the martyrs who are killed early in the Tribulation and martyrs who are killed later in the Tribulation (**Revelation 6:9, 11**). We have very clear evidence that these martyrs did not trust in Jesus Christ until they were in the Tribulation (**Revelation 7:14**). There are also believers who are an elect Jewish remnant during the Tribulation (**Revelation 12:13-14**). We also may observe that there will be a few Gentiles who will survive the Tribulation who will be permitted to enter the Kingdom, via the Judgment of the Nations (**Matt. 25:31-34**). The obvious question is where is the Church? Why isn't it mentioned? The only answer to this is that the Church is not in the Tribulation, it was raptured before the Tribulation.

(Proof #5) - The Church is alluded to as being in Heaven during the Tribulation.

There are several indications in Revelation that when Jesus Christ comes back at the end of the Tribulation, He brings the Church with Him, which means it has been with Him in Heaven during the Tribulation - **Revelation 19:7-11; Revelation 22:17**.

(Proof #6) - The Church is always admonished to look for the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

Various present tense verbs such as "to wait" (**Philippians 3:20**), "to wait" (**I Thessalonians 1:10**) and "looking" (**Titus 2:13**) clearly communicate that we are to have a continual expectancy for the Rapture of the Church.

If the Church were destined to go into the Tribulation, it would have an approximate time of the Lord's return because many of the specific details which precede the Second Coming of Jesus Christ are clearly spelled out in **Daniel, Matthew and Revelation (i.e. Matthew 24:15-22)**. This knowledge would diminish the concept of continual expectancy of His return. The challenge to remain loyal and steadfast because Christ may come at any moment, doesn't mean much in view of known signs which will occur in the Tribulation prior to Christ's Second Coming.

The only logical explanation to this is the Pretribulation Rapture view. We may literally challenge the Church to continually look for and expect the Rapture because we know it may occur at any moment. In fact, the two key events which signal the end of the Church Age - doctrinal defection and ecumenism - are clearly in place now more than ever before. We anticipate Jesus Christ may rapture His church at any moment. Perhaps even today. We may only have this view because we are not going into the Tribulation.

(Proof #7) - There are major contrasts between the Rapture and Christ's Second Coming.

There is a major contrast between what is described in **I Thessalonians 4:16-17** and **Revelation 19:11-16**. Dr. John Walvoord called this "the most important reason for Pretribulationism." His discussion on this point is worth noting (Dr. John Walvoord, *Vital Prophetic Issues*, pp. 224-225):

Probably the most important reason for Pretribulationism is the evident contrast between the details revealed concerning the Rapture and the description given of the Second Coming of Christ to establish His Kingdom. These contrasts describe these two events as different in purpose, character and result.

An analogy can be drawn between the contrasts in the Old Testament between the First and Second comings of Christ, and the contrasts in the New Testament between the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ to the earth. In the Old Testament, the first and second comings of Christ were mingled (**Isaiah 61:1-2**), but can now be distinguished because of the major contrasts of the sufferings of Christ relating to His first coming and the glory of Christ relating to His Second Coming.

It is doubtful whether anyone comprehended the difference between the First and Second Comings of Christ until the prophecies of the First Coming were fulfilled. In interpreting the distinctions between the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ, interpreters do not have the benefit of fulfilled prophecy as a basis of interpretation, but the same approach that enables one to distinguish the First Coming from the Second Coming of Christ helps distinguish the Rapture from the Second Coming to the earth.

Only the Pretribulationist interpretation can account for these sharp contrasts and the literal interpretation of the various factors relating to these two future events. Inevitably Posttribulationists are forced to spiritualize to some extent in order to explain away the evident contrasts."

(Proof #8) - The Church is given certain exhortations that may only be harmonized by a Pretribulation Rapture.

For example, in **John 14:1**, the disciples are challenged to not let their heart be troubled. This challenge is given in the context of Christ going away to prepare a place and coming back to get them (**14:3**). If one must go through the Tribulation, one has every right to be very troubled.

In **I Thessalonians 4:18**, the Apostle Paul, in a context pertaining to the Rapture and the Resurrection of loved ones who have died in Christ, exhorts to "comfort one another with these words." There is not anything comforting about the thought that one must go into and through the Great Tribulation.

