

THE RAPTURE IN REV. 3:10?

DON'T Force an Interpretation

By Arlen L. Chitwood

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation [testing], which shall come upon all the world [*lit.* ‘the inhabited world’], to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Rev. 3:10).

The words “hour of temptation” in Rev. 3:10 are taken by most Bible students to be a reference to the coming *Tribulation* (*Daniel’s Seventieth Week*), with the promise given in the message to the Church in Philadelphia that Christians will not enter into but be kept out of this future time.

The word “from” is a translation of the Greek word “*ek*,” meaning “out of,” with the correct translation being, “I also will keep thee *out of* the hour of temptation...”

Thus, those Bible students seeing “the hour of temptation” as a reference to *the coming seven-year Tribulation* correspondingly see the promise that Christians will be kept “out of” this time as a reference to *the rapture*. That is, they see this verse as a promise to Christians that *they will be kept “out of” this time by being removed from the earth before the Tribulation begins.*

In turn, this has also led many Bible students to follow a selective rapture ideology, for all Christians are not included in this promise. Note that only those who have *kept the word of His patience* have been promised that they will be kept “out of the hour of temptation...”

(Some individuals have sought to remove *the condition* for being kept “out of the hour of temptation” by retranslating from the Greek and restructuring the text, making the condition apply to that which precedes rather than that which follows.

However, *this changes nothing* for those attempting to do away with the condition [from what they see as the rapture] in this manner. Even if the restructured translation is followed, the promise in the latter part of verse ten is inseparably tied to that which precedes, with the condition remaining.

But, that is neither here nor there, for, as will be clearly shown, the rapture is not being dealt with in this verse anyway.)

Thus, if this verse centers around a promise that Christians will be removed before the coming Tribulation, with inclusion in the rapture *conditional*, then an insurmountable problem exists, for *a selective rapture teaching would be in direct conflict with that which Scripture reveals concerning the rapture.*

Scripture is quite clear in both the Old Testament types and the New Testament antitype that the rapture will be *all-inclusive*. *All Christians* will be removed at this time, not just those *who have kept the word of His patience.*

Past, Present Dispensations

The Tribulation comprises the last seven years of Daniel’s Seventy-Week prophecy. And, accordingly, these seven years have to do with *time which will complete God’s dealings with Israel during the preceding dispensation.*

This preceding dispensation was interrupted seven years short of completion. Israel’s sin had reached an apex (at Calvary); and God stepped in, stopped the chronometer marking off time for the dispensation, and instituted a new dispensation.

Israel was set aside, and fifty-three days following the events surrounding Calvary, God sent His Spirit into the world to procure a bride for His Son.

God, at this time, through events beginning on the day of Pentecost, called into existence *one new man* (which was neither Jew nor Gentile); and the Spirit began His search for the bride among those comprising this *new man* (Gen. 24a), a search which would last for one dispensation, for 2,000 years.

Then, once the Spirit has completed His search (Gen. 24b), this *new man* (comprised of all Christians)

will be removed from the earth and dealt with at Christ’s judgment seat in the heavens (I Cor. 3:11-15).

And once this has been accomplished, God will turn back to Israel and complete His dealings with this nation during Man’s Day, completing the last seven years of the previous dispensation.

This will complete Man’s 6,000-year Day. Christ will then return, restore a repentant and converted Israel, destroy Gentile world power, and the 1,000-year Messianic Era will be ushered in.

Structure of the Seven Epistles in Rev. 2, 3

The seven epistles to the seven Churches in Asia are all structured *exactly alike*, with that stated to all seven having to do with *exactly the same thing, with exactly the same subject matter seen throughout.*

All begin the same way (“I know thy works”), *all continue* with the works of Christians in the different Churches and the Lord’s attitude toward these works, and *all end* with an overcomer’s promise (“to him that overcometh”).

The rapture is simply NOT a subject matter dealt with in the uniform structure of these seven epistles. To see the rapture dealt with in one epistle and not in any of the other six is completely out of line with the manner in which these epistles are structured.

As well, note the context on both sides of the statement which many see as a reference to the rapture. *This statement MUST be understood contextually, which would also preclude the verse from having anything to do with either the rapture or the Tribulation.*

Both the rapture and the Tribulation are dealt with in the Book of Revelation, showing a pre-Tribulation rapture of all Christians. But neither is dealt with in this verse, nor elsewhere in Rev. 2, 3.

The rapture is dealt with in Rev. 1:10; 4:1, 2a, and the Tribulation is dealt with in Rev. 6-19a. But Rev. 3:10, understood within context, *CANNOT POSSIBLY deal with either.*

Revelation 3:10, within context, remaining within the way all seven epistles are structured, *CAN ONLY* be understood as having to do with *works emanating out of faithfulness* (cf. James 2:14-26), with a view to

overcoming (cf. vv. 8, 10a, 11, 12). And the Christians in Philadelphia were promised, because of their faithfulness, that they would be kept out of a particular time of testing/trials — *about to come upon* “all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

Promised Deliverance

This promised *deliverance* in Rev. 3:10 could only be the same as that seen in what is commonly called “the Lord’s prayer” in Matt. 6:9-13: “And lead us not into temptation, but *deliver* us from evil [*lit.*, ‘from the evil one’ — from Satan]...” (v. 13a). This would be the same temptation which Christ spoke of in Mark 14:38 and which Paul wrote about in I Cor. 7:5. And it is the same temptation from which the Lord promised *deliverance* in II Peter 2:9.

