# The Will To Overcome — Delivery Transcript

**Revelation 3:7–13 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, June 6, 2021** · *We Will Overcome*

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Thanks to the band for leading us in worship. If you want to take your Bible and open it up to Revelation chapter 3, we're going to be in verses 7 to 13 this morning. If you're just joining us, you picked the best Sunday to come to church because we're finishing up a series, so you kind of get the benefit of getting all the six sermons before this and the seventh one at the same time. So I commend you for your, you know, wisdom in picking when to come to church. If you haven't been with us, these churches that we've been looking at are not just kind of historical artifacts and interesting tidbits of historical information.

The problems that the church has faced are the same kind of problems that the church faces today. And the solutions that Jesus gives are solutions that are totally applicable to the kinds of difficulties that we face as a local church, specifically Broadview Baptist Church. And so we've been applying Jesus' words to these churches to our own context. The illustration that I think is helpful is that of Doppler radar. Have you guys ever heard the phrase or of the technology Doppler radar? Maybe if you've been watching KTXS, they always talk about their KTXS Doppler radar telling you the weather that's coming your way.

We're glad that we have a Doppler radar over at KTXS because what it does is it sends a signal into the air. I guess it's like microwave signals, I'm not quite sure. And the signals that are sent from the sender unit measure what they interact with in the ether out there, the air. They feel the wind resistance, they feel precipitation, they feel wind gusts that maybe you can't see with the naked eye, and they relay that information back to the receiver. And then that receiver compiles the data and tells the interested party what's going on in the air.

Now obviously we like it to keep ourselves from getting hit by tornadoes or crazy thunderstorms so we can get down in our bunker. Although I'm not a big fan of the bunker, I'm almost just taking my chances with the tornado than get down in a scary deep hole. But it's not just for stuff like that. Pilots actually use this to successfully land their planes and to

fly their planes so they don't get kind of stuck up in a wind shear or wind gust and crash and burn and all that stuff.

So here's the thing. This signal is able to see things that the human naked eye cannot see, and in a similar way, Jesus is kind of acting as a spiritual Doppler radar for these churches. He is in a position to see things that they cannot see, to know things that they cannot know, and he relays that information to them and says, You may not be able to see this, but I see this, and unless you change, or until you act on the information that I'm giving to you, you're inviting active destruction on your congregation.

So repent and do these things that Jesus tells these churches to do. Now some of the letters were encouraging and helpful and kind and stuff like that. Other letters that Jesus wrote were full of warning and rebuke and condemnation, and those were not so pleasant. We're going to end on a positive note as we look at the letter to the church at Philadelphia. But before we do that, I just want to give you a quick bird's-eye review of all the churches, because the common theme of every church is this invitation from Jesus for them to overcome.

The message is to the victors, to those who overcome the challenges that you're facing, Jesus gives these promised rewards of the kingdom and eternal life. The first church was the church at Ephesus. Their calling was to overcome a displaced love. They had lost their first love for Jesus, kind of like in marriage, how you can start out with this kind of deep affection and infatuation, but then you live life long enough, all these other things come into your orbit and you lose that prioritized love for your spouse. This kind of thing happens spiritually at the church in Ephesus.

Jesus says you need to reclaim it and overcome that displaced love. In Smyrna they had to overcome persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ. The Jewish synagogue in that town had used things like gossip and slander to solicit persecution from the Roman government on the Christians. Jesus tells them to stand fast. It's going to get worse, but stand strong and you will overcome persecution. In Pergamon they had to overcome spiritual compromise. This was an attitude or an idea that was in the church that basically said, you can have your cake and eat it too.

You can worship God on Sundays, live however you want, Monday through Friday. Yes, you can worship Jesus, but He doesn't care what you do with your sex life or what you put into your body. It was the doctrine of Balaam or Balak. You guys might have remembered that. If not, you can go back and watch it. But they had to overcome that spiritual compromise in their church. In a similar fashion, the church at Thyatira had to overcome not compromise, but misguided tolerance. And the tolerance was there was an attitude in the world of if you're going to be part of our society, if you're going to participate in our economy, you've got to worship these pagan deities.

