

The Second Coming of Christ – Pt. 5 The Great Tribulation and The Church

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I. Introductory Remarks.

In the study on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ it was established that His coming would not take place until the end of the "Great Tribulation" period of 3 1/2 years. It was also established that there are no scriptures that indicate a rapture or secret appearing of Jesus prior to the Second Coming, but there are those scriptures that do indicate that the Church will be protected or kept during this terrible time that is to come on the earth.

In this study the objective will be to examine what happens to the church during this time and what God's plans are for the ministry of this glorious church just prior to the great tribulation.

II. The Great Tribulation.

The "Great Tribulation" is that period of time which immediately precedes the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ the second time. It is the last three and a half years in the end of the present age. It is the last half of Daniel's seventy week prophecy. (See addendum #1 for further explanation)

The tribulation period will be the darkest page in the history of the world. All that has gone before, is as nothing to the horrors that will be enacted under the reign of the blasphemies of the antichrist. (W.H. Offiler)

The tribulation period is the period of time during the blowing of the seventh trumpet judgment when the seven bowls of God's final judgment and wrath are being poured out upon the earth. (See Revelation 16:2-17) Daniel speaks of this time as a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.

Daniel 12:1 "At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and **there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book.**

- **Jesus also said, "There will be "Great Tribulation", such as has not been since the beginning of the world."**

Matthew 24:21 *"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."*

At the beginning of this period a great separation take place in the church and those who made themselves ready were found worthy to escape to the place of refuge and the others were left behind to die by the sword of the antichrist or commit apostasy. This is the time known as the "great falling away."

2 Thessalonians 2:3 *Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the **falling away** comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,*

Revelation 13:7 *And it was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.*

Revelation 13:16-17 *And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.*

Revelation 20:4 *And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

III. God's Plan For The Church During The Great Tribulation.

Some of God's people shall be accounted worthy to escape the "Great Tribulation". It's important to understand, for the sake of this study, when reference is made to the "Great Tribulation", I am only talking about the final 3 1/2 years of God's ultimate wrath.

There is much tribulation that goes on in varying degrees immediately prior to the "Great Tribulation", which includes the seven seal judgments and the first six trumpet judgments. It is my conviction that the Church will be ministering in the full power and authority of Christ during the time immediately prior to the "Great Tribulation". We shall look at this a little later in the study.

Luke 21:34-36 *"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you*

*unexpectedly. "For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. "Watch therefore, **and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things** that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."*

- In the following passage God's people are told to shut the doors and hide for a little moment, until the indignation or the tribulation is past. The word "indignation" speaks of the fury of God's wrath and His displeasure with sin.

Isaiah 26:20-21 *Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the **indignation** is past. For behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain.*

- Zephaniah speaks of a gathering together before this terrible decree is given. He says, "***it may be that we will be hidden*** during the outpouring of God's wrath."

Zephaniah 2:1-3 *Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, O undesirable nation, before the decree is issued, before the day passes like chaff, before the Lord's fierce anger comes upon you, **before the day of the Lord's anger comes upon you!** Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. **It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger.***

- In the Book of Revelation we have a picture of a woman clothed with the sun the moon and the stars, who has been accounted worthy to escape the "Great Tribulation".

Revelation 12:1 *Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.*

Revelation 12:6 *Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.*

This passage of scripture will be discussed in greater detail later in this study. In most of these instances concerning the Church's safety during the time of the "Great Tribulation", it hints of a possible separation in the Church at this time. Luke 21 shows us that we must be worthy to escape. Zephaniah shows us that it may be that we shall be hidden and now here in Revelation 12 we see that there is a remnant that is left behind to face the beast during the "Great

Tribulation". In Revelation chapter 11 we see that there is a separation when the temple is measured.