Testings or trials are seen in Scripture within two spheres. They are seen as something which God uses in connection with the maturing process, with a view *to the person ultimately being approved at the judgment seat* (James 1:2-4, 12); and they are seen as something which *Satan uses in his efforts to bring about defeat in a Christian’s life* (Mark 14:38; James 1:13-15).

The promise concerning *deliverance* in Rev. 3:10 would have to be understood within this overall frame of reference, in keeping with Christ’s statement to His disciples in Matt. 6:13.

This “temptation [‘trial,’ ‘testing’]” by Satan *was about to* (literal rendering from the Greek text) come upon “all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

The fact that this testing would be *worldwide* is another thing which has led many individuals to believe that the coming Tribulation was in view. But, not so. *Christians* are being dealt with, not the world at large; and the expression, “all the world,” in this respect, must be understood in the same sense as it is used elsewhere in Scripture where *Christians alone* are also in view.

Note Col. 1:5, 6, 23, Paul states that the gospel (his gospel, the good news surrounding the mystery which had been revealed to him) had been proclaimed throughout “all the world [*lit.*

‘all creation’],” “to every creature which is under heaven.” However, the message in this gospel, in Paul’s gospel — “if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (v. 23) — was for *Christians alone*.

The content of the message restricts this good news to *Christians, allowing for only one understanding of the passage*. “To every creature which is under heaven” can only be a reference to *Christians (all Christians)* scattered throughout the inhabited world, not to unsaved individuals in the world as well.

And the extent of the promise surrounding deliverance from a coming time of testing/trials in Rev. 3:10 is the same. It is a promise made to *faithful Christians* relative to a time of testing/trials which Satan would bring upon *Christians (all Christians)* scattered throughout the inhabited world, *seeking to bring about their defeat*. They, because of their faithfulness, would overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil. And, through this means, they would be delivered out of the onslaughts of Satan, as seen in this verse.

And the context of Rev. 3:10 is *in complete keeping* with this thought, *NOT* with thoughts surrounding the rapture. Efforts to use this verse as a text relating to the rapture can only have *one end result, which is negative*. Such efforts can only serve *to do away with that which actually is dealt with in this verse — a facet of teaching pertaining to the Word of the Kingdom*.

A Pre-Tribulation Rapture of All Christians

There is an abundance of Scripture in both the Old Testament and the New Testament which reveals *the complete Church being removed prior to the Tribulation*. And, with this in mind, one need not attempt to make Rev. 3:10 deal with something that it doesn’t deal with in an effort to teach that which is clearly taught so many places elsewhere in Scripture, even elsewhere in the Book of Revelation itself.

If an individual wants to see the rapture preceding the Tribulation and including all Christians, *he needs to turn to sections of Scripture that deal with the matter, not to a section that doesn’t*.

A person, for example, could (actually, *SHOULD*) turn to the types. And *he should do this FIRST, allowing him to then build on the God-provided foundation*.

The original type of Christians being removed before the Tribulation is seen in Gen. 5-8 (“Enoch,” typifying *Christians, removed before the Flood*; “Noah and his family,” typifying *Israel, going through the Flood*). Then, everything beyond that in Scripture — O.T. and/or N.T — *MUST ALWAYS be understood in exact accord with the original type (e.g., Gen. 18, 19)*.

A type often overlooked in this respect is seen in the Book of Ruth. Though the rapture per se is not dealt with in this book, the Tribulation and place where Christians will be at this time are dealt with.

The judgments of the Tribulation, seen in the breaking of the seals on the seven-sealed scroll (Rev. 5), comprise *God’s terms for the redemption of the inheritance*. And Ruth is seen *on Boaz’s threshing floor (typifying Christ’s judgment seat [Ruth 3]) PRIOR to the redemption of the inheritance (typifying God’s redemptive terms being carried out during the Tribulation [Ruth 4])*.

Or, a person can turn To Rev. 1-4.

In the first chapter, the complete Church, represented by the seven Churches in chapters 2, 3 is seen removed from the earth and in Christ’s presence (removed from man’s Day into the Lord’s Day), with Christ appearing as *Judge (ref. Ruth 3, 4)*.

Then, in Rev. 4:1, 2, parts of the same scene are repeated, with Christians being removed *following the present dispensation (chs. 2, 3) but preceding the redemption of the inheritance, which occurs through the judgments of the Tribulation (chs. 5ff)*.

And all is in complete accord with the Old Testament types, *where God had previously laid the unchangeable foundation*.

Thus, if a person is going to deal with the rapture in relation to the Tribulation, *he NEEDS to use verses or passages of Scripture which deal with the subject*.

And Revelation 3:10 is *NOT* one of those verses.

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