

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Will the Church Go Through the Tribulation?, Part 3

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1326

We're continuing in our study of prophetic themes and tonight find ourselves dealing with the subject will the church go through the tribulation. This is the third part in the message and deals with some most exciting passages.

As Ron was singing that song I couldn't help but realize that deep down when all of the fluff and façade is ripped away men are really afraid, they're scared, and they're afraid really of God, or that there may be a God, if they're not sure. And they're afraid that judgment may come from a holy God on an unholy man and, believe me, men have a right to fear because you see all of man's history is the history of rebellion. All of man's history is the history of antagonizing God, whether you're talking about man after man or nation after nation or civilization after civilization, it's all the same history of rebellion.

And you can believe it, men have a right to be afraid because the Bible says, "God is going to judge those in rebellion against

Him." He always has in the past and the man who thinks he can

live his life in rebellion against God and get away with it is a fool. It can't be done. Peter dealt with this issue most significantly in II Peter 2:4. Look with me at those verses as a beginning for our study tonight.

Peter lays down principles here. He says, "For it God spared not the angels that sinned but cast them down to hell and delivered them in chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment, and if God spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person of righteousness in a flood on the ungodly," then verse 6, "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow," we'll stop right there because the stage is set. If God destroyed angels that sinned, the old world that sinned, Sodom and Gomorrah that sinned, are you such a fool to think that you can sin and get away with it? Are you such a fool to believe that there never will be judgment?

Over in Chapter 3 the critics say, "Oh where is the sign of His coming? He'll never come in judgment." And Peter says, "They are willingly ignorant of past performance on the part of God. They've forgotten the flood." The flood stands as a monument to the judgment of God against sin. He destroyed the whole earth in a flood, drowning every single individual except for eight souls and he

did it in judgment against sin. And a man thinks that God doesn't judge sin is a fool.

Verse 10 of II Peter 3 says, "The day of the Lord will come. The heavens will pass away with a great noise. The elements shall melt with fervent heat. The earth also and the works that are in it shall be burned up. When God destroyed the world by water He put a rainbow in the sky to show that He promised to never destroy the world by water again. He did not promise never to destroy the world again, only by water. Next time by fire.

God is going to judge and the judgment that is coming upon men is called in the Bible the Day of the Lord. Another term that is used to describe it is the tribulation. There's an interesting prophecy in the Old Testament in the Book of Zephaniah and let me just share with you something of what the prophet Zephaniah says in Chapter 1, verse 14. He's speaking about the great future Day of the Lord, also called the tribulation, and he says beginning in 14, Zephaniah is about four books from the end of the Old Testament, I know happiness is sitting next to somebody who knows where Zephaniah is. Verse 14 says, "The great day of the Lord, it is near, it is near. And here's a prophetic preview: and hasteneth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord, the mighty man shall cry there bitterly, bitterly.

See the picture in Revelation of all of the judgments that come and the terrible destruction that comes upon the captains and the mighty men? Zephaniah prophesied it. Verse 15, "That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of waste and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers." In other words all the armaments of men will not stand.

Verse 17: "And I will bring distress upon men that they shall walk like blind men." Revelation says that there will be a period of time when all will be darkness. "Because they have sinned against the Lord." Now this is a prophecy of the tribulation time, the great day of the Lord that comes as a result of sin. "And their blood shall be poured out like dust." You remember at the battle of Armageddon that the blood is as deep as the horse's bridles for an area of 200 miles. "And their flesh like the dung. Neither shall their silver nor their gold be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath, but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all those that dwell in the land."

Now here's a prophecy of tremendous judgment. This prophecies the tribulation. Now God said He was going to destroy the world. He told Noah and He said, "Noah build a boat," and everybody thought Noah was an idiot, but God judged. And God warned Sodom and Gomorrah and God judged. And God has warned the world again that judgment is coming and men may say it isn't, but it is. God's past performance on the basis of what He promises is 100% perfect and that judgment was prophesied as far back as the prophet Zephaniah who lived many thousand years ago in the Old Testament times, at least over 2,000 years ago and he saw what God would bring in the end times.

Now as I said this is also called the tribulation time. The questions that we're studying is this: this great period of judgment that's coming upon the earth is inevitable, but does the church of Jesus Christ redeemed saints washed in the blood of the lamb, those of us that are the body of Christ, do we go through that time or do we leave before the time begins? And we've seen that there are some who say we go through it, some who say we leave in the middle, and we believe we leave before it begins. And we've endeavored to substantiate that from three areas of proof: one, the nature of the church proves a pre-tribulation rapture, two, the nature of the tribulation itself proves a pre-tribulation rapture, three, the nature of the second coming at the end of the rapture proves a pre-tribulation rapture.

