

Is The Church Saved From Tribulation Or Wrath?

By Pastor Art Watkins

In most fundamental and dispensational religious groups there has been an ongoing debate for years about a so called “7 year tribulation period” in the future and the time Christ will come again in relation to this so called future “7 year tribulation period”. You have probably seen their charts describing the horrors of this future “7 year tribulation period”. Over the years these charts have become almost infallible in the minds of many people and if you dare question these charts, you are considered a heretic.

1000’s of prophecy conferences have been held to firmly imprint this theory of a future “7 year tribulation period” in the minds of God’s people. Those who teach this theory are given the same status as “rock stars” on TV and in some local churches. If you contradict their prophecies of future events you will be scorned and shunned.

1000’s of books have been written to promote the future “7 year tribulation period” theory and some of these books are given the same level of infallibility as the Bible itself. The “Left Behind” movie has convinced 1000’s if not millions of people saved and lost that this theory is true.

There are three groups of fundamentalists and dispensationalists who hold different views about the time Christ will come during this future “7 year tribulation period”. One group calls themselves pre-trib another mid-trib and the other post-trib. They all disagree as to when Christ will come again, but they all agree there is a “7 year tribulation period” coming in the future. All 3 promote this theory, but disagree as to when Christ will come again in relation to the 7 year tribulation period.

The group calling themselves pre-trib believes Christ will come pre or before the 7 year tribulation period begins and conveniently as they say; “*catch them out of here*”, before it begins. This position is the favorite amongst fundamentalists, dispensationalists and charismatics for obvious reasons. It promises deliverance from tribulation and after all who wants to

suffer tribulation? The pre trib doctrine also fits in nicely with the health, wealth and prosperity doctrine of the charismatics. The pre-tribbers far outnumber the other two groups, because the pre-trib position offers less suffering. (Doctrines that promise escape from pain and trouble are always the most popular, especially in America)

The other group that call themselves mid-trib believe Christ will come mid or in the middle of the so called 7 year tribulation period and catch them out so they will conveniently miss the last 3 1/2 years which they say is the worst. They also tell us that we should not be concerned about living on the earth during the first 3 1/2 years of this future tribulation, for they say it will not be too bad and will actually be a time of peace. They say this to convert their pre-trib friends. Mid-tribbers do not really expect to see much tribulation. They are what I call “diet pre-tribbers”.

The other group that call themselves post- trib believe Christ will come post or at the end of the so called future 7 year tribulation period and catch them away at the end. They say the church will suffer throughout the future 7 year tribulation period and be saved at the end. But, they like the others say; tribulation for the church is confined to a period of 7 years in future. Needless to say, the pre-tribbers and the mid-tribbers don't care too much about the post-tribbers. The thought of suffering 7 years of tribulation does not appeal to them at all. The pre-tribbers say, 7 years of tribulation is too much tribulation, so they place Christ's coming at the beginning to miss it all together. The mid-tribbers say 7 years tribulation is also too much tribulation, but they can handle 3 1/2 years, so they place the coming of Christ in the middle of the 7 years. But they calm the fears of their followers by teaching them that the first 3 1/2 years will not really be as bad as the pre-tribbers say it is.

But what saith the scriptures? What does the Bible actually say about all these theories?

Is there a 7 year tribulation period coming the future?

Did Jesus and the apostles preach a future 7 year tribulation period and did they say the Lord would come and save us from it?

Is the church really saved from tribulation?

The answer is: there is no future 7 year tribulation period and there is no pre, mid or post tribulation coming of Christ. And the Lord never promised to save the church from tribulation.

Here are the facts: The church has suffered tribulation in the past. The church is suffering tribulation today. The church will suffer tribulation in the future until the second coming of Christ. This is why Christ and the apostles never preached or wrote about a future 7 year tribulation period. They all preached and wrote that the church has always and will always suffer tribulation. There is not one verse of scripture in the Bible that says that tribulation is confined to a 7 year period in the future. But, the Bible clearly says that tribulation has always and will always be the plight of the church. This is why there is no such thing as a pre tribulation coming of Christ. How could he come pre or before a 7 year tribulation period when the church is in tribulation now and has been throughout church history? Pre means before; how can something come before an event when that event has already been taking place for 1000's of years?