That kind of pagan idolatry had infiltrated into the church through this woman Jezebel, whose real name might not have been Jezebel, but it was basically this person who was teaching a doctrine that you're not very loving if you don't tolerate this erroneous lifestyle and this erroneous approach to spirituality. Who are you to say you're right and they're wrong? And Jesus says, no, you may not want to, it may not feel right, but if you don't confront this idolatry in the church, you're going to lose your church, so overcome misguided tolerance.

Then the last two churches we looked at was the church at Sardis and the church at Laodicea, both of them very similar in the sense that they were wealthy, they were strong, they had a good reputation in their community. But with Sardis, even though they had the reputation of being alive, Jesus says, you're actually spiritually deader than a doornail. You're resting on your laurels, you're resting on your past successes, you're resting on your reputation in the community, but when I see you, I see a dead church. And so they had to overcome this arrogance that they had kind of been lulled to sleep by, and with Laodicea they had become spiritually apathetic.

Jesus says you're neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other. This is Jesus' way of saying, I wish you were spiritually good for something, but you have disengaged, you're going through the motions. Sure, you come to church on Sunday. Sure, you sing the songs, you put the check in the box, but your heart is far from me. You don't really love me like you used to love me. Very similar to Ephesus. And so they had to overcome that apathetic spirit in order to receive the promised reward.

The last church is actually the sixth church. The last church we're looking at is really number six in the sequence in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, but I wanted to close with Philadelphia because it is one of two churches that doesn't get any negative rebuke from the Lord, it's all glowing, it's all positive. And I think this church gives us actually a template for how we can be a church that possesses the will to overcome. This is a church that gives us a template for what it looks like to be faithful to Jesus Christ no matter what challenges may come your way, no matter how hard it may be in the moment.

This church possesses the tools and really embodies the mindset and the spirituality that enables them to overcome anything that may come their way. And so I want us to close on this positive note as we ourselves strive to be a church that overcomes. So let's read starting in verse 7, Revelation chapter 3. Write to the angel of the church in Philadelphia: Thus says the Holy One, the true one, and the one who has the key of David, who opens and no one will close, and who closes and no one opens.

I know your works. Look, I've placed before you an open door that no one can close because you have but little power. Yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. Note this. I will make those from the synagogue of Satan who claim to be Jews and are not, but

are lying, I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and they will know that I've loved you. Because you have kept my commandment to endure, I will also keep you from the hour of testing or the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world.

To test those who live on the earth. I am coming soon, so hold on to what you have so that no one takes your crown. To the one who conquers I will make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will never go out again. 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 then I'll write on him my new name. Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.

And God's people said amen. Electricity's broken. All right, so this letter, like I said, is a very encouraging letter, and I want to spend most of our time this morning, unlike what we've done in the past, on this introduction by Jesus to the church. One of the reasons that I felt like the Lord wanted us to study the book of Revelation as a church, and one of the reasons that we've been focusing on these churches in particular each one individually instead of one sermon to overlook all of them, is because I am convinced that for us to experience revival personally and corporately as a congregation, it's going to require us receiving a fresh vision of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Everywhere you look in the Bible where people encounter the Lord in fresh ways, they experience this renewed vision of the glory of God and the exaltation of Jesus Christ. And each church, Jesus essentially does this based on what the church is going through. And so if we want to be a church that overcomes, we've got to see the Lord Jesus Christ as He reveals Himself to this church. Because this was a church who overcame, and they overcame in large measure because they were able to see the Lord in this particular way.

Now Jesus gives a fourfold description in this church. Unlike the other churches, he really elaborates on who he is and what he's about. Some of the descriptions are self-explanatory, like He introduces himself as the Holy One and the true One. That's the Greek word hagios, which just means set apart in a class of his own. The word holy doesn't just mean morally blameless, it means to be different, one of a kind. And he says, not only am I different and one of a kind, I'm also true, meaning I'm authentic, I'm the real deal.

I'm not the generic. I'm not the knockoff. I'm someone who can be relied upon. I'm someone who you can depend on no matter what it is that you're going through. And then he shifts from those basic descriptions to a very specific picture or metaphor of being the one who holds the key of David and the one who opens doors that no one can shut and shuts doors that no one can open. So I want you to picture Jesus seated in heaven with this key of David. And if that phrase doesn't ring a bell, that's not a surprise because it's not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible other than one passage in Isaiah chapter 22, where essentially the proper— the one who should inherit the inheritance receives the key.

