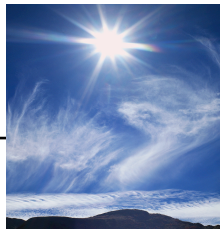


# Is the Rapture Next? Part 2



- Do you think Christians will go through the Great Tribulation or will the rapture happen before then?
- Is the rapture next on God's calendar?

A careful study of the various Bible passages that describe Christ's second coming shows that it will occur in **two phases**—the **rapture** and the **return** (also called the **revelation**). The rapture and return are two different events. They are not a second and third coming but the one coming in **two installments**. One Bible teacher explains Christ's second coming like a *two-act play separated by a seven-year intermission* which is the Tribulation period.

- ▶ At the **rapture**, Christ is coming **FOR** all Christ-followers (the Church) to take them to **the Father's house in heaven** (John 14:1-3).
- ▶ At the **return**, Christ is coming **WITH** the Church to take them **to the earth** to establish His earthly millennial (1,000 years) kingdom (Rev. 19:11-20:6; Matthew 24:27-31; Zechariah 14:1-5, 9).

The rapture and the return focus on two different purposes and are separated by time.

## Is the Rapture Next on God's Calendar? Or Will the Church Go Through the Great Tribulation?

In the Christian community, there have been DIFFERENT viewpoints concerning the time of the rapture. The debate deals with the question—will Christians go through the seven-year tribulation period or be raptured before it? Are Christians to be looking for the any-moment return of Christ and the rapture, or the horror of the antichrist and the Great Tribulation? There are five major positions concerning the relationship of the rapture to the Tribulation period. (See chart).

1. **The Pre-Tribulation Rapture:** All believers will be raptured *before* the seven years Tribulation.
2. **The Partial Rapture:** Only faithful believers who are *spiritually worthy* will be raptured *before* the Tribulation.
3. **The Mid-Tribulation Rapture:** All believers will be raptured in the *middle* of the Tribulation.
4. **The Pre-Wrath Rapture:** All believers will be raptured *five and a half years* into the Tribulation, just *before* God's wrath is poured upon the wicked world.
5. **The Post-Tribulation Rapture:** All believers surviving the Great Tribulation will be raptured at the end of the 7 years, the same time Jesus returns to the earth.

The conviction of this Bible study is that the rapture happens **before** the seven years Tribulation. The any moment return of Jesus Christ to rapture the Church and take her to the Father's house is the believer's **blessed hope** (Titus 2:13).

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**God promised to keep His people "out of" the entire period of the coming Tribulation.**

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## 2. The Promise of EXCLUSION from the "Hour of Trial" — Revelation 3:10.

In Revelation 3:10, Jesus made a special promise to the church at Philadelphia: *"Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you **from** the **great time of testing** (NIV - "hour of trial") that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world"* (NLT).

Q1. In Revelation 3:10, what promise did Jesus make to the believers at the Philadelphian church?

Two keywords in this verse are—"from" and "time" (NLT) [The NIV - *hour*"]. The word "from" is the Greek preposition εκ which means "out of, from within." The word "time" in the phrase "**great time of testing**" (NLT) refers to the **whole Tribulation period**. Jesus promised to keep His bride, the church, completely *out of or from within* the whole period called the Tribulation.

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...καγω σε τηρησω (Verb-Future, Indicative, Active) εκ  
...I also you will keep (continually in the future) **out of**  
της ωρας του πειρασμου της μελλουσης ερχεσθαι  
the **hour** of the trial ~~(the)~~ being about coming  
επι της οικουμενης ολης, πειρασαι τους  
upon the inhabited world whole, to try those  
κατοικουντας επι της γης.  
dwelling upon the earth.

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*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* explained, "This is an explicit promise that the Philadelphia church will not endure the hour of trial which is unfolded, beginning in Revelation 6. Christ was saying that the Philadelphia church would not enter the future time of trouble; He could not have stated it more explicitly. If Christ had met to say that they would be preserved *through* a time of trouble, or would be *taken out* from within the tribulation, a different verb and a different preposition would have been required.

Though scholars have attempted to avoid this conclusion in order to affirm posttribulationism, the combination of the verb 'keep' (*terein*) with the preposition 'from' (*ek*) is in sharp contrast to the meaning of keeping the church 'through' (*dia*), a preposition which is not used here. The expression 'the hour of trial' (a time period) makes it clear that they would be kept *out of* that period." (p. 939).

Also, the late Dr. John F. Walwood, former President of Dallas Theological Seminary and one-time leading authority on End Times theology, wrote in his book, *The Rapture Question*, "As the translators have made clear, the thought of the Greek is to 'keep from,' not to 'keep in.' The promise was to be kept from 'the hour' of trial, not just the trials in the hour. The primary promise to the church of Philadelphia was that they would not enter this hour of trial." (p.66).

Q2. Why is a proper understanding of the Greek preposition εκ (out of) important to understanding the promise of Revelation 3:10?

Q3. Why is the Greek *ωρα* (*hour*) important to understand the phrase "hour of trial" (NIV) or "time of testing" (NLT)? Is the verse saying God will keep them from **trials** or a **period of time** that will test the earth? What is the difference?

Q4. How does this fit with the pre-tribulation rapture view?

Again, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* adds, "It is difficult to see how Christ could have made this promise to this local church if it were God's intention for the entire church to go through the Tribulation that will come on the entire world. Even though the church at Philadelphia would go to glory via death long before the time of trouble would come, if the church here is taken to be typical of the body of Christ standing true to the faith, the promise seems to go beyond the Philadelphia church to all those who are believers in Christ." (pp. 939-940).

Q5. In your own words, why would the promise of Revelation 3:10 not be limited to the first century Christians in the church of Philadelphia but to all believers of all time?

### Was This Promise ONLY to the Philadelphian Christians OR the Body of Christ in General?

John F. Walwood, asked this question when he wrote, "Is the letter to Philadelphia addressed to the church at large like the Pauline letters to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians, or is it limited to the particular church addressed?" *The Rapture Question*, p.257.

#### Why the Promise Had to be to ALL Christians:

1. If this promise were limited *only* to the Philadelphian Christians, the keeping "**from the great time of testing**" would actually be a **type of partial rapture**. The believers in the other churches of the 1<sup>st</sup> century would **not be included**. The Bible does not teach a partial rapture, but that **all** followers of Christ will be **raptured together** (cf. 1 Thess. 4:14-17; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52).

2. The messages to the Seven Churches of Revelation 2-3 are addressed to **all followers** of Jesus Christ. It is not limited to the individual seven churches. Evidence for this is seen by the repeated broad application, "**Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches...**" (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13 & 22 NLT). Why should we hear, unless the message of the 7 churches is actually to the Body of Christ in general?

3. The Philadelphian Christians were going to be excluded from the Tribulation because they would die and be in the presence of Christ **long before the Tribulation would occur**. If it were to them only, it was a **meaningless promise** since God would know that the Tribulation would not occur during their lifetime.

### Conclusion

What do we do with Revelation 3:10? It seems to be a promise that the universal Church (the bride of Christ), will be kept out of the Tribulation period. Do we ignore it and believe otherwise? Is there a sound alternate explanation? Or do we accept it as it seems to simply and clearly indicate, that is, evidence for the rapture occurring **before** "the hour" of the Tribulation?

The best explanation for the promise of Jesus to keep you "... **from the great time of testing...**" is the pre-tribulation rapture.