Contrary to what many saints believe God did not make one promise to save his people from tribulation. That's a false religious myth. The truth is: the saints of God have suffered tribulation since the beginning of time. Consider this: All saints in the Bible are members of the same church. There is only one church in the Bible and all saints from all ages are members of it. It's called the church of God. According to Acts 20:28 Christ died and shed his blood for the church of God. If Christ died for Old Testament saints and New Testament saints, this means that both Old and New Testament saints are members of the same church which is called the church of God. But even though there is only one church in the Bible called the church of God, it has not always been Christ's body as it is today. The church of God became Christ's body when God made him the head of it and put the Spirit of Christ into the hearts of believers thus making them one body in Christ. This came to pass when God raised Christ from the dead and set him at his right hand in heavenly places according to Ephesians 1:18-23. But the church that became Christ's body in the New

Testament is the same church of God in the Old Testament that Christ died for. And the saints in the church of God in the Old Testament suffered tribulation. This means the church of God has suffered tribulation for over 6000 years! When people ask me if I believe the church will suffer tribulation I tell them of course. When they ask me when I believe the tribulation will begin, I tell them, the church of God has suffered tribulation since the day Cain slew Abel. (Matthew 23:35) Abel is actually the first martyr in the church of God.

This is why Jesus Christ and the apostles never ever said the church is exempt from suffering tribulation and persecution. They never led any saint of God to believe that because they are members of the church that they will somehow escape tribulation and persecution. Freedom from tribulation and persecution has never been the doctrine of the church of God. Christ and his apostles taught us that tribulation and persecution has always been and will always be the plight of the church. It is not limited to 7 years in the future. The church has, is and will suffer tribulation and persecution till the Lord comes again and puts a permanent stop to it. Read this paragraph again.

In Matthew 5:11-12 Jesus told his New Testament followers they would suffer tribulation and persecution like the saints in the Old Testament. ***Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.***

The Lord said that evil men will persecute you as they persecuted the Old Testament prophets and saints. The tribulation of the New Testament saints is just a continuation of what the Old Testament saints suffered.

Read how Old Testament saints in the church of God suffered:

Old Testament Saints

Hebrews 11:35-38 says: ***Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and***

imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

These verses describe the persecution and tribulation the Old Testament saints suffered. Tribulation is not something new for the church and it is not some 7 year period of time in the future. It's been going on for 1000's of years and these saints are proof of it. Tribulation has always been the plight of God's people. These saints Paul wrote about in Hebrews 11 were members of the same church of God as the New Testament saints and if they suffered tribulation, why do we expect to be saved from it? These saints were members of the same church of God as we are and yet they suffered horrible tribulation. Does God love us and favor us more than them? No. He loved them and favored them as much as us, but they suffered horrible tribulation.

New Testament Saints

In Luke 21:12-17 Jesus predicted how his followers would be treated in the New Testament: He said:

But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

In Matthew 23:33-34 Jesus said to the Pharisees who persecuted the New Testament saints:

Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

Every prediction Christ made of tribulation and persecution in these verses came to pass in the early church. They suffered all these tribulations and more. Are we any better than these saints? Are we not members of the same church of God as these saints? If so, why do we expect be treated any different than they? These saints did not escape tribulation and even

great tribulation and if they did not escape it, where did we get off thinking we will? Jesus never taught it and neither did the apostles who suffered it. In John 16:33 the Lord made a promise and a prediction to his followers. He said:

These things I have 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.

