

shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. This door is the door to heaven, which Jesus opens to receive the church home. You see it in chapter four verse one where you read,

Revelation 4:1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard *was* like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."

Believers of the Church Age will be preserved from the hour of trial by being resurrected or raptured prior to its inception.

Revelation 3:10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

Jesus summarized His opening comments in the phrase **because you have kept My command to persevere**. He anticipated they would go through the open doors of service on earth and preach the Gospel.

Could they have failed? Individually, yes. Corporately, no. Jesus once said **the gates of Hades shall not prevail against** the church (Matthew 16:18). In every generation the Lord sees to it by His own empowering that the church marches triumphantly through open doors of ministry. You and I can fail but corporately the church can not.

Notice the words that Jesus used, carefully chosen. **I also will keep you from**. **From** means *out of*. There are Christians who teach that Jesus will keep you safe through the Tribulation - like Noah in the ark, or the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace. Jesus said that He would keep the church *out of* the hour of trial.

Hour means the *period of time*. In other words, He won't just keep you safe through the trial; He'll keep you *out of* the whole *period of time*.

It's clear Jesus is talking about the future seven year Great Tribulation when He says it is **the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world**. This isn't just some local problem; this is the global

outpouring of God's wrath. It is described in chapters six through nineteen.

Finally, notice the purpose and the people upon whom this global trouble comes: **to test those who dwell on the earth**. It is a time of final reckoning with those whose lives are earthly, material, natural. The church is not in view. We will be gone – taken to Heaven through the open door at the resurrection and rapture of the church.

The church - you and I - will not enter any portion of the seven year Great Tribulation. Yes, in the world you shall have tribulation; but you won't be in the world for the Great Tribulation.

What about this idea that God will protect the church in and through the Great Tribulation? People cite Noah in the ark and the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace.

1. Noah and his family were indeed preserved through the flood, and that is indeed a type of God's people being preserved through the Great Tribulation. Noah is a type of Israel, of the Jews; **they** will be preserved through the Great Tribulation. Don't forget about Enoch! Enoch was taken out of the world before the flood! He is a type of the church - removed in the Rapture prior to the Great Tribulation. Notice that Enoch was not mid-flood, or post-flood. He was pre-flood.
2. The three Hebrews were indeed preserved through the fiery furnace and that is indeed a type of God's people being preserved through the Great Tribulation. They are a type of Israel, of the Jews; **they** will be preserved through the Great Tribulation. Don't forget about Daniel! Daniel was nowhere to be found during the fiery furnace. Again, he is a type of the church - removed in the Rapture prior to the Great Tribulation.

Revelation 3:11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Quickly means *suddenly*, at any moment. It is what we call the doctrine of imminence - that Jesus could come for the church at any moment. If He is coming for the church anytime after the Great

Tribulation begins His coming can be predicted and is not imminent. Only if His coming to Rapture the church is prior to the Great Tribulation can it be imminent.

Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. Several different crowns are mentioned in Scripture. They are given to you at the Reward Seat of Jesus after the church is resurrected and raptured. The crown Jesus may have had in mind here is the crown of rejoicing. It's a crown given to soul-winners who go through the doors Jesus opens on earth to share the Gospel. The apostle Paul mentioned it when he said,

1 Thessalonians 2:19 For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

1 Thessalonians 2:20 For you are our glory and joy.

When you are in Heaven at the Reward Seat Jesus will be giving you the crowns you've earned. How is it, then, that He said here, **that no one may take your crown?** How can someone **take** something He hasn't yet given?

He might mean that if you do not go through the open doors on earth then someone else will. That person will take the crown you could have earned.

It's not a rebuke. In some ways it's an encouragement knowing that the church will not fail. It's more an incentive. Since the church will not fail, why not be a part of its victory?

Revelation 3:12 **He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.**

We view **he who overcomes** as a phrase that describes the normal Christian life. The average, everyday Christian has every resource he or she needs to **overcome** the world, the flesh, and the devil as they make slow but steady progress in their walk with the Lord.

Philadelphia was a city notorious for its earthquakes. In 17AD Philadelphia was completely destroyed by an earthquake, along with

Sardis and other cities in the same area. Most of the other cities recovered quickly from the disaster but the aftershocks continued for a number of years in Philadelphia. The people were constantly having to flee the city in order to avoid being crushed by falling masonry from their houses.

Against this physical backdrop Jesus said to His church **I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more.** By far the greatest time of earthquakes all over the planet will be the future Great Tribulation. There will be no place to flee! Not to worry if you are a Christian in the Church Age because you will be safe and secure in the heavenly **Temple** and **shall go out no more.**

Though there is a real Temple in Heaven Jesus called you a **pillar**. That's because even in Heaven where there really is a Temple the church is prominent.

Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.

The tabernacle on earth and later the Temple in Jerusalem represented the inner sanctum of Heaven. But the real point of all of them is that God will enjoy full face-to-face fellowship with you.

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Three things accompany your arrival in Heaven prior to the Great Tribulation: a permanent rest, a permanent residence, and a permanent relationship.

A permanent rest. You will **go out no more**. When you don't go out, you stay at home. You will stay at home in Heaven in the sense of entering a permanent rest - with no worries, no fears, no anxieties.

A permanent residence. We'll see this heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, later in the Revelation. It will be your permanent residence for eternity - the city whose builder and maker is God.

A permanent relationship. You'll have three names written on you - the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem... And... My new name. Forget Miami Ink or L.A. Ink! This is NJ Ink – New Jerusalem!

Will we be tattooed? It sounds funny to us but somehow Jesus will mark us for all eternity. Maybe it will be on our heavenly garments. Wherever we go in all the vastness of God's new creation we will bear these three names.

Let's not speculate about exactly what names will be written on you and where. Think of the cultural norm we have of a wife taking on the name and living in the home of her husband. She takes his name, which is his father's family name for generations. She has a new address.

The church is the group that will have these names in Heaven for all eternity because we are the bride of Jesus Christ! Naming us is part of the romance of redemption.

Revelation 3:13 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Jesus repeated this at the end of each letter. Repetition is for emphasis. We should never tire of it when it relates to God's Word.

Any believer in any church at any time in history can relate to and apply the things in this and every other letter.

So how do we **hear** it tonight? By asking then listening. Ask the Lord what doors are open to you to serve Him – both in the church but especially in the world.