And the idea is that the only one who possesses the key is the one who is the rightful heir to David's wealth. And in the Old Testament David was the king of kings. He was like Israel's greatest king, the greatest inheritance, the greatest wealth, the greatest gold, the greatest all that. So Jesus is essentially saying, no, I'm the true king of kings, I'm the true rightful heir, I'm the ultimate one with access and rights to the authority of heaven because my kingdom is not just some geographical kingdom on earth like Israel.

My kingdom spans the whole world. It is the kingdom of God. It is the rule and reign of the Lordship of Christ in the hearts of man and eventually the literal physical earth when the new Jerusalem comes down. And so this is, I think, Jesus' way of saying, if you need heaven's resources in your life, you need the wisdom from heaven, You need a breakthrough that only God can bring about in your life. I'm your Huckleberry, right? I'm the one who possesses those things. I am the one who possesses the key of David.

And it wasn't just access either. Keys meant authority. Jesus in the Great Commission said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. And so you need it. I've got it. Come to me for what you need. This is in your notes. This is Jesus' way of saying all of heaven's resources are located in the Lord. Then this last phrase, which I think is most fascinating. This idea that Jesus is the one who opens and closes doors. He says, when I open a door, it doesn't matter who else tries to close it, the door is going to stay open.

And when I close a door, it doesn't matter who else tries to open it. It's going to stay closed because I possess this key. Which by the way, that key was not like a little Kwikset key that you open your door with. Imagine a big wooden national treasure kind of key. You guys ever seen the movie National Treasure? With the terrible actor, Nicolas Cage. He's so bad. But he has to like figure out the codes and the secrets to, you know, change the gears and crack the puzzle to open the big mysteries.

That's the kind of key that Jesus has here. So this idea that if you don't possess what he possesses and the way that he possesses it, then you don't have a chance of opening the door. So what's the door? Well, the easiest explanation of the door is access to heaven. It's salvation, it's a relationship with God, it's the forgiveness of sin. It's the whole salvation enterprise. So Jesus gives us access to that. You can't get into heaven except through the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter who you are. And once you're in heaven, it don't matter what you do, what somebody else does, no matter how far from grace you may fall, he keeps you protected in the palm of his hands, because once he shuts the door, nobody else is going to open it.

So it applies to that, but I don't think it just applies to that because of what Jesus says to this particular church when he says, I'm opening a door of opportunity for you individually. So it's not just a door of salvation. I think it's a door of opportunity. And I think we need to think about this picture of Jesus for our lives individually and for our lives collectively as a

church. The mental image I always think of is that of a prison door. Have any of you ever been to prison?

Hopefully to visit, but if not, that's fine. I mean there's no judgment here. Some of you've been to prison because you were going to stay. When you go to prison to visit or to stay, they have these pods, right? And each pod typically there's somebody who is determining access or lack of access to the pod based on what they see. They're usually in an elevated position and they're looking about what's going on or there's fights or there's some kind of potential threats, so that I shouldn't let this person in or this guard in?

Do we need to lock it down? Or is it safe and we can open it up? Okay? So it doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter how hard you kick, how loud you scream. You can throw a hissy fit all you want. If that person who's seated in that position of authority doesn't see what he needs to see to give you access that you're wanting, it ain't happening. And that's the picture of Jesus in this text. He is in a position of elevated authority. He sees things that we cannot see.

He has a perspective that we don't necessarily have. And he is only opening the door if he chooses that it would be best for you. If he opens the door. Otherwise he's going to leave that door closed. Now how different would your life be spiritually, emotionally, relationally? How different would your life be if you actually believe that about the Lord Jesus Christ? That he was the one who made opportunities happen and caused opportunities to close. I think it would prevent a lot of heartache. It would cause a lot of anxieties to cease in our hearts.

It would create a great deal of confidence when we felt like God was opening a door of opportunity, we would run through that door with great optimism, regardless of the naysayers, regardless of how many things could possibly go wrong. If we knew God was opening the door, we would move through it with confidence because we know He sees things that nobody else can see and He wouldn't open it if it wasn't for our good. And then we would be a lot more cautious when we were trying to force open a door that we were clear that God had closed for a reason, but because of our selfishness or rebellion, we were going to push it through anyway.