There is one promise and one prediction in this verse. The prediction of tribulation and the promise of peace. The Lord said that as long as we are in the world we will suffer tribulation. He didn't say tribulation is confined to a 7 year period in the future. He said as long as we are in the world we will suffer tribulation. But, he also promised us peace during our tribulation. He did not promise to remove us from tribulation, but peace during it. Every promise he made of peace in the four gospels was made in the context of suffering and tribulation. He promised peace to his people because of his prediction of tribulation. It's those who suffer tribulation who need peace, not those who escape it. As long as we are in the world we need peace, because as long as we are in the world we will suffer tribulation according to Jesus Christ.

Paul's Epistles

There are dispensationalists today who separate the church in Paul's epistles from the church in the four gospels and Hebrews through Revelation. They say the saints to whom those books were written expected to suffer tribulation, but not the saints in the church to whom Paul wrote. They say the reason those saints expected to suffer tribulation is because they looked for Christ to come after the so called future 7 year tribulation period. They say the reason Paul preached salvation from tribulation is because God gave to him and him alone a "*new revelation of a secret coming of Christ*" (guess when?) BEFORE the so called future 7 year tribulation period. They say that because we are members of the church Paul wrote to, our hope is to "*be out of here*" as they say, before it begins.

But, does Paul agree with them? Did he say the church in his epistles is saved from tribulation? Did he teach the saints they are free from tribulation and persecution? Did he say the church will be, *out of here*, before a period of tribulation? Did Paul agree with the "Left Behind" movie and the modern prophecy teachers who predict the church will, *miss the tribulation*, as they say? Even though the Lord said we will suffer tribulation as long as we are

in the world, did Paul contradict him by promising us deliverance from tribulation? What saith the scriptures? Let Paul and the scriptures speak for themselves.

In Acts 14:22 it says Paul: ***Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.***

Paul plainly says that we MUST through MUCH tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Before the kingdom of God comes years of tribulation will precede it and Paul told the saints he preached to and wrote his epistles to, that they will suffer it. As a matter of fact, a few days before he warned them about tribulation he suffered great tribulation when he was stoned and dragged outside the city and left for dead. See Acts 14:19. I would consider being stoned to death or nearly to death great tribulation wouldn't you?

Paul never ever said the saints in the church will escape tribulation. He said the opposite: it will suffer MUCH tribulation now and for many years to come. Paul did not contradict Christ concerning tribulation. He based what he preached and wrote about tribulation on what Christ said; that as long as we are in the world and until the kingdom of God comes, the church will suffer tribulation.

In 1 Thessalonians 3:1-4 he wrote to the Thessalonian church he founded in Acts 17. He said:

Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

Paul warned these saints from the beginning that they would suffer tribulation and his prediction came to pass. He also reminded them that as Christians they were APPOINTED to suffer tribulation and afflictions.

In most churches today new converts are usually taught they will escape tribulation, but the first thing Paul taught his converts was they are appointed to suffer tribulation. How can a Christian today believe Christ will come again and catch them out pre or before tribulation begins when Paul said we are APPOINTED to suffer tribulation? That's a major contradiction!

In 2 Thessalonians 1:4-5 he wrote again to these saints and said:

That we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

It says they suffered persecution^S and tribulation^S; in other words more than a few. But, through it all they were patient; that is, they didn't faint or give up and they also kept the faith and did not depart from the faith when they suffered tribulation as many did. (See Matt. 13:21) Paul admired their patience and faith and said it was a token and a proof and a sign that they were worthy of the kingdom of God for which they suffered. Suffering tribulation for Christ sake was considered an honor by the church in Paul's day. It was a token and sign of their steadfastness to the faith and their dedication to the Lord. Today, tribulation is a dirty word in most churches. Instead of tribulation being a token of honor it's considered dishonorable and heresy to say the church will suffer tribulation. They will run out the door in horror if you teach it today. (I have seen them do it)

In Philippians 1:29 Paul wrote: ***For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.***

In this verse, suffering for Christ is considered as much a privilege as believing on Christ. This sounds strange to the most Christians, but yet this is what the saints and apostles believed in the early church. They did not expect to be saved from tribulation and persecution. Instead they counted it an honor and privilege to suffer tribulation and persecution for Christ.

