

Hour of Testing

How do you, as post-tribulationists, respond to the fact that Believers are spared from “the hour of testing,” i.e., the Tribulation period?

A popular reference used to support the premise that Believers are removed from Earth before the Tribulation period comes from Revelation 3:10, where Yeshua the Messiah promises to spare those of the congregation or assembly of Philadelphia from the hour of testing:

“Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth” (ESV).

What is automatically assumed by most pre-tribulationists is that the congregation of Philadelphia comprises all Believers and that the “hour of testing” (NASU) is the Tribulation period. This is a major hermeneutical problem. It is not appropriate to assume that all Believers in Yeshua classify as being “Philadelphian,” and furthermore that the “hour of testing” or “hour of trial” is the Tribulation period.

If we look at only a surface examination of who the Philadelphian Believers are, the Greek *Philadelphieia* (Φιλαδέλφεια)—the name of a city in First Century Asia Minor—means “*brotherly love*” (LS),¹ a key indicator of one of the characteristics that these people have. Revelation 3:10 says that the Philadelphians “have kept the word of My perseverance” (NASU). *Hupomonē* (ὑπομονή) is “*a holding out, patient endurance*” (LS).² Yeshua issues a “command to endure” (HCSB) to the Philadelphians. Persevering in one’s faith is not only remaining true to the teachings and commands of Scripture, but also regards how one *patiently waits* for the arrival of the Messiah.

Many people are *overanxious* in regard to the return of Yeshua and are not following the admonition of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, which says not to be disturbed in regard to the coming of the Lord. Through the advent of prophecy fiction books such as *Left Behind* and with pre-tribulationism *indeed being promoted to an extreme*, many people are not *patiently waiting* for the Messiah’s return. Many are literally sitting on the edge of their seats *waiting for an any-moment escape*. Equally so, there are post-tribulationists preparing for the worst, storing up food, guns and ammunition, literally *chomping at the bit for the Great Tribulation to begin*. Are such people—in both categories—*waiting patiently* for the Messiah’s return?

Those who belong to the true Philadelphian assembly have both *brotherly love* and are patient in regard to Yeshua’s coming. They are patient because they are secure in the work of God’s Kingdom on Planet Earth. *Not all who claim to have faith in the Messiah would classify as being “Philadelphian.”* This is only a specific category of people.

The Greek word translated “testing” or “trial” in Revelation 3:10 is *peirasmos* (πειρασμός), which can be indicative of “the temptation by which the devil sought to divert Jesus the Messiah from his divine errand” (Thayer).³ TDNT adds to this, “Rev. 3:10 promises deliverance in the final hour of trial.”⁴ The Messiah further tells those of the Philadelphian assembly, “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and 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 My new name” (Revelation 3:12, NASU).

The testing that those of Philadelphia are preserved from is what will deter them from their calling: **to persevere**. In Matthew 4:1-11, Satan tempts Yeshua three times and the Lord responds to him with Holy Scripture. Had Yeshua worshipped the Devil, He would have been made king of the world, *but would not have fulfilled His destiny as the Divine Redeemer*. In a similar manner, we must prevail and have faith in Him—*patiently*

¹ LS, 861.

² Ibid., 845.

³ Thayer, 498.

⁴ H. Sessemann, “test, attempt,” 823.

waiting for His return. Many in the Tribulation period will be forced to either worship Satan or be martyred, and it is this form of “testing” that we believe the Philadelphian Believers are spared from. They will be preserved from the testing to fall away. And, we would eagerly point out that *this does not include everyone.* Only a certain segment, who God knows and specially calls out, will be spared from this temptation.