Point number one, we said this: we do not believe the church goes through the tribulation because of the nature of the church. Because of what it is does not belong in the tribulation. We've seen this in detail. The church is a parenthesis. It's a parenthesis in God's dealing with Israel. It started at Pentecost, it had its own beginning. It has its own ending. It begins and ends and God goes right back to dealing with Israel. We made a clear distinction between the church and Israel. The rapture is an exclusive event for the church. It is part of the mystery. Paul even said in I Corinthians 15, "Behold I show you a mystery." And part of the whole mystery of the church was the mystery of catching away the church.

We remembered in John 14 that Jesus told His disciples about it and they couldn't understand because it had no point of reference in Judaism. It strictly belonged to the church. So based on the special nature of the church, the church has no place in the tribulation. We closed out that discussion in Revelation 4:4, and I'll only remind you of it for just a moment because several people asked so I'll take a moment on Revelation 4:4.

Now there's a chronology in the Book of Revelation. In the first chapter you have just a presentation of Christ and some general things about what's going to happen. But in Chapter 2 the church is pictured on earth. In Chapter 3 the church is pictured on earth. And in Chapter 4 we're introduced to some interesting individuals. Verse 4 we all of a sudden pop up to heaven and we get up to heaven in verse 4 and incidentally the tribulation hasn't started. It doesn't start until Chapter 6 so we're in Chapter 4 in heaven. And it says in verse 4, "Round about the throne were four and twenty thrones and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment they had on their heads crowns of gold." Now verse 10 says, "the four and twenty elders fall down before him that seated on the throne and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever and cast their crowns before the throne saying, 'Thou art worthy O Lord,'" and so forth. Now here we meet 24 elders. Some people think these are angels. I do not think they are angels because nowhere in Scripture are angels ever called elders. Since angels do not have a concept of age the term elder would be misapplied if granted to angels. Elder basically means just what it is, elder, older, mature, experienced. Angels are as old now as when they were created. They have no concept of time related to their existence.

Others say that these are Old Testament saints. Incidentally if you can confirm that this is the church, then you've got the church in heaven before the tribulation, see. So it's an important point. So if you want to make sure the church goes through the tribulation you got to do something with the 24 elders. They can't be the church. So some say they are Old Testament saints. Well that's a problem and the reason for that is in Chapter 5, verse 9, because here the 24 elders sing. Now you know what they sing? They sing a new song and the song is this: now watch it. "Thou art worthy to take the scroll and open its seal," singing to Christ. "For thou was slain as redeemed us to God by thy blood, wash, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation." That's not Israel, right? I do not believe that the 24 elders are Israel, nor do I believe that half of them are Israel and the other half are the apostles. Some say the 12 of them are the 12 representatives of the 12 tribes. That can't be. They had been redeemed from every tribe and kindred and tongue and nation. Now that only characterizes one group. Which group? The church.

Again, the white raiment in verse 4 of Chapter 4 is the symbol of the church's purity. Again, the crowns that they wear on their heads is not the word *diatomah*, which would be a kingly crown, but the word *stephanas*, a victor's crown. Who is promised again and again and again the victor's crown? The church. And the joy of the church in Chapter 4:10 casting their crowns where? At the feet of Jesus Christ. I believe, clearly, the 24 elders are the church. If so they're in heaven before the tribulation begins.

We told you last time we'd beat it by two chapters. Great day! All right. Then the first reason we believe that the church does not go through the tribulation is by virtue of the nature of the church, just because of what the church is. Second thing, we do not believe the church goes through the tribulation because of what the tribulation is, the nature of the tribulation.

First of all, and we'll get into this point now. First of all the tribulation is for Israel. That's A under Roman numeral II. In fact, Jeremiah, we saw last week, calls it the time of loose trouble, Jacob's trouble. And we saw several Old Testament passages including even as old as Deuteronomy indicating the tribulation was coming on Israel. When Christ came the first time Israel was His object. When Messiah came to earth He came to Israel, right? He came to offer Israel the kingdom. He did not come to Gentiles. When Gentiles even tried to get involved there is no indication that He moved toward Gentiles. In fact, the one lady said, "At least we should be able to lick the crumbs that fall off the table if we can't get in to dinner." And there was an occasion where some Gentiles wanted to see Jesus and the apostles reported that fact to Jesus and nothing in Scripture ever says that He went to see them. He came initially to Israel.

He came as David's son and he came to set up David's throne. He came to set up the promised kingdom as their Messiah king. And, of course, what did they do? They all screamed, "Away with Him, away with Him, we will not have this man to do" what? "To reign over us." All right they rejected

the king. The nation of Israel willfully, consciously, rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah. As a result of that, God set about to punish them for their rejection. Believe it, God punishes anybody who rejects. There is no special punishment against Israel other than the fact that to whom much is given much shall be required. So the intensity of the punishment is greater because the intensity of revelation was greater.