There is an example of this in Acts 5 when the apostles were beaten for preaching in the name of Christ. It says:

And when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

They rejoiced not because they escaped tribulation, but because they suffered it! In Colossians 1:24 Paul said: ***Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you.*** In 1 Peter 4:13 he said: ***But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings.***

It was counted an honor and privilege to suffer in the cause of Christ in the early church. Today, suffering is despised by the church because they have

bought into the lie that God will not allow them to suffer tribulation. I heard a Christian woman once say on radio that Christ would not dare allow his bride, the church, to suffer tribulation. She said: what kind of husband would allow his wife and bride to suffer tribulation? That sounds good to the pre and mid tribbers, but yet Paul says the church that is Christ's bride and wife, should count it a privilege to suffer tribulation and persecution for Christ. Do you see how the theories of modern dispensationalism have deceived the church? They have members of the church deceived into believing escape from tribulation is their right and consider it heresy to say otherwise. I know of a missionary who was fired by his mission board because he dared to say the church will suffer tribulation before Christ comes again. Many today consider it heresy to say the church will suffer tribulation and yet throughout the book of Acts which describe the early church, they rejoiced to suffer it!

In 2 Timothy 3 Paul wrote about the last days that precede the second coming of Christ. He describes the conditions of those days. In verse 1 he said: ***This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.***

The word perilous means; dangerous, difficult, furious, fierce, hard and hazardous. And in verse 12 he says that in the perilous times of the last days: ***all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.***

This is a prediction that the church will suffer persecution in the last days. It does not say: all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall escape tribulation and persecution in the last days. It says: they will suffer persecution and tribulation in the last days. If the doctrine you believe predicts the church will escape tribulation and persecution in the last days, it's obviously wrong.

Jesus Christ and the apostles never ever said the church will escape tribulation. They all said the church suffered tribulation in the past, is suffering tribulation today and will suffer it in the future. This is why there is no such thing as a quote: pre-tribulation or mid-tribulation or post tribulation coming of Christ for the church. The church suffered tribulation in the past. The church is suffering tribulation today. The church will suffer tribulation in the future. So, how can Christ come before, in the middle or after tribulation when the church is always in a state of tribulation? Tribulation has been the plight of believers from the beginning and will be the plight of believers till the end.

As I am writing this article the proof of what I have written is in all the news. In many Muslim nations such as Iraq we read about 1000's of Christians who are being beaten, be-headed, raped, cut to pieces, burnt alive, crucified, shot to death in mass executions and buried alive for their faith in Christ.

In Nigeria 1000's of Christians have been driven from their homes, their children killed before their eyes, their women raped, their villages burned to the ground and 1000's tortured and killed and be-headed for their faith in Christ. How is that so called "pre-tribulation escape doctrine " working for them?? Go ask these precious saints if God saved them from tribulation and even great tribulation and see how they answer you. You may get away with preaching this false hope of escaping tribulation in America, but dear friends it "ain't working" for the saints in the rest of the world!

And if you think you will escape it just because you happen to live in America you are mistaken. It's coming sooner than you think. When it comes, American Christians will find out the hard way that this pre-trib and mid-trib escapism doctrine is a farce. American Christians will learn what the saints in most other nations have always known; that the church has always and will always suffer tribulation and even great tribulation till Jesus comes again.

What The Church is Saved From

We are not saved from tribulation and persecution; instead we are saved from ETERNAL WRATH. There is a difference between eternal wrath and temporal tribulation.

In Acts 14:22; ***Paul confirmed the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.***

God said that before the kingdom of God comes at the second coming of Christ, the church will suffer much tribulation. Therefore, we are not saved from tribulation.

In 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4 he said: ***We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God***

for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.

When God saved them and us from sin and hell, he did not save them or us from tribulation and persecution.