It would change the game of the way that we think about acting on opportunities for the kingdom of God. I don't think we'd manipulate people nearly as much. We wouldn't try to force things to happen, like forcing a square peg into a round hole. There's a tendency for Christians sometimes to pursue righteous goals in unrighteous ways. Have you ever done this? Well the goal was good. I was trying to honor the Lord in my marriage. I was trying to help my child or help my family member grow in the Lord and or be protected or whatever the case may be, but you pursued that righteous goal in unrighteous ways.

You cheated here, you skirted the edges there, you were a little bit less than Christian in your attitudes and actions there, you wouldn't be nearly as prone to use unrighteous methods to pursue righteous goals if you believe God is the one who opens the door, that Jesus is the one who opens and closes the doors. You wouldn't question God's wisdom when he shuts a door. You wouldn't think to yourself, well I guess he doesn't love me, or I guess I'm not good enough. Or I guess I'm not worthy, you would just realize, no, he sees things I can't see.

He knows things I can't know, and so I'm going to trust him. And then some of us, maybe, if we believe this about the Lord, we wouldn't be talking to everybody else about our problems, and we wouldn't be trying to rally everybody else to mobilize to our— what do you call it— your camp, your kind of partisan agenda, so let's get everybody on my team so that we can push this issue and push it over the edge if we really believed God was the one, or Jesus was the one, who opens the doors, then we would pray as if he's the only one who could actually open the doors.

It would revolutionize our prayer life, change our relationships if we really believed Jesus was the one who opens the door. And so when we talk about getting a fresh vision of Jesus Christ, personal renewal, personal revival in our church. We need to see him and worship him as the one who is holy, set apart, authentic, and true. Possessing the key of David, not just for our salvation, but for anything good that happens to us as it relates to the kingdom of God. And who, when he opens the door, no matter the resistance, it's going to stay open.

And who when he closes the door, no matter how badly you want it, how good intentions you may have be, you're not going to get the door open when he has shut it. Then he goes on in verse 8, I know your works. In other words, I know you better than you know yourself. And you need to know, I have placed before you an open door. I've given you an open door so that nobody can close it. Why? Because you have but little power, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

That's why I think Jesus doesn't just mean a door of salvation, but a door of opportunity. And he's talking to this specific church who, in the words of Jesus, has a little bit of power. I take that to mean they didn't have a big attendance. Maybe they didn't have big impressive buildings. They didn't have a lot of money. Maybe they were having to wait for the preacher to cash his check until Monday when all the tithes could get submitted into the bank. You know, they didn't have a lot of resources and power, but Jesus says it's because of that fact that I'm going to bless you.

Now what does that mean? Does Jesus bless weakness just for the sake of weakness? Is it wrong to be wealthy and powerful and self-sufficient in those ways? Not necessarily, but I think what this church had learned is because we don't have any resources in and of ourselves, we have learned to be totally and completely dependent on the Lord for everything. And that's why Jesus says, you did not deny my name, and you have kept my

word. And because of your poverty of spirit, because of your humility and dependency, I'm going to open up this door of opportunity.

Now what was that opportunity? It doesn't really say in the text, but my theory is Jesus was going to use this church as a strategic outpost for evangelism because this city, the city of Philadelphia, was created to be a strategic outpost for a process known as Hellenization. Anyone ever heard that phrase? It's kind of a scholarly word that basically means they were an evangelist for Greek culture. They wanted the surrounding towns, which were not part of the Roman Empire, but they wanted them to learn to speak the Greek language, to think Greek thinking, they wanted them to sing Greek songs, to love Greek culture, to embrace the Greek worldview.

This city was a strategic outpost for Greekifying their counterparts or the surrounding cities. And I think what Jesus is saying is you're not just going to be a city that's a strategic outpost for Hellenization. You're going to be a strategic outpost for the evangelization of the rest of the world. And you may think to yourself, well, we don't have any money and we don't have any potential, we don't have the resources to be that kind of church. And Jesus is saying, it doesn't matter because I have the resources, I have the money, I'll create the opportunity, so don't you worry your little heads.

I'm going to open a door of opportunity and use you, use your church in ways that you cannot even imagine. Why? Because you have little strength. Because he uses the word because. In other words, the cause, the thing that invites the open door in our life as a Christian is not skills, it's not talents, it's not abilities, it's not some impressive spiritual resume. The thing that invites the blessing of God on your life and my life in our church is humility and dependency on the Lord. It's weakness. It's an awareness that I'm weak, but he is strong.

