

Will the Church Go Through the Tribulation?, Part 2

Selected Scriptures

1325

We are aware that Jesus as well as the prophets of the Old Testament under the inspiration of God predicted a time of trouble, a time that would come upon the earth that is known as the time of tribulation. It is a period when God's wrath will be unleashed upon the earth. And the pouring out wrath is going to come in three series of judgments.

There are three series of judgments in the book Revelation that delineate for us the pattern of the tribulation. First are the seals. Beginning in Chapter 6, the Lord Jesus Christ begins to open a scroll that is sealed seven times. And with the breaking of each judgment pours out, war, famine, the death of one-fourth of all people on the earth, the collapse of heaven, the panic if the population of the earth as the Bible says "the kings of the earth and the great men and the rich men and the chief captains and the mighty men and every slave and every free man hide themselves in the rocks and the mountains and cry to the mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face Him that sitteth upon the upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath has come and who is able to stand."

"The seals are followed immediately by the trumpets, hail and fire mixed with blood cast upon the earth result in one-third of the trees and grass being burnt up. A flaming mountain cast into the sea and one-third of the sea becomes like blood killing one-third of it's creatures and destroying one-third of all the ships. A star called wormwood falls into the fresh water and pollutes one-third of it and many die. One-third of the heavenly bodies go out and the next three trumpets are even worse. Demons arise from the abyss to torment men. And men will seek to die. They will try to commit suicide, but will be unable to die only to bear the terrible torment that comes from demons. A great Army from the east will slaughter one-third of the remaining population of the earth, then will come lightening and thunder and earthquakes and great hail. And the trumpets are followed by the boils that will be poured out at the close of the period known as the tribulation, in which sores will be appear on the bodies of men. And all of the sea will be turned to blood killing every creature in it and all fresh water will be turned to blood and men will be scorched with fire, then will come total darkness. The earth begins to fall apart, hundred pound hail stones begin to fall and this precedes immediately the return of Jesus Christ."

That's a fearful anticipation, isn't it? That is the biblical description of the time known as the tribulation. Now the question which we are facing in this study is will the church go through the tribulation or will the Lord take us out before it begins? Is this something that we need to look forward to or are we going to be delivered from this? Now that's a very practical problem, isn't it?

Because if I am looking forward to the tribulation, that colors everything I do because that's what I need to get ready for. It's pointless for me to be wandering around looking at the sky and thinking Jesus is going to come any minute until I've begun to see these things happen if I'm going through

the tribulation. I mean, I've see a little a hail, but I've not seen 100 pound hail stones. And if that's the last thing that's going to happen before Jesus comes, then I know when Jesus is going to come. It removes the eminent return, plus instead of looking for Christ, I'm looking for antichrist.

Now we gave you last week a little bit of a theology lesson and told you that there are three views of the church and the tribulation. There is what is called post-trib, then mid-trib, pre-trib. Remember? Of course you remember. Post-trib says the church goes through the tribulation and is taken out at the end. And you remember up and back again for the kingdom.

Mid-trib says the church goes halfway through the tribulation then leaves. Pre-trib says the church goes before the tribulation and when the church goes the tribulation begins. Now we have committed ourselves to the pre-tribulation view, that the church goes before the tribulation. And really the dominant reason for that is that it allows us to believe in the eminent return of Christ. If we don't go until all these things happen, then we know when Jesus is coming. And if we know when He's coming that violates the promise that no man knows the day nor the hour.

Now the post view that the church goes through time of tribulation is inadequate, because it violates the nature of the church. It violates the nature of the tribulation and it violates the nature of the second coming. It wipes out the eminent return of Christ we're all looking for antichrist. And incidentally, it removes the greatest motive and purity in the Christian life, which is the knowledge that Jesus could come at any moment. "And He that hath hope in himself," what, "purifies himself."