In 1 Thessalonians 3:1-4 Paul wrote: ***Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.***

Paul not only warned them about tribulation, he even said; **we are appointed to suffer tribulation.**

But compare this with 1 Thessalonians 5:9 which says: **For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.**

1 Thessalonians 3:3 says; **we are appointed unto tribulation,** but 1 Thessalonians 5:9 says; **we are not appointed unto wrath.** Therefore wrath and tribulation are two different issues in the scriptures.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:10 it says: **And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.**

It says Jesus delivered us past tense from the wrath to come in the future. This is why Paul said we are not appointed unto wrath in 1 Thessalonians 5:9. How did he deliver us in the past from the wrath to come in the future? Paul tells us how in Romans 5:9 which says:

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Christ died and shed his blood to deliver us from the wrath to come. Those who are justified by the death and shed blood of Christ are the ones Jesus delivered from the wrath to come in 1 Thessalonians 1:10. Jesus did not die to save us from tribulation, for as long as we are in the world are appointed to suffer tribulation. But Jesus had to die to save us from the

wrath to come and only those who are justified by his blood will be saved from the wrath to come.

But what is the wrath to come that Jesus died to deliver us from? In 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 Paul describes the wrath we are saved from.

He wrote:

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

According to these verses the wrath to come Christ died to save us from is the EVERLASTING wrath and vengeance he will execute against the lost when he comes again. It's not a 7 year period of wrath. Verse 9 says the wrath is EVERLASTING. When Christ comes again the saints will be glorified according to verse 10 and rest according to verse 7, at the same time the lost will suffer EVERLASTING fire and vengeance according to verses 8-9.

There is a preview of this in the Old Testament. Christ's coming will be as the days of Lot. Luke 17:28-30 says:

Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

Jesus said; the same day the angels delivered Lot out of Sodom he rained fire and brimstone on the Sodomites left behind. That day was a day of salvation and wrath. A day of salvation to Lot and a day of EVERLASTING wrath to the Sodomites. (See Jude 1:7) And then the Lord says in verse 30: EVEN THUS SHALL IT BE IN THE DAY WHEN THE SON OF MAN IS REVEALED. What happened to Lot and the Sodomites is a preview of his second coming. When Jesus comes again, his angels will deliver the saints out of this world, as they delivered Lot out of Sodom, and then those same angels along with Christ will punish the lost with **everlasting** fire and

destruction according to 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 as they punished the Sodomites in Lot's day.

And when writing about Christ's coming Paul did not contradict what Jesus said in Luke 17. What the Lord said about Lot's day Paul said likewise in 1 Thessalonians chapters 4 and 5. In 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul describes the salvation of the saints when Christ comes again. He says the saints will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, but in chapter 5 he said in verse 3; THEN sudden destruction will come upon the lost. The destruction that will come on the lost will be sudden and soon after the saints will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. According to the Lord it will be in the SAME DAY as it was in Lot's day. (See Luke 17:29) In the same day the saints will be saved according to 1 Thessalonians 4, the lost will suffer EVERLASTING destruction and damnation according to 1 Thessalonians 5. The destruction that will come on the lost in that day will be so sudden they will not have a chance to even call on the Lord to be saved.

This is the wrath we are saved from. The wrath to come is not an age or a 3 1/2 or 7 year period of time. Christ didn't die to save us from an age or period of time. There will be millions of saints alive in the future age and period of time when he comes again. (See Revelation 7:9) Does this mean they will suffer the wrath of God, just because they will happen to live in that age or period of time when the second coming of Christ actually takes place? Of course not. Christ died for their sins too and no one whose faith is in the death and resurrection of Christ will ever suffer the EVERLASTING wrath of God. (The saints in that day will have the same faith we have in the death and shed blood of Christ. See Revelation 7:14, 1:5, 5:9, 12:11)

Christ died to save us from the ETERNAL wrath and fire he will pour out on the lost in the day he comes again. Christ had to die to save you from God's ETERNAL wrath and only those who are justified by the blood will be saved from it.

