

***A Revolutionary View of Revelation 3:10 and the Rapture:
Escaping the Traps of the Partial-Rapture and of Dispensational-Perseverantist Views¹***

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Introduction:

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

Views:

Pre-Tribulation Rapture: All Church-Age believers will be raptured.

Partial Rapture: Only Church-Age believers who persevere will be raptured.

Dispensational-Perseverantist: All Church-Age believers will be raptured, but only those who persevere to the end are truly believers.

A trend started by the King James Version:

The King James Version translators seem to have viewed individual verses in their Greek text as individual sentences (contrary to the punctuation in the printed Greek text they used).

Every KJV verse starts with a capital and they try to end verses with final punctuation.

If (1) Revelation 3:10 starts a sentence, and if (2) its first word (*hoti*) should be translated “Because,” the grammar would be highly unusual. Only about ten sentences in the New Testament would match this grammar. On the other hand, if (1) verse 9 were to end in a comma, and (2) the first word in verse 10 (*hoti*) were translated “because,” there are almost 400 sentences that match this grammar. I knew that (1) the sometimes artificially began new sentences at verse breaks, and (2) that this created odd grammar for Revelation 3:10. Therefore, I experimented with ending verse 9 with a comma:

Indeed, I will grant [that] those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Judeans and are not but lie—behold, I will make them know that I have loved you, because you have kept My word to persevere. And I will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole inhabited [↑] world, to test the earth-dwellers (Rev 3:10: JHN)

The repunctuated text made sense, but it is important that we examine exactly what is involved. This will also show why it is rare to start sentences with capitalized “Because.” The sixty-four dollar word for doing that in English (or the Greek equivalent) is to make a “suspensive sentence.” Other than “If. . .

¹ This is a revision and condensation of John H. Niemelä, “For You Have Kept My Word,” Part 1: *CTSJ* 6 (Jan 2000): 14-38; Part 2: *CTSJ* 6 (Oct 2000): 52-68.

then. . ." statements (rather than "Then. . . if. . ." ones), suspensives are rare both in English and Greek. ["If. . . then. . ." is suspensive, because the dependent clause precedes the independent clause.]

Leaving behind technical terms, let us imagine that we encountered an ancient English manuscript. It was written all in capital letters and lacked punctuation, like early NT manuscripts. It read:

I ATE BREAKFAST
BECAUSE I WAS HUNGRY
I ALSO ATE AN EARLY LUNCH

Note that one could punctuate and capitalize this in two distinct ways, just as one could handle Revelation 3:9b-10 in two ways:

- (1) I ate breakfast, because I was hungry. I also ate an early lunch.
- (2) I ate breakfast. Because I was hungry, I also ate an early lunch.

Did the writer wish to explain why he ate breakfast? Or, did he seek to say why he ate an early lunch? Transferring this to Revelation 3:9b-10 yields:

I WILL MAKE THEM KNOW THAT I HAVE LOVED YOU
BECAUSE YOU HAVE KEPT MY WORD TO PERSEVERE
AND I WILL KEEP YOU FROM THE HOUR

The issue is whether Jesus Christ seeks to explain:

- (1) why He will make the synagogue of Satan know that He loved the Philadelphians, or
- (2) why He plans that the Philadelphians will not enter the hour.

If this were my only argument, I could say, "The New Testament uses *hoti* (because) in the way that view 1 interprets it about 400 times, but in the way that view 2 interprets it (Because) only ten times. That evidence favors view 1, but does not disprove view 2. What other evidence exists?"

View 1 reinforces the phrase "because you have kept My word" (verse 8)

Within verse 8b, the following appears:

I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for. . . you have kept My word.

The open door represents opportunity for ministry. The Lord has opened this door, because (despite having only a little strength) they have kept His word and did not deny His name. This leads logically to what He says in 9b-10a:

I will make them know that I have loved you, because you have kept My word to persevere.

Note that the phrase, "you have kept My word," appears both in verse 8 and in verse 9. The first time, He does not say "to persevere," but note the following phrase: you "have not denied My name."

Not denying His name, but continuing to obey His word is another way of saying that they persevered. They kept His word to persevere. View 1 sees the Lord vindicating them because they kept His word. That reinforces the words repeated from verse 8:

View 1:

The Lord gives ministry opportunity [despite opposition], because they kept His word (3:8b), and The Lord will vindicate them before their persecutors, because they kept His word.

View 2:

The Lord gives ministry opportunity [despite opposition], because they kept His word (3:8b), and He will not let them enter the Tribulation, because they kept His word.

View 1 has the advantage of continuing the line of thought from verse 8.

View 1 makes sense of the *kagō* (and I) in Revelation 3:10b

The New King James translation of Revelation 3:10 is fairly standard. The words rendering *kagō* are underlined for clarity:

“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.”

Kai (and) normally connects like-elements (two nouns, two verbs, two independent clauses, two dependent clauses, etc. Almost never does it connect an independent clause (like Revelation 3:10b) with a dependent one (like 10a). Such a usage here for view 2 would be quite unexpected.

A simpler solution exists under view 1. Here the *kai* (and) links the series of first person verbs that started in 3:8 and continues through verse 10:

- (1) I know your works (8a),
- (2) I have set before you an open door. . . (8b),
- (3) I will grant for those of the synagogue of Satan. . . (9a),
- (4) I will make them . . . know. . . (9b),
- (5) and I will keep you from the hour. . . (10b).

In other words, the connection between 1-4 is a comma (in English), but the connection between the fourth and fifth is an *and*. This is in keeping with normal usage of *kai*.

Summary of the evidence

The grammar of view 1 is quite ordinary. It is only very rarely that our English Bibles start a sentence with “Because.” Likewise, the word *and* which starts verse 10b most naturally connects like items. Thus, for it to link first person verbs is expected, while the traditional punctuation creates something most unusual. The repetition of the phrase, “because you have kept My word,” fits most naturally under the view that Christ opens doors of opportunity for a faithful church and vindicates them before their persecutors. The traditional punctuation does not flow as naturally.

Analysis of the verse

Revelation 3:10b does not specify **how** Christ would keep them from the hour (the tribulation). He does not say, “I will rapture you, to keep you from the hour.” Rather, it promises to deliver the first century Philadelphians without specifying the means. For those in the first century (and, indeed, all generations until the rapture generation) the means of deliverance was through physical death.

Technically, it is not a rapture passage, but a deliverance passage. It harmonizes well with 1 Thessalonians 5:9, which declares, “God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Within that context, the natural referent for us is the universal church.

Conclusion

Both the Partial Rapture nor the Dispensational-Perseverantist views camp heavily upon the capitalized “Because” in Revelation 3:10. This passage does not condition protection against entering the tribulation upon the degree of faithfulness. No Church Age believer need fear entering the Tribulation. Either through physical death or through the rapture, Jesus will keep us all from entering that hour.