It also ignores the fact that in no mention of the tribulation any where in the Bible is the church ever mentioned. It's never seen in the tribulation. Well, you say, what about the mid-tribulation view. Well, that's only a very, very limited view anyway. Not too many people hold to that view, but it is an interesting one. The problem with it is, it can be supported which is a problem.

It has three basic supports and I'm not even going to give you three, because the other two aren't as good as this one and this one isn't very good, but I'll give you one. Now to get...you have to put your thinking cap on and get a little bit of connection here with some Scriptures.

1 Thessalonians 4 it says, "And at the trumpet," at the last trump, you know and of course 1 Corinthians 15 also, "the trumpet shall sound the dead in Christ rise, the last trump." Now the mid-trib says the last trump then must be equal to the seventh trumpet, which is also the last trumpet in Revelation. So if the last trump is the seventh trumpet we've got to be here for the first six. Well, if we've got to be here for the first six trumpets, we've also got to be here for the first six seals, because that's part of them. And even part of the seventh.

So the church remains during the seals and the final seventh trumpet the church exists, and then the church is gone and then the boil judgments happen. And therefore the church goes halfway in the middle of the tribulation. Dr. Walvoord has a good answer for this. He says at Dallas Seminary there are series of bells and at the time of a class period there is a warning system of several bells and then there is the last bell. And so when the professor says that is the last bell, he does not mean that that is the last bell in all of the world. He does not mean that is all...the last bell of the day. He means it's the last bell in terms of a succession of bells having to do with a specific class. To equate such a statement with ultimate...with an ultimate bell anywhere doesn't make any sense. There can be a last trump for the church, there can be seven trumpets for Israel in the tribulation, and there's no reason

to connect them.

There have always been trumpets in connection with God summoning His people. There have been trumpets blown throughout the history of Israel. There will be trumpets blown at the conclusion of the church and there will be trumpets blown in the judgment of the earth. They don't have to be the same trumpets. That's a very arbitrary connection. Let me give you an interesting thing. You say well if I'm mid-trib and I don't go, and incidentally they think that the tribulation is a literal period of seven years, it's just a figurative long, long time. The seven years they just completely discount, but somewhere in the middle of all of this judgment we go when the seventh trump sounds. You say well then, we must be around for the six trumpets. That's right and we must be around for the seals. That's right according to this view.

Well, they say the seals were World War I and the trumpets were World War II, this is according to Harrison's book His Coming. Now they take the phrase Revelation 8:1, this is very interesting, Revelation 8:1 says, you know, it says that phrase about the...there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour which somebody used to prove there weren't any women in heaven, but I don't agree with that.

But anyway, it says...it says there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And this is what they do with that view. Since according to Peter one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, that would mean a half hour is 1/48th of a day, right? Therefore, since one day is equal to a thousand years, that would be dividing a thousand years down by 1/48th, 20 years and ten months.

Which means that there would be period of 20 years and ten months between the seals and the trumpets. Since the seals were World War I and the trumpets are World War II, there's going to be 20 years and ten months. Interesting, because it's almost accurate. There were 20 years and nine months and 20 days and Hitler jumped the gun by ten days.

And they begin on the armistice of November 11, 1918 and they go to September 11, 1939 and they explain the ten day jump by the fact that the Bible says about the space of half an hour. Of course that is such a concoction, you know, that it's just...it's beggar's language to try to defend such a thing.

It's so arbitrary and, you know, at best you certainly cannot make it literally. If you believe in a literal seven years, it's an impossibility. It's a certainly a scramble to try to figure that kind of thing out and to take Peter's statement today and when the Lord says a thousand years as a literal statement of the definition to be applied to all prophecy is hopeless. It doesn't make sense at all.

Well, that's the best that mid-trib can do is equate those two trumpets. Really when you study it down...I just threw that in for what it was worth. When you study it down carefully, you really must come to the conclusion I'm convinced that you're...that the pre-tribulation view is accurate, that the church has to go before all of this begins. You see then you allow for a literal seven year tribulation.

