

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Wed. Eve. Bible Study - 12/7/16

Bible Prophecies

The Church And The Tribulation

In our last study we saw that the *Great Tribulation*, as foretold in scripture, is a period of unparalleled trouble that is coming upon the earth when God's judgments will be outpoured. Where will the Church be when this terrible time is ushered in? We believe the Church will be removed from the earth before the *Great Tribulation* begins, for Jesus will have come and gathered His own to Himself □- according to John 14:3. What are our grounds for believing this?

1. When we consider the nature of the Church, her calling and election, her place in the divine program and her relationship to Christ, surely the Church cannot go through the *Great Tribulation*.

The Church is a "called-out" company of believers, of Jews and Gentiles from every nation under Heaven □- look up Acts 15:14. The place of the Church in the divine program is in the nature of a parenthesis, and that parenthesis ends with the "mystery" of the Rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). When the Church has been completed and translated, then the prophecies relating to Israel will take up their course again. Moreover, consider the relationship of the Church to Christ (Ephesians 5:31-32). The Church is the Bride of Christ, and to make the Church go through the Tribulation would be to subject Christ Himself the second time to the visitation of God's wrath.

2. Not one syllable of scripture affirms that the Church will go through the *Great Tribulation*, nor can there be found anywhere any warning to believers to prepare for the *Great Tribulation*.

If it had been part of the divine program that the Church should pass through the *Great Tribulation*, would not our Lord have referred to this fact and have warned His disciples and us of it? Yet in John, chapters 13,14,15,16 and 17, (where He was speaking to "His own", and not with reference to events after the Rapture, which have a special relation to the Jews), not a mention is made of the *Great Tribulation*. He only spoke of this in Matthew, chapters 24 and 25; Mark, chapter 13, and Luke, chapter 21; but these statements and warnings have no relation to the Church at all. Our Saviour's great word to the Church is John 14:1-3. In addition to this, when we turn to the Epistles, which were written specifically for the Church, here again we find there is no word of warning to believers to prepare for the *Great Tribulation*.

3. If the Church is to go through the Great Tribulation, then many scripture promises have encouraged believers with a false hope.

The great hope of the Christian is not death, or even Heaven; it is "the blessed Hope" - look up Titus 2:11-13. The doctrine of the Lord's Return is presented in scripture as an incentive to holy living (1 John 3:2-3); to patience (James 5:7-8) and to a diligent walk (1 Peter 1:13-15). If the Church must go through the Tribulation then we should be looking for the Tribulation and not for the imminent return of our Lord; but look up 1 Thessalonians 1:10! The great "hope" which Paul holds before believers is that they may go without dying; and if they have to go through the Tribulation first, would it not be better to die than to be alive?

4. The scriptures expressly teach that the believer is delivered from wrath and that judgment is past, but the Great Tribulation will be a time of fearful judgment, the time of the "wrath of the Lamb".

Psalm 2:5 tells us that the Great Tribulation will be a visitation of the wrath of God upon His enemies; but we are not His enemies and there is no wrath reserved for us, for Christ has borne our judgment for sin at Calvary (John 5:24; Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9). If Christians are to go through the "purgatory" of the Great Tribulation, why must only those Christians who are alive have to put up with this fearful judgment?

5. In the Book of Revelation, most of which is a panoramic view of future events, the Church is represented as being in Heaven before the Great Tribulation period begins.

The Great Tribulation cannot take place before the Lamb opens the book with the seven seals (Revelation 5); it is only after these seals are broken that the trouble begins (Revelation 6).

6. In the Old Testament there are three typical analogies which are violated by the teaching that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation.

1. **The translation of Enoch** before the judgment of the Flood (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5) □- typical of the rapture of the living saints (1 Thessalonians 4:17), prior to the time of fearful judgment upon the earth.
2. **The preservation of Noah** and his family through the Flood (Genesis 7:1,16) □- typical of the preservation of Israel during the Great Tribulation when, because of the fierceness of the Great Tribulation, God will shorten the period of judgment for His elect's sake (Matthew 24:22).
3. **The deliverance of Lot** from Sodom (Genesis 19:22) □- the Lord says of His Church now, "I cannot do anything (in judgment) until you reach it!"

7. Believers in this world are declared to be God's Ambassadors beseeching sinners to be reconciled to Him (2 Corinthians 5:20).

When ambassadors, who have been offering peace, have been insulted and ejected, their government recalls them ☐- and war begins! God will recall and remove His ambassadors before the Great Tribulation!

Father, let thy kingdom come, Let it come with living power; Speak at length the final word, Usher in the triumph hour.