I can't but he can. In the kingdom of God, an open door of opportunity isn't given because of impressive talents or abilities. It's given because of personal humility and absolute dependency on the Lord. And this is the principle I so desperately want our church to learn. And the principle that I'm trying to learn more and more of in my own life. And this is the mindset that until and unless we embrace it as a congregation, we will not move forward into what the Lord has for us in the future. We cannot be a church who finds our worth or our value or our potential in external material things.

We can't rest on the laurels of the past. We can't rest on our reputation in the city. The other churches had that. Remember, Sardis had a reputation for being alive, but they were dead. Laodicea, they had money, they had all that they needed to have materially and physically. But Jesus says, no, you need to buy from me gold, me clothing— buy from me the things that you need spiritually, because you may be physically rich, but you're spiritually bankrupt. This is the message of the Lord, I believe, to the church that overcomes.

You want to be a church that's faithful, you want to be a church that perseveres no matter what, then stop resting in your own strength. Stop leaning on your own power and your own understanding and lean on me. It's not by strength. It's not by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty. One of the verses that my mom used to put on the refrigerator to pray for us, it'd have your name on it, whatever your card was. And so I think it's kind of like my mom's way of drive-by guilting.

Anybody have a mom do that before? Like, I know what you're doing, boy, but I can't prove it. But God told me. And so I'm praying that you'll get busted and repent, which happened from time to time. But one of the verses that she had when I got a little bit older in life was Jeremiah chapter 9, verses 23 and 24. This is what that verse says. I think it applies specifically or perfectly to what Jesus is telling this church in Philadelphia. It says, This is what the Lord says: The wise person should not boast in his wisdom.

The strong person should not boast in his strength. The wealthy person should not boast in his wealth. Now is there anything wrong with being wise? Of course not. Anything wrong with being strong? No. Anything wrong with being wealthy? Absolutely not. But you shouldn't boast in it. Don't boast in your wisdom. Don't boast in your strength. Don't boast in your wealth. The one who boasts should boast in this: that he understands and knows me. That I'm the Lord showing faithful love, justice, and righteousness on the earth, for I delight in these things.

If you want to get the keys of God into your life, you want God to give an open door of opportunity for your family, for our church, the way up in the kingdom of God is down. It's the way through is by embracing a poverty of spirit, humility, dependency on the Lord. In fact, the wealthier you are, the stronger you are. It's actually a spiritual liability, not because wealth and strength and power are bad or evil. It's just that wealth and power and strength are a temptation to trust in yourself.

And that temptation is a spiritual liability if you fall prey to it. This is why Jesus throughout the New Testament said, no, embrace the poverty of spirit. My kingdom is antithetical to the kingdom of this world. My values are upside down from the values of this world. So they got that. This church understood, if God is going to use us powerfully, if we are going to endure, it's not going to be through our pulling ourselves up by our spiritual bootstraps. It's going to be by resting in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's the vine. We're the branches. Apart from him, we can't do anything. And so we're going to abide in the Lord. In addition to their humility and dependency, the one other thing that this church, I think, captured and the reason that they were able to overcome is because of a spirit of patient endurance. Patience and perseverance. This church embodied it. You see this when Jesus says you've got these so-called Jews who are persecuting you, and we know

from Smyrna that the way that the Jewish synagogue there brought about persecution is that they misrepresented what the Christians believed.

And their unwillingness to worship Caesar as God, they kind of use that refusal to worship Caesar as a way to invite physical persecution and eventually martyrdom and death because of the way that they phrased it. They said these Christians are a threat, they're the true threat to Rome. It's not us, it's them. And this church persevered patiently through that tribulation. It reminds me, as you think about doing ministry or living for the Lord, of an individual by the name of William Carey. Has anybody ever heard that name before? He was actually a missionary in Kolkata, India.

And I've actually been able to visit William Carey's college in Kolkata when we went over there to explore engaging an unengaged and unreached people group. And I remember being in his college and there was this big bust— or is that what they call them, a bust?— of like a physical representation of William Carey, and it had my favorite slogan of his down on the bottom of the bust which said, attempt great things for God and expect great things from God. Or maybe it's vice versa. Expect great things from God and attempt great things for God.