And I'll show you why I believe a literal seven year tribulation is legitimate in a few minutes. Now we gave you three basic areas of study to show why we believe in a pre-tribulation rapture. One, the nature of the church. The nature of the church. Now this is the very basis. The pre-tribulation rapture, that is the catching away of the church before the time of the tribulation is based on the definition of the church.

Now you watch, in the tribulation there will be saints, right? Israel will be saved, correct? Not only Israel, Revelation 7 says so many Gentiles they won't even be able to be numbered. There are going to be saints in the tribulation. Now if the church and Israel and the tribulation saints are all the same, all the same group, then we have to go through the tribulation, right? If we're all the same group, because He's not going to have a special catching away for the select out of the whole group. If we are one with Israel, one with the tribulation saints, then we're all going together. If they're part of the body, the body stays together.

So you see the very basic point that we must come to is we must verify that the church is distinct from Israel. That God can take out the church and still go back to dealing with Israel, and this we believe is accurate. If the church is a separate unit from the redeemed nation of Israel, though there are certainly Jews and Gentiles in the church now, but in a national sense, Israel is still distinct. If this is true, then it's no problem to have a separate ending to the church.

Why? Because they had a separate beginning. God began the nation of Israel with Abraham in Genesis 12. He began the church where? The day of Pentecost in Acts 2, if they had a separate beginning, why couldn't they have a separate conclusion. Of course, if they're the same, however, as Israel, if it's all been blended into one thing, then we're going to have to go through the tribulation because there are saints there and there's no reason to believe that any of us should get off the hook if we're one with those saints.

So we must prove then that the church is unique, that it is separate from Israel in the past and in the future. Now last week we gave evidence, hopefully, to conclude this. That the church and Israel are not the same. The church is not the new Israel and the distinction clear, I think, in Scripture. God has a very definite plan for Israel and He has a very definite plan for the church.

As we look at the history of Israel, we see that God was working through the nation Israel. And the ultimate design for the nation of Israel was the coming of Messiah to set up a kingdom, right? The Messiah came and what did Israel do? Rejected the Messiah. And when Jesus first came here, remember He was always saying "repent, for the kingdom is at hand." That was His message. His message was to Israel. Some Gentiles even wanted to know the message and He didn't deliver it. It was very Israel. Salvation is first to the Jews. To the Jew first also to the Greek even Paul said.

So basically God was dealing with Israel. Israel was His vehicle to reach the world. God was uniquely working the nation Israel, but they rejected the Messiah. God therefore set them aside and moved toward the Gentiles and began what we call a parenthesis. The church. A body that is not seen in the Old Testament a mystery body He called redeemed. He began them. He will end them, take them out of the earth, go right back to dealing and finish His dealings with Israel.

We are not Israel. We are not the new Israel. We do not receive the promises of Israel. They are still for Israel. If you have the church receiving all the promises for Israel, then God was a liar, because God made promises to Israel which He is not keeping. And so we believe there must be a distinction. The church is unique, it is separate.

Now we saw this last week and I'll just review these by a statement. We saw it from the use of the ekklesia, which is church. We saw it from Jesus' words in Matthew 16:18, remember what He said?

"I," which tense, "will build my church." It was a future thing. "And the gates of Hell will not prevail against it," which was an indication again that it wouldn't be in the tribulation either when Satan rules.

We saw last week that the church is distinct from Peter's statement in Acts 11:15. Where Peter talks about the church in Acts 2 and he says "the Gentiles receive the same thing that we received at the beginning." The beginning of what? The beginning of the church. A unique body. We saw from Romans 11 that Israel were the natural branches of the stalk of blessing, unbelief, God cut them off, right? And grafted in the church. Some day God will take the church away, graft in Israel. He makes a clear distinction between the church and Israel.

Now to begin with in your Bibles, look at Ephesians 3. And I just want to start there and picking up from last time. The clear teaching, incidentally, of Ephesians 3:1-12 shows the distinct character of the church. It cannot be Israel. It must be distinct.