Revelation 12:17 *And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

It will be important in this study to determine what constitutes one being preserved or protected and also why it is that some will not be. This truth is understood when we see how the truth concerning the Bride of Christ relates to the end time scenario. (See addendum #3 for further clarification)

IV. The Bride of Christ in Relationship to Great Tribulation.

One of the most important truths surrounding the end time environment is the truth or mystery concerning the Bride of Christ. You see, I believe, it is His bride that He is ultimately watching out for to protect during this time. The concept or truth concerning the Bride of Christ is the centerpiece to this whole mystery.

1. The Bride Of Christ Is Mentioned In Scripture.

Ephesians 5:32 *This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

We, the Church, have been espoused or engaged to Jesus the bridegroom, who is to be the husband.

2 Corinthians 11:2 *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

Isaiah 62:3-5 *You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God... But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; **and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.***

Romans 7:4 *....that you may be married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead.*

The apostle Paul compares the relationship of a husband and wife to the relationship of Christ and His Church.

Ephesians 5:25-27 *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

2. The Bride Must Be Thoroughly Cleansed Before Jesus Returns.

In this same passage that Jesus likens the relationship of a husband and wife to the relationship He has with the Church, it says, "Jesus is going to present to Himself a glorious Church or Bride without spot or wrinkle or any such thing". Before Jesus can return His Bride must be thoroughly purged of sin.

In the following passage Isaiah speaks of the cleansing and purifying that must take place in the Church, before she enters into the tribulation period.

Isaiah 4:1-2 *And in that day **seven women** shall take hold of **one man**, saying, "We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; **only let us be called by your name, to take away our reproach.**" In that day the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious; and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and appealing for those of Israel who have escaped. (See verses 3-6 also)*

Notice that it says in verse 1, "And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, 'We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by your name, to take away our reproach.'"

This passage is clearly speaking of the Bride of Christ and her relationship to the Bridegroom. Only Jesus can take away our reproach and seven women speak of the perfection that the Bride shall experience.

- Revelation 19 shows us there is a preparation that must take place before the Bride can be presented to Jesus. It says, "His wife has made herself ready."

Revelation 19:7 *"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."*

As we have seen from the testimony of these scriptures, God is going to have a great and glorious Church in these last days. It will be out of this Church that He shall choose a bride for His Son. It will be those in the Church who have made themselves ready and measured up to the stature of the fullness of Christ who will be chosen. These are those who are worthy to escape the "Great Tribulation".

3. The Church Will Be Measured To Reveal The Bride Of Christ.

God is going to measure the temple of God, which is His Church and there will be those who will not meet up to the measuring process.

Revelation 11:1-2 *Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. "But **leave out the court which is outside the temple**, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city under foot for forty-two months.*

The New Testament Church is the temple of God. We are the temple that God is going to measure. God no longer dwells in temples made with hands, but dwells in believers, the Church of the living God.

2 Corinthians 6:16 *And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."*

Ephesians 2:19-22 *Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a **holy temple** in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.*

This spiritual house is growing unto a Holy temple in the Lord. This is the temple that God is going to measure.

5. The Standard by Which God Will Measure The Church.

- **She shall be chaste and pure from every fault.**

2 Corinthians 11:2 *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

The word chaste means: Innocent, modest, perfect, clean and pure. (Vines) says, "*chaste signifies pure from every fault, immaculate, pure from carnality.*"

- **She shall be holy, without spot or blemish.**

God is looking for a bride, who will be a help meet for His Son, someone who is

commensurate to Jesus. He's looking for a bride in all her glory, having no spot, wrinkle or any such thing. It is not that our sinful body will be done away with. It's that we will have brought our sinful body into subjection to the new man in Christ.

Ephesians 5:27 ...that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

- **She shall measure up to the stature and fullness of Christ.**

The Bride of Christ will measure up to the stature of the fullness of Christ in authority, power and character. She will be commensurate to Jesus in every aspect.

Ephesians 4:13 ...till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...