In **Titus 2:13**, Paul, in speaking about the Rapture, called it a “blessed hope.” As Dr. Walvoord said concerning this verse, “The hope of a Rapture after enduring the Great Tribulation is hardly a happy expectation ...”

These exhortations only make sense if the Church is raptured before the Great Tribulation.

(Proof #9) - The Pretribulation Rapture is the only position that makes sense of **Revelation 3:10**.

Let us keep in mind when reading this verse, that this verse does not just apply to the church of Philadelphia, but to all the churches (**Revelation 3:13**). The promise of this verse is that believers will be kept out of a very devastating judgment, which will come against the “whole world.”

The immediate reason why Christ promises this to His church is because His church carefully guarded the Word of God and maintained their stand for the name and identity of Jesus Christ (Savior, Messiah, God) - **Revelation 3:8**.

The particular promise that Jesus Christ gives to His Church is that He will keep His Church “out of” (ἐκ) the time of the Tribulation which is about to come against the whole world. The recipients of this judgment are specifically named as being “those who dwell upon the earth” (**3:10**). This particular phrase shows up some ten times in Revelation and in every instance it refers to unbelievers who are in the Great Tribulation (**6:10; 8:13; 11:10 (twice)*; 13:8*, 12, 14 (twice); 17:2, 8***).

There are three key grammatical arguments which can only lead to the Pretribulation Rapture conclusion:

1) The preposition “from” (ἐκ - literally “out of”). This is a promise not to be delivered in or through the Tribulation, but to be kept out of its time period. This preposition is used in **Acts 15:29** where Gentile believers are exhorted to keep themselves “from” (ἐκ) such things. The obvious point is never enter into these things, not go in and then come out. In **James 5:20** we are told that if a sinning believer can be turned from his error, he can be saved “from” (ἐκ) physical death. Obviously the point is he will not enter into a premature death. It is impossible for one to enter a death state and then come out of it. So the promise is never to enter into the death state.

The same is true concerning the Great Tribulation. Believers are promised in **Revelation 3:10** that they will not enter into the time of it. Thus Pretribulation Rapture is proved.

2) The object of the preposition “from” (ἐκ) is “the hour of the testing ... upon the whole world.” The promise is not just to be kept from the type of trial, but from the time of the trial. The believer will be kept out of the time frame of the Great Tribulation.

3) The verb and preposition “keep from” (τηρεω εκ) occurs only in one other place in the N.T. - **John 17:15**. Christ prays and asks that believers be “kept out” of the evil or the evil one. Christ is not praying that believers go into satanic things and then get out of them. He is praying that they never go into satanic thing and never come under the dominating power of Satan. **Colossians 1:13** informs us that His prayer was answered.

Dr. Charles Ryrie gives a wonderful illustration concerning **Revelation 3:10** worth citing: “Perhaps an illustration will help keep the promise in its clear, uncomplicated form. As a teacher I frequently give exams. Let us suppose that I announce to a class that I am going to give an exam on such-and-such a day at the regular class time. Then suppose I say, “I want to make a promise to students whose grade average for the semester so far is A. The promise is: I will keep you from the exam.” If I said nothing more by way of explanation, I expect that the A students would puzzle over that promise. “Does it mean we have to take the exam or not?” they would ask. And just to be safe, I would expect, they would show up at the appointed time because they would not have understood clearly what I meant. Now I could keep my promise to those A students this way: I could pass out the exam to everyone, and give to the A students a sheet containing the answers. They would take the exam and yet in reality be kept from the exam. They would live through the time but not suffer the trial. This is Postribulationism. Protection while enduring. But if I said to the class, “I am giving an exam next week. I want to make a promise to all A students. I will keep you from the hour of the exam.” I very seriously doubt if the A students in that class would spend any time debating what I meant or whether or not they had to show up at the time of the exam. They would understand clearly that to be kept from the hour of the test exempts them from being present during that hour. This is Pretribulationism, and this is the meaning of the promise of **Revelation 3:10**. And the promise came from the risen Savior who Himself is the Deliverer from the wrath to come (**I Thessalonians 1:10**)” (Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, pp. 484-485).