Now notice verse 3. Paul's talking here about his calling to the ministry and what he is to proclaim. He says, "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery." Now what is the mystery? Something hidden in the Old Testament revealed in the New. The church is never seen in the Old Testament. God gave Paul a mystery. "As I wrote before in few words by which when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge and the mystery of Christ."

What is the mystery Paul? Well, it's which in other ages was...ages was not made known under the sons of men as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." Well, what is it Paul? What is it? Verse 6, "That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." That's the mystery.

And what's another name for verse 6? The church, Jew and Gentile one in the same body. "Partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel." Now that is the mystery. Now look at verse 9, "And God has called me, Paul, to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages hath been," what's the next word, "hidden." The church is not Israel, it is distinct.

And God called upon Paul to reveal the mystery. And the mystery was simply that Jew and Gentile were one in a new body. Never seen in the Old Testament, not connected to Israel, but unique. And the idea of such equality, incidentally, was very foreign to the Jews. They had not such concept of Jew, Gentile equality. Interesting how they looked at the Gentiles and how they saw the Gentiles. And in a sense this is true from a Jewish standpoint. Isaiah 61:5, talking about the kingdom. Isaiah says, "And foreigners shall stand and feed your flocks and the sons of the aliens shall be your plowmen and your vine dressers, but you shall be named the priests of the Lord. Men shall call you the ministers of our God."

In other words, the prophet Isaiah, that's Chapter 61, verses 5-6, saw Israel in the kingdom ruling and Gentiles serving Israel. And so the Gentile never saw equality. The Jew had never saw equality with Gentiles. He never saw that one body concept. He always saw a Jew and Gentile down here in servitude. And so the body is the mystery, the one body. That is something brand new.

In Colossians 1:26, Paul says, "I'm a minister of the mystery which hath been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has made manifest to His saints." And what is the mystery? The end of

very 27, "Christ," where, "in you." That was never seen in the Old Testament. The Messiah was never seen as an indwelling presence, only as a political earthly king. And so that's a whole new concept.

John 14, Jesus said to the disciples, "You know about the Holy Spirit, He has been with you, He shall be in you." Something brand new. Brand new. And then in John 17 He prays about this unity. He's one with the Father and the Father's one with Him and the believers are one with Him and thus one with the Father and all this glorious new unity.

And so you see the church is unique in every way. It is a mystery. It does not belong in confusion with Israel. And you see what happens and this is what so many theologians do, they take all of the promises given to Israel and they say when Israel crucified Christ, they disqualified themselves permanently from the promises. God turned to the church and all of the promises are then spiritualized and being fulfilled in the church. They're not literal. And they come up with ah millennialism. There's no literal kingdom.

Well, that's a kind of a tragic thing to be able to announce to the Jews that since they crucified Christ, they forfeited everything and we get it all. And everything literal that God said has now been made figurative and it's all just a different term for spiritual blessing. And when it says "the lion shall lie down with a lamb and the children will play in the snake pit," and all of that is just figurative stuff for a happy go lucky kind of lifestyle. And when you're at peace with God and all of this kind of thing.

And that all there is left...I'll never forget Dr. Feinburg at Jerusalem conference on prophecy after somebody had gotten up and defended the whole ah millennial viewpoint, Dr. Feinburg stood up and said, "well, it's wonderful that we came all the way to Jerusalem to announce to the Jews that the curses are theirs and the blessings are ours."

And Paul in Romans 11 says "Is God finished with Israel, God forbid." God is not finished with Israel. So all Israel shall be saved. The church is a parenthesis. During the time of the blindness of Israel until such a time as they look Him whom they have pierced. And so the church is unique.

Let me show you an interesting footnote that I kind of discovered this week, 1 Thessalonians 5:9. Now, this again, I think is a distinction for the church. Verse 9, 1 Thessalonians 5, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain deliverance." Now this I think is a...such an exact statement that the church doesn't go through tribulation from this standpoint. The word appointed means destined. God has not destined the church for wrath.

