

## WILL THE CHURCH GO THROUGH THE GREAT TRIBULATION?

What does the Bible call the time of tribulation?

### A Time of Trouble

Daniel 12:1 (NKJV) "...and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation until that time;"

### The Time of Jacob's Trouble

Jeremiah 30:4-7 "Now these are the words which the Lord spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah, "For thus says the Lord, I have heard a sound of terror, of dread, and there is no peace. Ask now, and see, if a male can give birth. Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale? Alas! for that day is great, there is none like it; and it is the time of Jacob's distress, but he will be saved from it."

### The Great Day of the Lord

Zephaniah 1:14-18 "Near is the great day of the Lord, near and coming very quickly; listen, the day of the Lord! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress. A day of destruction and desolation. A day of darkness and gloom. A day of clouds and thick darkness. A day of trumpet and battle cry, against the fortified cities and the high corner towers. And I will bring distress on men, so that they will walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the Lord; and their blood will be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them on the day of the Lord's wrath; and all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy. For He will make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one, of all the inhabitants of the earth."

I Thessalonians 5:2 "For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night."

Revelation 6, 16,17 "And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"

## The Great Tribulation

Matthew 24:21,29 "For then there will be a Great Tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall... But immediately after the Tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

Revelation 2:22 "Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into Great Tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds."

Revelation 7:14 "And I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the Great Tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

## The Wrath of God

Zephaniah 1:15 "A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness."

Revelation 6:16,17 "And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"

Revelation 14:10 "He also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb."

Revelation 15:1 "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished."

Revelation 16:1 "And I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth."

Revelation 11:18 "And the nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy bondservants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

The term "wrath" is never used in the Bible to refer to "Hell" or "The Lake of Fire." The use of the word "wrath" refers to God's wrath against sin which is specifically poured out during the Great Tribulation.

## **WHO WILL EXPERIENCE THE WRATH OF GOD?**

### **\*The Ungodly And Unrighteous**

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Romans 1:18 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."

### **\*Children of Wrath**

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Ephesians 2:3 "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

### **\*Sons of Disobedience**

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Ephesians 5:6 "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."

Colossians 3:6 "For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come."

### **\*Babylon the Great**

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Revelation 16:19 "And the great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath."

## **\*The Nations**

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Revelation 19:15 "And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty."

## **\*Israel**

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Jeremiah 30:4-7 "Now these are the words which the Lord spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah, "For thus says the Lord, I have heard a sound of terror, of dread, and there is no peace. Ask now, and see, if a male can give birth. Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale? Alas! for that day is great, there is none like it; and it is the time of Jacob's distress, but he will be saved from it."

Zechariah 13:8,9 "And it will come about in all the land, declares the Lord, that two parts in it will be cut off and perish; but the third will be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on my name, and I will answer them; I will say "They are My people," and they will say, "The Lord is my God."

## **\*The Tribulation Saints**

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Revelation 13:7-10 "And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear. If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints."

The purpose of this Great Tribulation caused by the outpouring of God's wrath is fourfold:

1. To test those who dwell upon the earth - Rev.3:10
2. That God might pour out His wrath on the wicked - Revelation 15:7
3. To destroy those who destroy the earth - Revelation 11:18
4. To purge the nation of Israel - Daniel 11:35, Zechariah 13:8,9

## WHO WILL NOT GO THROUGH THIS PERIOD OF GOD'S WRATH?

### **The Church is promised deliverance from the wrath of God**

1 Thessalonians 1:9,10 "For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come."

1 Thessalonians 5:4,5,8,9 "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;... But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Luke 21:36 "But keep on the alert at all time, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Revelation 3:10 "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth."

Remember, there is a difference between the wrath of the world against the Church and the wrath of God against the world. Jesus clearly stated that the Church would suffer the wrath of the world, when He said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but, be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33).

The Church will face tribulation in the world from the Satanic world system. Satan is the one behind these attacks on the Church. Paul tells us that, "...our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12).

The Great Tribulation, manifesting the wrath of God, originates not from Satan, but from God and is not directed towards the Church, but towards a rebellious world.

## THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE

I Thessalonians 4:16,17 "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord."

The Bible teaches that the Church will be "caught up" to be with the Lord before the Great Tribulation, the outpouring of God's wrath, is allowed to come upon the earth.

The term "Rapture" is taken from the Latin word "rapere" which is used in the Latin translation of the Scripture (the Vulgate) for the phrase "caught up" in I Thessalonians 4:17. The Latin word "rapture" means to be in ecstasy, so verse 17 was translated, "caught up into ecstasy (rapture)." The term "**Rapture**" has now come to describe the translation of the Church - which we know will be a rapturous experience indeed!

## THE CLEAR TEACHING OF GOD'S WORD

That the Church will be "caught up" or raptured before the tribulation is very deliberately taught in type in the Old Testament and in clarity in the New Testament.

## OLD TESTAMENT PICTURES

### 1. ENOCH

Genesis 5:21-24 "And Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah. Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him."

Enoch was a preacher of righteousness in a very wicked world that was heading for a deluge of the wrath of God (Jude 14-15). Enoch knew the wrath of God was coming and he proclaimed the coming of judgement. Before the wrath was poured out "God took him".

### 2. LOT

The valley of cities of Sodom and Gomorrah had sinned so grossly that they were to be exterminated. But before God could pour out His judgement of wrath upon these wicked cities, believing Lot and his family had to first be removed. The angel sent by the Lord to destroy the city could do nothing until Lot was taken

out of Sodom and safely brought to another place. "Hurry, escape there," the angel said, "for I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Genesis 19:22

The Divine principle we see typified in Enoch and Lot is that God first removes the objects of His love and grace from the sphere of His judgement.