Since coming into the stature of the fullness of Christ is the measure that we shall be measured by it will be important for us to look at some of the scriptures that pertain to coming into this type of maturity and readiness. (See Addendum #2 for further clarification)

Matthew chapter 25 illustrates to us how we come into bridal maturity. It will be discussed more fully in the next lesson.

Addendums

Addendum #1

(Note concerning perfection – Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Perfection comes when we experience the fulfillment of the [Day of Atonement](#), a day in which we cease from all of our labors. It is something that only Christ can do. Just as the Feasts of Passover and Pentecost were fulfilled in New Testament Christianity, so also must the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles be fulfilled. Perfection cannot be understood without an understanding and revelation of how the Feasts of Israel fit into this picture. This is another study of its own)

This passage of scripture has a lot to say about what's going to happen to the Church prior to the "Great Tribulation". Without getting too deep into the truths concerning the "Feasts of Israel" and their relationship to the end time scenario, this Scripture speaks of the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. Under the Old Covenant the Day of Atonement was the one day in the year in which all the sins of the people in the nation of Israel were completely cleansed. It prepared them for the coming feast of tabernacles.

Under the New Covenant the Day of Atonement is a day near the end of the age in which all of those Christians, who have prepared themselves, shall be completely cleansed and purified before the marriage of Christ and His church during the feast of tabernacles in the wilderness spoken of in Revelation Chapter Twelve.

Addendum #2

The Bride's Ministry Prior to the Great Tribulation.

It is my conviction that the Bride of Christ will actually minister to the world in the stature of the fullness of Christ. Everything that happened during Christ's ministry on the earth during His 3 1/2 years of ministry shall be duplicated once again.

John 14:12 *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.*

Only this time it will be accomplished by a many membered body, which is able to do much more than Jesus did, because of His limits of space and time.

- **There are many scriptures that make reference to this glorious ministry**

Ephesians 1:22-23 *And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

Matthew 24:14 *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

We must keep in mind that God is a fair and just God. I believe He is going to give the world one last chance to experience the majesty of His power and glory through His purified Bride, who has now been made holy without spot or wrinkle. A mighty revival shall occur throughout the nations through the many membered body ministering in the fullness of the Christ, which now fills all in all. This is all occurring during the trumpet judgments that are to come before the antichrist is revealed and the Bride is taken to her place of refuge during the great tribulation.

Isaiah 60:1-5 *Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. "Lift up your eyes all around, and see: they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side. Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you.*

The length of time that the glorious church will minister on the earth before being taken out to the wilderness is scripturally undetermined. Some speculations are:

- Five years. From the Day of Atonement to the beginning of the feast of tabernacles (7/10 to 7/15) equals five days, a year for a day.
- Three and one-half years. It would be commensurate to Jesus' 3 1/2 year ministry.
- One year. This is the 'year' of the Lord's favor as in Isaiah 62:2.
- Nine months. This is the natural gestation period (Revelation 12:2-5; Isaiah 66:7-8).

Addendum #3

The place of refuge.

Now that we see that God does have a plan for saving His glorious Bride during

the "Great Tribulation", let's look at this place of refuge in more detail.

Luke 17:34-37 *"I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left." And they answered and said to Him, "Where, Lord?" So He said to them, "Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together."*

Many scholars have used this scripture to describe the rapture, but let's remember that each piece of an interlocking puzzle must fit in with the whole. It is also important to keep in mind that an obscure passage of scripture must fit with the overall continuity of what the Bible is saying. You don't major on the obscure pieces, you allow them to fit with the whole, which is why I have waited until now to fit this piece with the overall picture. As you see it fits perfectly now that the foundation has been laid.

When it says "one will be taken and the other will be left" it says nothing about a secret rapture, but rather says they will be taken to where the body is gathered together. It is the place spoken of in Revelation 12, the place in the wilderness where we are taken on the wings of an eagle. The "body" is the body of Christ and the "eagles" are the blood washed saints gathered around the atonement at the end of the age.