Who has God destined for His judgment? Israel and the Gentile names that are disobedient. God has not destined the church for wrath. There is no point in the church going through the tribulation. All the wrath that God's judgment could pile on us, has already been piled on whom? Christ at the cross. To admit that we go through the tribulation is to depreciate the work of Christ on the cross and to assume that there needs to be more wrath that we must take ourselves.

God does not will our destruction, but our deliverance. He doesn't make us the subjects of His wrath. He has no point in putting us under punitive action and the sudden destruction. He cherishes no angry purposes toward His church. We're His beloved bride. The one that He wants to whip into believing is Israel, Israel. Wrath you see, mark it friends, wrath is the destiny of unbelievers. When

God was going to bring a flood on the earth, who did He remove before the flood? All of those who were His. And Noah and his whole family are a picture of the church. When God is going to bring judgment, He has a way of protecting those that are His.

He cherishes no angry purposes against His church. So we're distinct. Now, I gave you A through E points under number one last time, the nature of the church. Let me give you an F and G. Turn to Ephesians 5 and I'll call this the meaning of Ephesians 5:22-32 is another reason that the church and its distinction cannot be Israel.

And if we aren't Israel, get this now beloved, if we aren't Israel, then we don't have to stick around for the time when God works with Israel, you get it? We can be gone. All right, Ephesians 5, this is a great passage, verse 22. "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church and He's the Savior of the body." Now we all know about the passage. It talks about the uniqueness of the body in relation to Christ.

Now go to verse 25, "Husbands love your wives even as Christ also love the church and gave Himself for it." Now why? That's the question that hits me, why did He do that? Why did He give Himself for the church? 26, "That He might sanctify, cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself," watch, "a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Now just think with me. Christ called a church and He purified that church so that it would be holy and absolutely without blemish. Listen to this verse, 2 Corinthians 11:2, just listen to it. Paul says, "I am jealous over you with Godly jealousy." Why? "For I have espoused you to one husband." Now watch this one. "That I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Now watch. The plan for the church is that the church is presented to Christ at the rapture absolutely chaste, pure, and undefiled.

Now watch, verse 32 of Ephesians 5. "This is a great," what, "mystery. I speak concerning Christ in the church." You say what's the mystery? You mean the mystery is the marriage? You mean, the figure of the marriage is the mystery? Now, well is that new? It's not new is it? The marriage concept was in the Old Testament.

Remember the story of the Old Testament, Israel is seen to be the wife of Jehovah, right? The whole book of Hosea, the whole thing is devoted to a historical allegory of the relationship between God and Israel. Now watch. Israel is seen as God's wife. Well, what kind of wife? Adulteress, untrue, a harlot. And the promise is that the harlot would be restored in the kingdom. Now watch beloved. Israel is a wife, but a harlot. The church is a bride and a virgin. Those are not the same. You got it.

Those cannot be the same. The church is a chaste virgin. That is the mystery. That is the new thing. The new thing is a church presented to Christ sanctified without spot, without blemish, clean and pure that can't be Israel. Israel is still an adulteress wife, fooling around with other gods, committing spiritual adultery and doesn't get restored yet until comes the trouble in the tribulation.

But don't confuse the chaste virgin presented to Christ with Israel, an adulteress, wretched harlot unfaithful to God. That's a pretty powerful point to show the distinction.

All right, the last point under this one is the message is to the church is in Revelation. This is just again a very important point. Revelation 2, now we're still seeking to show you that the church and Israel are different, because if they're different then the church doesn't have to go through the tribulation. We can have a special exit as we had a special beginning.