Abraham stated this principle eloquently:

"And Abraham came near and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? ...Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Gen 18:23,25.

### NEW TESTAMENT PROMISES

1. **II Thessalonians 2:1-8** "Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him, that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first. and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming."

**Zephaniah 1:14-18**

**Joel 2:1-2, 10-11**

**Isaiah 13:9-11**

**Revelation 6:17**

**Acts 2:20**

**I Thessalonians 5:2**

**II Peter 3:10**

**Zechariah 14**

- Someone had upset the Church at Thessalonica by telling them that they were in the period called "The day of the Lord"(vs.2), or the Great Tribulation.
- Had they been taught by Paul that they were going to go all the way through the tribulation - or even mid-way through - they would not have been shaken from their composure or "disturbed" (vs.2).
- The Church was disturbed because they were being told they were in the Great Tribulation and they had never expected this. They were ready to be persecuted by the world (John 16:33) but not to be the objects of God's wrath!

I Thessalonians 1:10 "And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come."

I Thessalonians 5:9 "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

- Paul calms their fears by telling them that they are not in the tribulation and the tribulation cannot come until there is first an "apostasy" (vs 3) and the one who now restrains (vs.6) is "taken out of the way."

- The words "the apostasy" are "he apostasia" in Greek and have been translated "falling away" in the KJV. The primary meaning of the word "apostasia" is "defection", "revolt", or "rebellion" against God. But there is another meaning - it can be translated disappearance or departure.

- Verse 3 could be translated, "Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the departure or disappearance (apostasia) comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction." Some have seen a possible reference to the rapture of the Church and not just a reference to an end-time apostasy.

### The Restrainer

Before the Day of the Lord can come, Paul tells the Thessalonians, the son of destruction, the antichrist, must first be revealed (vs.3-4). He cannot be revealed until "what restrains him now" (vs.6) or "he who now restrains" is "taken out of the way" (vs.7).

### Who is the Restrainer?

**THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKING THROUGH THE CHURCH IS THE RESTRAINER.** The Church is spoken of as salt and light (Matthew 5:14 and Matthew 5:13). Salt restrains contamination and decomposition. Light restrains one from being enveloped by darkness, (Ephesians 5:8 and II Corinthians 4:4).

2. **I Thessalonians 1:9, 10** "For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come."

- The word "wrath" in the Bible can refer to God's general wrath against sin (as in Romans 1:18), and also of God's wrath which will be poured out in the Great Tribulation (Revelation 6:17; 14:10, 19; 15:1,7; 16:1).



●The word "wrath" is never used to refer to hell or to the lake of fire. This verse refers to our having been delivered "...from the wrath to come." This future wrath from which we have been delivered is not the lake of fire or hell, because Jesus has already saved us from these by His atoning death and glorious resurrection. The future wrath that the Church is saved from is spoken of in this verse, the wrath of the Great Tribulation. Jesus is coming specifically to deliver His Church, His Bride, from the Great Tribulation.

3. **Revelation 3:10** "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth."

●This faithful end-time Church is promised to be kept "from" the hour of trial or the tribulation described in the following chapters of the Revelation (chapters 6-19). The sphere of this trial is world-wide, to test those who dwell on the earth."

●This verse does not say that the Church will be kept safe during the trial, the tribulation. It says that the Church will be kept "from" the very hour of trial. The Church will be kept from the actual time of the Great Tribulation.

●The word translated in English "kept from" is "tereo ek" in Greek, meaning "kept out", or "kept out of". If Jesus had meant the Church would be protected "within" the trial, He would have used "tereo ev" "kept in" (as in Acts 12:5; 25:4; I Peter 1:4; Jude 21), or "tereo eis" "kept into", or "tereo dia", "kept through". The words the Lord Jesus uses are specific and wonderfully chosen! "Tereo ek" - "kept out of" means the church will not be in, into, or through the tribulation at all!

### THE CLINCHER

●If this passage in Revelation 3:10 only means that the Church will be kept safe throughout the tribulation as some have taught, then you have a major problem on your hands! The problem is this, all through the tribulation, "saints" are being killed on a massive scale (see Rev. 6:9-11; 11:7; 12:30, 17; 13:7,10,15; 14:13; 17:6; 18:24). If these martyrs are church age saints then they are not being kept safe and the promise to the Church in Revelation 3:10 is an error or it is meaningless. Only as we distinguish between the Church-age saints and the tribulation saints does the promise of Revelation 3:10 make any sense.

- The term "saints" can refer to people saved in the Old Testament, under the Old Covenant (i.e. Ps. 34:9 & 89:5,7) as well as those who are redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Covenant (i.e. I Cor. 1:12).

- The existence of "saints" in the tribulation does not prove the Church is going through the tribulation. The term refers to those who are saved by God in each specific dispensation.

The promise of Revelation 3:10 is that the church will be taken up out of the sphere of the tribulation before the hour of testing comes upon the earth. Those people converted during the tribulation (Revelation 7) are the "saints" spoken of throughout the Book of Revelation. They are martyred during the Great Tribulation.

**4. Revelation 3:10 tells us that the Church will be kept from the hour of trial that is to come upon the whole world.**

- The "hour of trial" is referred to again in the Book of Revelation in Revelation 14:7

"And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgement has come; and worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."

- The Church has been promised immunity from The "Hour of Trial" that is coming upon the whole world.

- The Great Tribulation is God's great judgement upon this world. John 5:24 specifically tells us that we will never come into judgement!

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgement, but has passed out of death into life."

- Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

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