

REVELATION – SERMON 21

PROMISES TO DIE FOR

Revelation 3:10,12-13

INTRODUCTION

- The modern-day movement of *survivalists* or *preppers* devote themselves to surviving a coming “doomsday” by building underground bunkers; stockpiling food, equipment and weapons; and acquiring survival skills.
- There are Christian groups who are encouraging believers to make preparations in order to survive the coming tribulation.
- While it is prudent for the Christian to be prepared for adversity (Proverbs 22:3), and to avoid unnecessary harm where possible, our main priority in these last days is to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15)
- There is a coming day of wrath upon this earth, the likes of which has never been seen before, but as we will see today, those who are Christ’s can take comfort in the fact that the Lord will keep His people from that hour.
- The content of the seven letters to the churches follows a standard pattern: description of Christ; commendation; criticism; exhortation; promise to the overcomers.
- Yet to the Philadelphians (as with the church in Smyrna), there is no word of criticism.
- They were a small church that God used mightily to spread the gospel (v.8)
- They faced persecution, yet endured it with patience (v.9)
- They laboured for a heavenly crown (v.11)
- It is to this church that Christ gives his longest and fullest description of Himself and which receives the lengthiest of promises.

Consider three great promises to the faithful Philadelphians...and to all true believers:

I. PRESERVATION FROM THE PERIOD OF GREAT TRIBULATION (10)

- A. This is a promise to all true believers that they will be kept from the great tribulation
 1. The testimony of the rest of Scripture shows that *all* who are in Christ will be caught up at the same time to meet the Lord in the air (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:16-17; 5:9)

2. True believers are those who persevere and keep Christ's word (Hebrews 3:14)
 3. It is a blessing designed to comfort the church (1 Thessalonians 4:18) with the blessed hope of Christ's coming (Titus 2:13) before God's wrath is poured out upon the earth
- B. This verse clearly teaches a pre-tribulation rapture
1. This "hour of temptation" refers to the great tribulation
 - a. It is *future*
 - b. It is *global*, not local
 - c. It is *finite* – the *hour*
 2. "Them that dwell upon the earth" is a technical term that always refers to unbelievers during the tribulation
 - a. They hate and persecute God's people (Revelation 6:10; 11:10)
 - b. They worship the beast (Revelation 13:8,12,14)
 - c. They are drunken with the wine of the great whore's fornication (Revelation 17:1-2)
 - d. God's curse is upon them (Revelation 8:13)
 3. The Christian is not of this world, but is a stranger and pilgrim on the earth (John 15:19; 17:14,16; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11)
 4. There are two main purposes of the tribulation
 - a. To prepare Israel for her Messiah
 - i. There is a particular focus on Israel in reference to the tribulation (Deuteronomy 4:30; Jeremiah 30:7; Ezekiel 20:37; Daniel 12:1; Zechariah 13:8-9; Matthew 24:9-26; Revelation 12:1-2,17)
 - ii. During the tribulation, the Jews will repent and believe in Christ (Zechariah 12:10; Romans 11:26; Revelation 7:1-8)
 - iii. Through their witness, multitudes of Gentiles will be saved (Revelation 7:9)
 - b. To pour out wrath and judgment upon unbelievers (Jeremiah 25:32-33; Isaiah 26:21; 2 Thessalonians 2:12)
 - i. The Greek word for "temptation" means to "try" or "test"

- ii. Such a test demonstrates the nature of a thing, rather than purifying its quality
 - iii. During the tribulation, the ungodly will be proven to be lovers of the world and sin, and haters of God, even blaspheming Him in response to His plagues (Revelation 16:8-11)
- 5. Christ promises to “keep thee from” this awful hour
 - a. It could not mean kept *through* or *within* the tribulation
 - i. The Philadelphian church did not go through the great tribulation
 - ii. The account of the tribulation recorded in the Revelation shows that multitudes of believers are martyred during the tribulation, and are not kept safe through it (Revelation 6:9-11; 7:9,14)
 - iii. The same phrase “keep from” is used by the Lord when He prayed the Father would “keep them from the evil” (John 17:15)
 - b. The believer is not only kept from the tribulation, but from the very *hour* or time period of it
- 6. The New Testament teaching is clear that the Rapture is imminent and *pretribulational* (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:13-18; 5:9)

II. GLORIFICATION AS PILLARS IN GOD’S TEMPLE (12)

A. Stability

- 1. The Philadelphian church on earth was dwarfed by the great pagan temples and the large Jewish synagogue in the city.
- 2. But they are promised a permanent place in God’s eternal temple in glory
- 3. On earth, church members are as “lively stones, built up a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5), but in heaven they are eminent pillars
- 4. Unlike the buildings of Philadelphia that were often shaken and destroyed by earthquakes, these pillars are established forever (1 Peter 1:4)
- 5. The *temple* here seems to indicate the New Jerusalem, which is the temple by virtue of the presence of God there (Revelation 21:22)

B. Security

- 1. “He shall go no more out”
- 2. Adam, through his sin, was banished from paradise (Genesis 3:23-24)
- 3. In glory, full communion between God and man will be restored, and there will be no more possibility of falling

4. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

III. IDENTIFICATION WITH THE PRIVILEGES OF GOD'S TENDERNESS (12)

A. They are the possession of God

1. God will not only permit redeemed sinners into heaven, He will *honour* them (John 12:26)
2. He "is not ashamed to be called their God" (Hebrews 11:16)

B. They are citizens of heaven

1. Our heavenly citizenship is presently known to us, but hidden to the world (Philippians 3:20)
2. On that day, it will be manifested to all (Revelation 22:14)

C. They have full communion with God

1. Christ's "new name" is presently incommunicable and known only to God
2. Though we presently know Him, and have union with him, it is only a partial knowledge (1 Corinthians 13:12)
3. In glory, His new name will be revealed and written upon His people, denoting His ownership of them, and perfect communion with them

CONCLUSION

1. The word 'keep' holds much comfort to the Christian:
 - He will keep the soul that trusts in Him (2 Timothy 1:12)
 - He keeps His people by His almighty power (1 Peter 1:5)
 - He is able to keep us from falling (Jude 24)
2. Are you an *earth-dweller* – is your heart and affections set on the things of this world? (1 John 2:15; James 4:4)
3. If so, then you are God's enemy, and certain judgment will come upon you, both in this life and the next.
4. Has your heart been made new by the regenerating Spirit of God so that you now hate those worldly things you once loved, and now love those heavenly things you once hated?
5. Most seek their glory, wealth and fame in this brief life, in this passing world, then leave it all to suffer everlasting contempt in hell.
6. The Philadelphians were content to suffer in this life and wait for the glory of the next, in the same way Moses chose rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:24-26)