Well, this is...this is really interesting. Revelation 2:20, now here He's writing to the church at Thyatira and this church was an idolatrous church, verse 20. "Notwithstanding, I have a few things against you. You allow that woman Jezebel," whether that's her real name or just a pseudonym indicating her character we don't know, but "you allow that woman Jezebel who calls herself prophetess to teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication and she repented not. Behold I'll cast her into a bed." Boy can you...just the dripping sarcasm. She likes beds, I'll cast her into a bed. Wait until she's the bed I give her.

"And them that commit adultery with her into great," what, "tribulation." Watch this one, "Except they repent of their deeds." Who goes into great tribulation? False teachers, people who repent of their deeds are accepted. They're exceptions, do you see?

The great tribulation is for false teachers, for sinful people, for idolatrous churches. And He says, "I'll cast her into great tribulation", except they repent. Does repentance excuse us from the great tribulation? I think so. Go to 3:10, let's see another message to the church. This is the church in Philadelphia. Not the Philadelphia that we know. Philadelphia from phileo and adelphas brotherly love, verse 10. And this is a good church, true church, pure church, lovely church. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will," watch it, "keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth." Because you're the true church, I'll keep you from the trial and temptation that's coming on the whole earth. Wow, I don't know what other way we could construe that than to say that's a promise. That's a true church shall be delivered from tribulation. Kept from the hour of temptation. Which hour? The one that's going to come on the whole earth to try them that dwell on the earth. To test them. And that's exactly what the tribulation is.

Now notice this, "them that dwell upon the earth," do you see that phrase? All that upon all the earth? It doesn't refer so much to geographical location as it does to the character of the people. You could probably translate it that shall come upon worldlings or earthlings. People who conform to the system.

A period of testing is coming on worldlings, but I'm going to keep you from it. Now let me show you another one. Go down to verse 15 and 16. This is the church at Laodicea, the apostate church of the last days. Verse 15, "And I know your works, you're neither cold nor hot, I would that you're cold or hot." In other words, you're nauseating. You know, there's one thing about drinking these. You want to...if they're supposed to be hot, you want them hot. There's nothing worse than lukewarm coffee.

I don't drink coffee, but that's what people say. I don't have any conviction, I just don't like the taste of it. And there's nothing worse than lukewarm water. If you want water, you want it cold. If you want coffee, you want it hot. The middle is rather nauseating. And God says to the church at Laodicea, "you are nauseating, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I'll spew you out of my mouth."

Laodicea is the last stage of the church, the final apostate church. If you look at these churches chronologically and there certainly is a justification for that at least as one interpretation. Philadelphia, watch this one, we just read about it. Philadelphia was the true church kept from the tribulation.

Laodicea is the false church that'll be vomited by Christ right into the tribulation. Do you know that in the tribulation the church is going to great guns. Why it's just going to dominate everything. Read Revelation 17, the church of the tribulation is going to have a hay day. All the apostates will get together, they'll have a wonderful be ecumenical hash, during the tribulation.

Now watch verse 20, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I'll come into him and sup with him and he with me. To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne."

He says to the Laodiceans get ready I'm coming. I'm knocking. I'm getting read to come. If you don't open great tribulation. If you do open, you will overcome and you'll come and sit with me. That's deliverance. Well the contrast between Philadelphia and Laodicea shows me that the false church will be in the tribulation, but the true church will be kept from the hour.

You see the church is something very distinct, very separated from Israel. God still has national purposes to fulfill with the nation Israel. And I'm so happy to be able to announce that. I was so happy to have a conversation with our guide in Israel that to tell him that God had some wonderful plans for the people of Israel.

And I felt like I had something to say instead of having to say that all Israel would ever have left is the curse. I'm so glad that I believe that when the Bible says the desert will blossom like a rose and that God will then after bringing the people back He'll begin a revival like Ezekiel said and He'll sprinkle clean water upon them and they shall be clean and He'll take the stony heart out and give them a heart of flesh and He'll plant His Spirit within them. And He'll love them and He'll restore them and He'll redeem them. I'm so glad I can say that to Israel.