Dr. John Walvoord cites fifty reasons why the Pretribulation Rapture position is the only position that is possible (Taken from Dr. John Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, pp. 192-199):

1. The early church believed in the imminency of the Lord’s return, which is an essential doctrine of Pretribulationism.
2. The detailed development of Pretribulation truth during the past few centuries does not prove that the doctrine is new or novel. Its development is similar to that of other major doctrines in the history of the church.
3. Pretribulationism is the only view which allows literal interpretation of **all** Old Testament and New Testament passages on the Great Tribulation.
4. Only Pretribulationism distinguishes clearly between Israel and the church and their respective programs.
5. Pretribulationism maintains the Scriptural distinction between the Great Tribulation and tribulation in general which precedes it.

6. The Great Tribulation is properly interpreted by Pretribulationists as a time of preparation for Israel's restoration (**Deuteronomy 4:29-30; Jeremiah 30:4-11**). It is not the purpose of the Tribulation to prepare the Church for glory.
7. None of the Old Testament passages on the Tribulation mention the Church (**Deut. 4:29-30; Jeremiah 30:4-11; Daniel 9:24-27; 12:1-2**).
8. None of the New Testament passages on the Tribulation mention the Church (**Matthew 24:15-31; I Thessalonians 1:9-10; 5:4-9; Revelation 4-19**).
9. In contrast to Midtribulationism, the Pretribulationist view proves an adequate explanation for the beginning of the great tribulation in **Revelation 6**. Midtribulationism is refuted by the plain teaching of Scripture that the great tribulation begins long before the seventh trumpet of **Revelation 11**.
10. The proper distinction is maintained between the prophetic trumpets of Scripture by Pretribulationism. There is no proper ground for the pivotal argument of Midtribulationism that the seventh trumpet of Revelation is the last trumpet in that there is no established connection between the seventh trumpet of **Revelation 11**, the last trumpet of **I Corinthians 15:52**, and the trumpet of **Matthew 24:31**. They are three distinct events.
11. The unity of Daniel's seventieth week is maintained by Pretribulationists. By contrast, Midtribulationism destroys the unity of Daniel's seventieth week and confuses Israel's program with the church.
12. The translation of the Church is never mentioned in any passage dealing with the Second Coming of Christ after the Tribulation.
13. The Church is not appointed to wrath (**Romans 5:9; I Thessalonians 1:9-10; 5:9**). The Church, therefore, cannot enter "the great day of their wrath" (**Revelation 6:10**).
14. The Church will not be overtaken by the Day of the Lord (I Thessalonians 5:1-9) which includes the Tribulation.
15. The possibility of a believer escaping the Tribulation is mentioned in **Luke 21:36**.
16. The church of Philadelphia was promised deliverance from "the hour of the trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (**Rev. 3:10**).
17. It is characteristic of divine dealing to deliver believers before a divine judgment is inflicted upon the world as illustrated by the deliverance of Noah, Lot, Rahab, etc. (**II Peter 2:6-9**).
18. At the time of the translation of the Church, all believers go to the Father's house in heaven (**John 14:3**), and do not immediately return to the earth after meeting Christ in the air as Posttribulationists teach.
19. Pretribulationism does not divide the body of Christ at the Rapture on a works principle. The teaching of a partial Rapture is based on the false doctrine that the translation of the Church is a reward for good works. It is rather a climactic aspect of salvation by grace.
20. The Scriptures clearly teach that all, not part, of the church will be raptured at the coming of Christ for the church (**I Corinthians 15:51-52; I Thessalonians 4:17**).
21. As opposed to a view of a partial Rapture, Pretribulationism is founded on the definite teaching of Scripture that the death of Christ frees from all condemnation.
22. The godly remnant of the Tribulation are pictured as Israelites, not members of the Church as maintained by Posttribulationists.