And attempt he did. He tried to raise money to go to Kolkata, but he couldn't get any of his home churches to sponsor him for missionary activity. They said basically if God wants to save the heathen, then let God save the heathen. What does it concern us? And so William Carey said, well, goodbye to you fools. I'm going to go do what the Lord's called me to do. He goes to Kolkata. He has no money, so he starts working for a factory. He doesn't know the language, so he learns it.

When he's not working in the factory at a subsistence level to provide basic food and shelter for his family, he's outside knocking on doors, doing evangelism trying to share the gospel, and it is slow, slow going. Not one single convert. Years go by years of preaching and evangelism, not one person comes to faith in Jesus Christ. And so he starts to work on Bible translation. The first thing he did was translate the Bible from English to Bengalese because in West Bengal, that's what they speak, is Bengali. And after he translated into Bengalese, he translated it into 35 different languages.

It's unbelievable. When I was in that college, I was standing in the room where William Carey would walk up and down each aisle. And he would quote a passage like John 1 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And he would quote it in Bengalese on one aisle, then he'd go to the next aisle, and he'd speak it in Oriya, or Orissa, then he'd go to the next aisle and speak it in another dialect of that culture and he did that day after day, hour after hour.

For years until he translated the Bible into 35 different languages, all the while continuing to do evangelism and church planting. And finally upon his homegoing— he finally died— one of his friends wrote him a letter because a church had been planted. There was finally a gospel witness, a gospel witness that's continuing to expand today on which we're actually participating. His friend wrote him and said, what a remarkable life that you have lived. And he wrote back to his friend, there is nothing remarkable in what I've done. It has only required patience and perseverance.

And I wish every Christian would receive that word. The Christian life is not like the stock market. You don't get all your wins in one fell swoop. It is day by day, repentance and faith, day after day, patience and perseverance. As one of my mentors used to say, most pastors vastly overestimate what they can do in one to two years, which is true, but they vastly underestimate what they can do in 10 to 15 years, because with steadiness and perseverance and patience, standing strong against temptation, remaining faithful to Jesus Christ, you will be amazed at what God will be able to do through your life with that continued faithfulness, long obedience in the same direction.

That's the way Jesus encourages this church, and then he closes with the promise in verse 10. Because you've kept my commandment to endure, in other words, because you've endured like I've endured, you've been patient, I will also keep you from the hour of testing that is going to come. Where does it come? It's going to come on the whole world to test those who live on the earth. I am coming soon, so hold on to what you have so that no one takes your crown. Now we don't have time to get into this, but this is a controversial text because the tribulation that's going to come on this church does not seem like it's a localized tribulation, and it doesn't seem like it's tribulation in general.

According to Jesus, it's an hour of testing, it's a defined period of time that's going to come on the whole world. So what is a tribulation that comes on the whole world for a defined period of time? Well, in the book of Revelation, that is the great Tribulation. That's the granddaddy tribulation. It's the big Mama Tribulation. It's the tribulation that has not been seen up to this point and will never be seen again, to use Jesus' words in Matthew 24. And so for this, it's for this reason that I think the church in Philadelphia actually represents an end times church, a church that experiences the rise of the Antichrist and the persecution of the saints and the seal judgments and trumpet judgments and bowl judgments that we're all going to look at as we go through the book of Revelation later on.

But if that's what it's talking about, and I think it is, on whom does that tribulation fall? He says it falls, it tests the people of the earth, which is a catchphrase in the book of Revelation. It's not just saying everybody who's on the earth at that time. This is a particular group of people who are materialistic, hedonistic, atheistic. They are the opposite of God's people.

Okay, you've got God's people, the kingdom of God, then you have the people of the earth. And so if you're not a part of the people of God, you're part of the people of the earth.

And this great tribulation comes to test those people, to test their worldview, to see if you really want to stick with that way of looking at things. And then Jesus says, when that tribulation comes, you need to know as God's people, I'm going to protect you. I'm going to protect you. Now the debate is, how does he do that? And there are some Christians who believe in what's called a pre-tribulational rapture, which says the way God's going to protect us from the great tribulation is he's going to take us up out of the earth and we're going to go up to heaven.

You maybe have read books like the Left Behind series, which were very popular that communicated that idea. There's biblical warrant for a rapture in like Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. When Christ comes, we'll be caught up together with them in the clouds. And so some take this protection to be that. But it doesn't necessarily have to be read that way. In fact, there is nothing in this text that says we're going to be protected through a rapture. It's just that we're going to be protected. The Greek word is tēreō ek.