But God punishes all those who reject Christ. And the nation rejected and God began the punishment of Israel. And you and I know today that because of Israel's will for rejection God has blinded them in a judicial act and their blindness is maintained until the tribulation time when God brings about the final judgment on Israel for rejection and at the same redeems out of Israel those who believe.

Now they were guilty of the death of their king. And you know you can try to pacify your conscience on that and try to be nice and loving to Jewish people and indeed we ought to be. If any Christian has anything but love for Israel there's something wrong because that's all God has for them. That's all Jesus ever had for them, that's all Paul, Peter, or anybody else had for them. Anti-Semitism of any kind is absolutely intolerable, but we cannot at the same token excuse Israel from the death of Christ. The Pope may do that, we can't do that biblically. The reason we can't do that is because we have Peter's words. Peter says, "You did it, not once, but several times." And that's why he kept getting into trouble obviously. Jerusalem was not the safest place to make that kind of pronouncement.

Now because of their rejection of Christ listen to what Jesus said. He said this, don't look it up just listen, Matthew 23:38-39. He said this: "Behold your house is left to you desolate." Now listen, "For I say unto you, you shall not see Me again until you say, 'blessed is He who come in the name of the Lord.' Jesus said, 'You are left desolate.'" You will be blind and you will never see Me again until you acknowledge Me as your Messiah. In Luke 21:24 he said, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Israel was being punished century after century for the rejection of Christ.

And you know what happens in the tribulation? Zechariah tells us the punishment becomes hot and heavy and two out of every three Jews is slaughtered in the tribulation. It's the summation, the climax of Israel's rejection of the Messiah. The tribulation, beloved, is for the purpose of judgment on Israel.

Now let me support that again by looking at Ezekiel 20:33. "As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand and outstretched arm and with fury poured out will I rule over you." Now He's talking to Israel, "I'll bring you out of the peoples, and gather you out of the countries in which you are scattered with a mighty hand with an outstretched arm and with fury poured out. I'll bring you into the wilderness of the peoples and there will I enter into," what, "judgment with you face to face."

Now God says I'm going to re-gather you Israel and I'm going to enter into judgment. Now have you and I seen the re-gathering? Believe us we have, haven't we? Marvelous things that we've seen God

doing re-gathering Israel from about the world planting them in the land and He's gathering them for a judgment. He says in 36, "As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness in the land of Egypt, so will I enter into judgment with you. I'll cause you to pass under the rod. I'll bring you into the bond of the covenant. I'll purge out from among you the rebels." People always say well what it says in Romans 11:25, "all Israel shall be saved," does it mean every Jew in the nation Israel at the time of the tribulation? No. There will be rebels, but watch this. They will be the exception. The vast majority of the nation will be saved, the rebels purged out.

So judgment will come. He's going to purge the rebels out and them that transgress Me I will stop them. God says there's coming a time in the future I'm going to re-gather Israel for the purpose of judgment. Beloved, first of all the tribulation is for the judgment of Israel. Secondly it is for the salvation of Israel. The Bible is very clear that during the tribulation when the judgment comes on Israel it is also the time when salvation comes to Israel and they look on Him whom they have pierced and they mourn for Him as an only son. And they will say what Jesus said, they will say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord and they will be saved." The tribulation is Israel's time.

Now the clearest passage on this is Daniel 9. Let's go to Daniel 9 and let's look at the 70 weeks of Daniel. Of course a very important prophecy, Daniel 9:24. Now put on your thinking caps. Verse 24 says this, and here incidentally finds two marvelous things. We could just spend weeks on this prophecy alone, but two things I want you to note. This prophecy is a classic prophecy and one that everybody ought to understand because it defends the literal interpretation of prophecy. It's a great support for a literal view. You know there always people who want to explain all the prophecies away sort of metaphorically or figuratively, but this is very literal. Secondly it's important because it's the chronology of the history of Israel. Verse 24, "Seventy weeks," now that's clear, "are determined upon thy people," who would that be? Israel and that's Daniel's people, "upon thy holy city." What would that be? Jerusalem. "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness," what would that be? That would be the kingdom, wouldn't it? Sure. Now watch, "to seal up the vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy," who would that be? Crowning the Messiah. Now watch, he says seventy weeks of history are determined upon Israel until everything ends and the kingdom comes with Messiah reigning. That's what the verse says. It's got to be a final thing because everything is a final. Finish the transgression, make an end of sins, seal up the vision and prophecy, bring in everlasting righteousness, anoint the most holy. Boy that's final stuff isn't it? The end, the finish, the seal, seal it up, close it off, that's the way it is. All right now.