But, until the Lord comes again we will suffer tribulation as all saints in all ages have suffered it. His death on Calvary did not save us from tribulation, but from the ETERNAL wrath of God. Tribulation is in our future, but not wrath. His death delivered us from the ETERNAL wrath the lost will suffer when he comes again. That day will be a day of ETERNAL salvation to his saints, but ETERNAL wrath to the lost left behind. Christ delivered us from

the wrath to come in the future, by suffering the wrath for us on the cross in the past.

Why The Saints of God Suffer Tribulation

The Lord has told us many times we will suffer tribulation if we follow him, but we need to understand why. Jesus gives us three reasons in John 15:19-21:

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

In these verses the Lord gives us three major reasons why we can expect tribulation and trouble and even persecution in our lives if we follow him.

(1) The World Hates the Followers of Christ

Many Christians have the mistaken idea that when they get saved the world will be glad and rejoice for them, but Jesus said the opposite.

He said: ***But because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.***

When you got saved and become a follower of Christ, you not only inherited his blessings and promises, but you inherited his enemies. His enemies will hate you like they hated him. And if they hate you, they will persecute you like they persecuted him. So why do the followers of Christ suffer tribulation and persecution? Because the world hates them because they hate their Master and Lord.

(2) Because Servants are Treated the Same as Their Master

In John 15:20 Jesus our master said: ***Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.***

If you call yourself a servant of Christ the first lesson you should learn about servants is this: A servant cannot expect or demand better treatment than his master. A servant should expect to be treated the same as his master. If they love his master, they will love the servant. If they hate his master, they will hate him. If they despise his master, they will despise him. If they persecute his master, the servant can expect the same treatment.

Jesus Christ, who is the final authority on the subject of tribulation and persecution, tells us in no uncertain terms that if we call him Lord we can expect the same treatment as him if we call ourselves his servants. And if you want to know what God will allow to happen to the servants of Christ, take a long look at what he allowed to happen to the Lord and Master of the servants. Jesus Christ our Lord suffered tribulation and persecution throughout his life (John 5:16) and great tribulation at the end. So, why do the followers of Christ suffer tribulation and persecution? Because they are servants of Christ and servants can expect to be treated the same as their Master. This alone should change everyone's minds about escaping tribulation, for if you say we are saved from tribulation and persecutions then you are saying you expect better treatment than your Master who is Christ. The apostles and followers of Christ expected to be treated the same or even worse than their Master and so should we. I wonder what the apostles and followers of Christ would have thought about the pre or before tribulation escape doctrine that Darby and Scofield taught? Hmmm

(3) Because the World Takes Out its Vengeance Against Christ by Persecuting his Followers

The Lord said in John 15:21: ***All these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.***

As mentioned before: When you became a servant of Christ you not only inherited his blessings, but his enemies. His enemies cannot get their hands on the Lord today and so they take out their vengeance and hatred against him, by persecuting his servants. Those who call on the name of Christ, who preach the name of Christ, who call themselves by the name of Christ, can expect the same treatment as Christ. And he said when they persecute you; they do it for my name's sake or on account of me.

That is why the disciples rejoiced when they were persecuted. In Acts 5:40-42 it says:

And when they (religious and political rulers) had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

The Lord told them ahead of time they would be persecuted for his name sake and when they did, they rejoiced they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And they didn't quit preaching in his name either, for it

says: ***Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.***

Additional Notes

Dispensational theology (which is far from being infallible as some think) says the wrath to come we are saved from is the 7 or 3 1/2 year period of time that precedes the second coming of Christ. Is this true or false? FALSE! To say the wrath we are saved from is the 7 or 3 1/2 years that precede Christ's coming is a major error for many reasons, and one is the presence of millions and millions of saints who will live in those days. In Revelation 7:9 it says:

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. Verse 14: These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

John looked into the future and he saw a multitude of Jew and gentile saints that no man could number living in the time when Jesus comes again. Will those saints suffer the wrath of God just because they will happen to live in the period of time when Jesus comes again? You may be one of these saints. Will God pour out his wrath on you and them just because you happen to live in that period of time? According to dispensational theology he will. They say the wrath we are saved from is the 7 or 3 1/2 years prior to the second coming of Christ. If that were true then millions and millions of saints will suffer the wrath of God! Can you see how insane this doctrine is?