I'm going to keep you from. And that phrase there, tēreō ek, is used one other time in the New Testament, and it's in John's Gospel, in John chapter 17, verse 15. And in John 17, 15, Jesus says, my prayer is not that you would take them out of the world. Remember he's praying to his father. I should have that verse in there, John 15— John 17:15. My prayer is not that you would take them out of the world, but that you would keep them from the evil one. Same Greek phrase, tēreō ek.

So in John's gospel, it wasn't a rapture out of the world, but it was a preservation in the trials and tribulation that was falling on the world. Just like in the Exodus. You guys remember the Charlton Heston movie, The Ten Commandments?[1] When the plagues would come, the locust plague would come, it would affect the Egyptians, but it didn't affect the people of God. When the water turned to blood, it affected the Egyptians, but it didn't affect the people of God. When the death angel came through and killed the firstborn of everybody, it affected the Egyptians, but it didn't affect the people of God who took the blood of the Lamb and put it on their doorposts.

It passed over those people. And so perhaps Jesus is saying, I'm going to protect you by preserving you within the tribulation as it falls. It will affect them, but it will not affect you. Whichever way you take it, the point is, Jesus is going to protect us in that time period. So if we'll remain faithful to him, he will remain faithful to us. Verse 12, to the one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will never go out again. 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 then I'll write on him my new name.

Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. Again, I don't have time to get into all of those references. He's referencing things that are going to happen later on in the book of Revelation. At the end of the age, when heaven comes out of the skies, very interesting concepts. But his main point is because you've remained faithful to me, I'm going to remain faithful to you. And I know you don't feel like I'm remaining faithful to you right now. I know you feel like your world is crumbling.

You feel like you're crumbling, but know this, because you are mine and I am yours, on that day I'm going to make you a pillar. You will be firm, steady, and sure. You may feel like an alien and sojourner in this world. You may feel like you're crazy or everybody else is crazy, but I don't see things the way the rest of the world sees things. And he's saying, you may feel like a stranger and an alien now. But on that day, there's a new heaven, there's a new city coming from heaven.

It's the new Jerusalem, and that's your true home. That's the— your citizenship belongs to that country, not this country. That's the final destination for you, and on that day you will no longer feel like a sojourner, you will no longer feel like a crazy person, you'll no longer feel like an alien because you will belong to the new Jerusalem and you may feel lost and confused on who you are. You may feel like you're in an identity crisis. You don't know what you value or how to get value. You've tried to find value and significance in sex and money and power and all of these things but on that day you will realize you are valuable because you are mine and I'm going to write my name on your head.

And I'm going to write the name of my God on your head, and you're going to know you're his and he is yours, and on that day, they're going to know that he loves you and these people who are persecuting you and saying all kinds of false things against you and making your life miserable right now, on that day they're going to bow down at your feet and they're going to see I love you because you are mine and I am yours. And so hold on. Don't lose heart. Persevere. Hold on to Jesus and you will overcome.

So how do we become a church that has the mindset, the spiritual grit to overcome whatever comes our way. It's through a humility, an absolute, total dependency on the Lord. Patient perseverance and a commitment to be faithful to him because he has been faithful to us. He's already demonstrated his faithfulness on the cross, his resurrection from the grave. And he is promising an even greater faithfulness when he comes again. And so fix that day in your mind and hold on to Jesus until that day comes and we will overcome. And we will overcome because he has overcome.

I want to respond to the Lord, and the way I want to do that is I'm going to invite Taylor to come back up and we're going to stand and respond. I know we don't always do that, but in light of this series, I want us to end this chapter with solidarity with one another and a confidence in the Lord that we can stand. Because we are strengthened in the Lord's

strength. If there's an issue you want to pray about, the altar's open. I'll be here to pray with anybody who wants to pray.

If you're here and you're not a Christian and you want to give your life to Christ for the first time, maybe you're watching online and you want to respond to the Lord in that way, then you do that now. As the Lord leads, I'll be here to receive you. But let's bow our heads and—

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "the Charleston Hessen movie, the Exodus"; the Charlton Heston film that dramatizes the plagues and the Passover is The Ten Commandments (1956), directed by Cecil B. DeMille, in which Heston plays Moses. Source: Wikipedia, "The Ten Commandments (1956 film)." ↩