23. The Pretribulational view as opposed to Posttribulationism does not confuse general terms like elect and saints which apply to the saved of all ages with specific terms like Church and those in Christ which refer to believers in this age only.
24. The Pretribulational interpretation is the only view which teaches that the coming of Christ is actually imminent.
25. The exhortation to be comforted by the coming of the Lord (**I Thessalonians 4:18**) is significant only in the Pretribulational view, and is especially contradicted by Posttribulationism.
26. The exhortation to look for “the glorious appearing” of Christ to His own (**Titus 2:13**) loses its significance if the Tribulation must intervene first. Believers in that case should look for signs.
27. The exhortation to purify ourselves in view of the Lord’s return has most significance if His coming is imminent (**I John 3:2-3**).
28. The church is uniformly exhorted to look for the coming of the Lord, while believers in the Tribulation are directed to look for signs.
29. The Holy Spirit as the Restrainer of evil cannot be taken out of the world unless the church, which the Spirit indwells, is translated in the same time. The Tribulation cannot begin until this restraint is lifted.
30. The Holy Spirit as the Restrainer must be taken out of the world before the “lawless one,” who dominates the Tribulation period, can be revealed (**II Thessalonians 2:6-8**).
31. If the expression, “except the falling away come first” be translated literally, “except the departure come first,” it would plainly show the necessity of the Rapture taking place before the beginning of the Tribulation (verb root is ἀφίστημι = to move or depart).
32. According to **II Corinthians 5:10**, all believers of this age must appear before the judgment seat of Christ in heaven, an event never mentioned in the detailed accounts connected with the Second Coming of Christ to earth.
33. If the twenty-four elders of **Revelation 4:1-5:14** are representative of the Church, as many expositors believe, it would necessitate the Rapture and reward of the Church before the Tribulation.
34. The coming of Christ for His bride must take place before the Second Coming to the earth for the wedding feast (**Revelation 19:7-10**). (Jewish wedding = a groom goes and gets his bride and takes her to his home and has a wedding feast).
35. Tribulation saints are not translated at the Second Coming of Christ but carry on ordinary occupations such as farming and building houses and shall bear children (**Isaiah 65:20-25**). This would be impossible if all saints were translated at the Second Coming to the earth as Posttribulationists teach.
36. The judgment of the Gentiles following the Second Coming (**Matthew 25:31-46**) indicates that both saved and unsaved are still in their natural bodies, which would be impossible if the translation had taken place at the Second Coming.
37. If the translation took place in connection with the Second Coming to the earth, there would be no need of separating the sheep from the goats at the subsequent judgment, but the separation would have taken place in the very act of the translation of the believers before Christ actually sets up His throne on earth (**Matthew 25:31**).

38. The judgment of Israel (**Ezekiel 20:34-38**) which occurs subsequent to the Second Coming indicates the necessity of regathering Israel. The separation of the saved from the unsaved in this judgment obviously takes place sometime after the Second Coming and would be unnecessary if the saved had previously been separated from the unsaved by translation.
39. At the time of the Rapture the saints meet Christ in the air, while at the Second Coming Christ returns to the Mount of Olives to meet the saints on earth.
40. At the time of the Rapture, the Mount of Olives is unchanged, while at the Second Coming it divides and a valley is formed to the east of Jerusalem (**Zechariah 14:4-5**).
41. At the Rapture living saints are translated, while no saints are translated in connection with the Second Coming of Christ to the earth.
42. At the Rapture the saints go to heaven, while at the Second Coming to the earth, the saints remain in the earth without translation.
43. At the time of the Rapture the world is unjudged and continues to sin, while at the Second Coming the world is judged and righteousness is established in the earth.
44. The translation of the Church is pictured as a deliverance before the day of wrath, while the Second Coming is followed by the deliverance of those who have believed in Christ during the Tribulation.
45. The Rapture is described as imminent, while the Second Coming is preceded by definite signs.
46. The translation of living believers is truth revealed only in the New Testament, while the Second Coming with its attendant events is a prominent doctrine of both Testaments.
47. The Rapture concerns only the saved, while the Second Coming deals with both saved and unsaved.
48. At the Rapture Satan is not bound, while at the Second Coming Satan is bound and cast into the abyss.
49. No unfulfilled prophecy stands between the Church and the Rapture, while many signs must be fulfilled before the Second Coming.
50. No passage dealing with the resurrection of saints at the Second Coming in either Testament ever mentions translation of living saints at the same time.

These are powerful evidences and a blessed hope for all of us who know the Lord that we will be raptured before the Great Tribulation.