Some teach we are not saved from tribulation, but from great tribulation. The mid tribbers preach this. Is it true? Read Foxes Book of Christian Martyrs and see the great tribulation the saints suffered in the past.

Read the Voice of the Martyrs magazine and you will see how they suffer great tribulation today.

Ask the saints in Muslim countries today who are being crucified, chopped to pieces, raped, murdered, burnt alive, buried alive, beheaded today and see if they believe the church will suffer great tribulation. If they are not suffering great tribulation then what is it? According to the Voice of the Martyrs organization there are more Christians suffering tribulation now than at any time in history.

In Matthew 24:21, 29 it says the Lord will come and gather his saints from heaven and earth unto himself AFTER a period of great tribulation. It's obvious those saints are not saved from suffering great tribulation and they are members of the same church of God as we are. What makes us think we are better than them?

Jesus Christ suffered both tribulation and great tribulation in his life and death and he says that if you are his servant, you can expect the same or worst treatment. Read John 15:20 again and again.

Some say: how can the Blessed Hope be blessed if the church suffers tribulation and even great tribulation? The answer is obvious; The Blessed Hope is far more blessed to someone suffering tribulation than someone who escapes it.

The facts are these; Every believer in the Bible is a member of the same church of God that Christ died for. (Acts 20:28) The church of God suffered tribulation and great tribulation in the past. It is suffering tribulation and even great tribulation today. It will suffer tribulation and great tribulation in the future, till the second coming of Christ. We are no better or different than the saints in the past or future.

Christ did not die to save any member of the church of God from tribulation. He died to save us from the wrath to come. The expression "wrath to come" appears twice in the Bible. Once by John the Baptist in Matthew 3:7-12 and Paul in 1 Thessalonians 1:10. In the context in which it appears, it is not an age or a period of time, for Christ did not die to save us from an age or period of time. It's the wrath, fire and everlasting punishment he will execute against the lost at the same time he comes again to save and glorify his saints. (Compare Matt. 3:11-12 with 2 Thess. 1:7-10)

God never made one promise to save his people from tribulation. He said we are appointed unto tribulation and will suffer it till he comes again. He said we will suffer it like him and all the apostles and prophets before us. He even said it's a privilege to suffer for him. He said it's a sign you are living godly if you suffer tribulation for him and promised those who suffer that they will reign with him in the kingdom of God. (Compare 2 Timothy 3:12 with 2:12)

If your doctrine says that God will save you from tribulation then it's obviously wrong and you need to change it. Don't change the Bible to fit your doctrine, change your doctrine fit the Bible. Ditch the charts and start believing the Bible means what it says and says what it means, even if it says you are not exempt from tribulation and even great tribulation. Quit teaching the saints of God that they will escape tribulation for you are giving them a false hope.

Comments of Corrie Ten Boom about Persecution and Tribulation

Corrie ten Boom who suffered in German prison camps for hiding the Jews from the Nazis was asked in a church service in America if she believed the church would suffer tribulation. She said: *Only an American Christian would ask such a question!* She rejected the tribulation escape doctrine saying it was without Biblical foundation. She believed that such doctrines left the Christian Church ill-prepared in times of great persecution, such as in China under Mao Zedong.

Miss Corrie Ten Boom was a Dutch survivor of the Nazi concentration camps and a lifelong missionary. Corrie was a believer in facing tribulation. She was one of the many people persecuted in concentration camps during World War II. Her family was murdered before her eyes; but though her life was threatened, God led her through that terrible time. She lived to testify all over the world of how God brought her out of that time of trouble. In the worst days in the concentration camp, Corrie and her sister Betsy discovered that "there is no pit so deep that the presence of God is not there with us."