Well, those are a few basic reasons why I believe initially that the nature of the church indicates we don't through the tribulation. Secondly, the nature of the tribulation also indicates it. The nature of the tribulation. You say what do you mean by that? I mean that that the tribulation was never designed for the church to begin with and the very fact of what it is eliminates us.

Let's begin where we begin. Deuteronomy 4:29, "But if from there thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul." Now watch, "When thou art in tribulation and all these things are come upon thee," you say oh MacArthur, that's just talking about having trouble. That's not...you can't make that the tribulation. No, that's ridiculous. Listen to the next statement, "even in the latter days." That's exactly what he's talking about.

According to verse 30, who's the tribulation for? Who's it for? Israel. Israel. Well, that's not the only Old Testament indication that tribulation is for Israel. Jeremiah Chapter 30, verse 7, here's a new name for the tribulation, some of you know it, some of you may have not heard it. Jeremiah 30, verse 7, "Alas for that day is great, so that none is like it. It is even the time of," what, "Jacob's trouble." I

love this, "But he shall be saved out of it. Who's the tribulation designed for? Jacob.

What name did God give Jacob? Israel. Tribulation's for Israel. The Jews are going to break the Gentile yoke in verse 8 and verse 9, the rule of God's going to come in the kingdom and they're going to have a new David, Messiah, reigning in verse 10, there's going to be peace and rest and oh glories.

And you know, you go to the New Testament it confirms it. You read Revelation 6 where the tribulation begins and in Chapter 19 the tribulation ends, and you'll never find one statement about the church. They're not in there, but you know what you will find? You'll find Israel all over the place from 6 to 19. Chapter 7 even delineates 12,000 from every tribe.

They're all there. Let me show you something else kind of exciting. The nature of the tribulation doesn't belong to us, because of what it says in Revelation 4:4. Revelation 4:4, interesting little footnote. Some people say verse 1 is a picture of the rapture, which could be, you know. It's a trumpet again. And it says "come up here." See? And John goes up and he might be a type of the church there. So that could be the rapture there and tribulation doesn't start until Chapter 6.

But basically look at verse 4, John gets up there in his vision and he says, "around about the throne were four and twenty thrones," 24 thrones, "and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting clothed in white raiment and they had on their heads crowns of gold."

You say why are you reading that? Because I believe those are representatives of the church and I have much reason to believe that we've covered that in detail in our tape on Revelation 4, but let me just say that I feel that this is the church, because first of all this was promised to the church that the church would reign with Christ, and there would be thrones.

Not only that the white raiment is definitely the clothes of the redeemed church. It appears as such in several places. The word crowns is not diademas the crown of king, it is Stephanas the crown of a victor. The same word that is used to speak of the crowns of the church winds here on earth.

There are other reasons. I believe also that 24 is the priestly number from 1 Chronicles, and that we are believer priests and here is the representative of the church...a representation of the church in terms of its priestly character as it ministers before the throne of God. And that's only...there are many, many other little things that can be brought into the discussion to verify that this is indeed the church.

The church then is seen, watch this now, in the vision in heaven in Chapter 4. And Revelation is fairly chronological. The tribulation starts in Chapter 6. The church is in heaven in Chapter 4. We can't be in the tribulation because we've already been in heaven for two chapters.

And then I like what the elders do in verse 10, "The four and twenty elders fell down before Him that's seated on the throne and worshiped Him that liveth forever and ever and they cast their crowns before the throne."

We win a crown for the Lord Jesus Christ and we have the marvelous joy of casting it at His feet. Beloved, I don't think we're going through the tribulation. I see us in heaven as a part of the throne,

singing praise to God. John is there and he's perhaps the picture to the church.

When I think about the future, do you know what I think about? I think about the fact that Jesus is coming. And I'm not looking for the tribulation and I'm not looking for the antichrist, I'm looking for Jesus Himself. We believe Jesus is coming and we want to be ready when He gets here. I hope you're ready.

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