In a letter she wrote in 1974 these are some of the comments she made when she shared a plea for the saints to prepare themselves for the possibility that, at some point, their faith may be severely tested. It serves today as a timely warning to us in the comfortable and complacent Western Church.

*My sister, Betsy, and I were in the Nazi concentration camp at Ravensbruck because we committed the crime of loving Jews. Seven hundred of us from Holland, France, Russia, Poland and Belgium were herded into a room built for two hundred. As far as I knew, Betsy and I were the only two representatives of Heaven in that room. We may have been the Lord's only representatives in that place of hatred; yet because of our

presence there, things changed. Jesus said, “In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

*There are some among us teaching there will be no tribulation and that Christians are exempt from tribulation and will escape it. These are some of the false teachers that Jesus was warning us to expect in the latter days. (Peace and safety) Most of them have little knowledge of what is already going on across the world. I have been in countries where the saints have suffered terrible persecution for years. It’s nothing new to them.

*In China, the Christians were told, “Don't worry, before the tribulation comes you will be translated — raptured.” Then came a terrible persecution. Millions of Christians were tortured to death. Later I heard a Bishop from China say, sadly,

We have failed. We should have made the people strong for persecution rather than telling them Jesus would come first. Tell the people how to be strong in times of persecution, how to stand when the tribulation comes — to stand and not faint.

*When I was in the concentration camp, a camp where only twenty percent of the women came out alive, we tried to cheer each other up by saying, “Nothing could be any worse than today.” But we would find the next day was even worse. During this time a Bible verse that I had committed to memory gave me great hope and joy:

If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part evil is spoken of, but on your part He is glorified (1 Peter 3:14)

*In America, the churches sing, “Let the congregation escape tribulation,” but in China and Africa the tribulation has been going on for many years. This last year alone, (1974) more than two hundred thousand Christians were martyred in Africa. Now things like that never get into the newspapers because they cause bad political relations. But I know for I have been there. We need to think about that when we sit down in our nice houses with our nice clothes to eat our steak dinners. Many, many members of the Body of Christ are being tortured to death at this very moment, yet we continue right on as though we are all going to escape tribulation.

*Several years ago I was in Africa in a nation where a new government had come into power. The first night I was there some of the Christians were commanded to come to the police station to register. When they arrived they were arrested and that same night they were executed. The next day the same thing happened with other Christians. The third day it was the same. All the Christians in the district were being systematically murdered. The fourth day I was to speak in a little church. The people came, but they were filled with fear and tension. All during the service they were looking at each other, their eyes asking, "Will this one I am sitting beside be the next one killed? Will I be the next one?" The room was hot and stuffy with insects that came through the screen less windows and swirled around the naked bulbs over the bare wooden benches. I told them a story out of my childhood. When I was a little girl, I said, "I went to my father and said, 'Daddy, I am afraid that I will never be strong enough to be a martyr for Jesus Christ.'" "Tell me," said Father, "When you take a train trip to Amsterdam, when do I give you the money for the ticket? Three weeks before?" No, Daddy, you give me the money for the ticket just before we get on the train." "That is right," my father said, "and so it is with God's strength. Our Father in Heaven knows when you will need the strength to be a martyr for Jesus Christ. He will supply all you need — just in time...."

My African friends were nodding and smiling. Suddenly a spirit of joy descended upon that church and the people began singing, *in the sweet, by and by, we shall meet on that beautiful shore*. **Later that week, half the congregation of that church was executed. I heard later that the other half was killed some months ago..**

But I must tell you something. I was so happy that the Lord used me to encourage these people, for unlike many of their leaders, I had the word of God. I had been to the Bible and discovered that Jesus said He had not only overcome the world, but to all those who remained faithful to the end, He would give a crown of life.

What you have just read is a dose of reality. The "no tribulation doctrine" that is so popular in the USA does not work in the rest of the world. It does not work, simply because it is not true.

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