Seventy weeks are determined in the history of Israel until the kingdom begins. That's an important prophecy, folks. That's very important. You say well spread it out a little bit so I can get it. All right, I will. Listen. The seventy weeks are weeks of years. The term weeks literally means just a regular week, but is used from time to time in the Hebrew to refer to periods of seven, and here it obviously it refers to periods of seven years. Now watch. Seventy times seven years, rather than seven days

would be one week, it's a week of years. So, seventy times seven is 490 years are determined upon Israel's history. You say you mean it says there it's going to be 490 years of Israel's history? If we could find out when it began we'd know when the kingdom was going to come. Exactly. That kind of gets exciting.

Now biblical years are years of 360 days, not 365 but 360. We know this by comparing three different passages in the book of Genesis. And as we compare them and the annotations that are given we find out that the Old Testament calendar counting was based on a 360-day year. And you're saying to yourself well tell us when it began so we know when it ends. All right. Verse 25 tells you. "No therefore," I don't want you to be ignorant, "and understand it begins from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem." That's when it began. You say do we know when that was? Absolutely, that date is set in history. The date? March 14, 445 B.C. Artaxerxes gave the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. That date is a known date. And I'll tell you something fascinating. You start on March 14, 445 B.C. now let's look at verse 25 and it says, "From the going forth of that commandment unto the Messiah, the prince, this is the Messiah as he's presented as prince and king, "shall be seven weeks and three score and two weeks, which adds up to how many? 69. Now watch. So you've still got an extra seven years hanging on, right? All right. From the decree of Artaxerxes to Messiah, the Prince, will be what amounts to 483 years. You subtract 7 from 490 because there's one week left out, 69 weeks.

You want to hear something thrilling? Sir Robert Anderson took the number of days involved started on March 14th 445 B.C. and added exactly the amount of days and came to the date April 6, 32 A.D. And according to Sir Robert Anderson, who had done almost all of the historical work in this, that is the very day Jesus rode into Jerusalem and announced Himself as king. You say what's the significance of that. The significance of it number one is God is right on the dime. Number two it supports the fact that prophecy is to be taken literally. You see what I'm saying. That is a literal prophecy. When people come to the Bible and want to mush up all the prophecy into figures they are violating a principle that Daniel will adhere to, a literal interpretation. Now that's obvious. Right on the day He rode into the city Messiah, the Prince. On that very day, you want to hear something exciting? On that very day that Jesus rode into that city I believe that He knew He was fulfilling that. You say, boy God had to do some kind of arranging to bring that one off. That's no problem for God. Details, details. And you know the Lord knew perfectly well exactly what He was doing.

Let me show you a passage that absolutely thrills me. Luke 19, and I'll show you how Christ was right on schedule and He knew it. Luke 19:28, he says, "And when He had thus spoken He went ahead ascending to Jerusalem." Now it's Palm Sunday April 6, 32 A.D. "And it came to pass came near Bethphage Bethany, etc. the Mount of Olives, sent two of His disciples," he went through that little deal to get the foal of an ass, a colt. You know why He did all that? Because Zechariah 9:9 said that's exactly what He'd do. So He was arranging all the prophecies. He arranged them right up to the time of the cross and He was arranging them while He was hanging on the cross. The Bible even says that

He knew all things were fulfilled so He died.

So here's He arranging everything and He takes care of getting the colt and the foal of an ass so he can fulfill Zechariah 9:9. That runs all the way down through verse well the whole section really. Then you come to verse 37. This is great. "And when He was come near even at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen saying, 'Blessed be the King that commeth in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven and glory in the highest.'" And you know what they were doing? They were reciting the Hal ell from Psalm 118 fulfilling more prophecy. God had everybody fulfilling prophecy.

And I love this: verse 39. "And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto Him, 'Master rebuke thy disciples.'" What are they doing calling you this king and so forth? He says unto them, "I tell you if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Why? Prophecy's got to be fulfilled. If they would shut up God will have the rocks saying it.

Now we know something spectacular is going on here. I mean this is all calculated. But most important of all we have it from the lips of Jesus. He knew what he was doing. Look at verse 42. He's crying now seeing Jerusalem. He said, "If thou hadst known, if thou hadst known even thou at least in this thy day." You know that He knew what day it was? He said if you really knew what day it was, if you had known Daniel's prophecy and you knew that on the 173880th day I would be here if you'd have known what day it was. "Oh the things that belong your peace but now are they hidden from your eyes."

And what were the things that belonged to them? To make an end of sin, to finish the transgression, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to anoint the most holy, everything that Daniel had prophesied in Daniel 24 was to be for them if they only knew what day it was. They didn't know. They didn't know. And you know what He said then? Your enemies are going to prevail, your city is going to be wiped out and judgment is going to begin. Look at verse 43, "For the day shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, compass thee round, and keep thee on every side and shall lay thee even with the ground," flatten you, "and they children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the" what? "the time of thy visitation." You didn't know what you should have known. They didn't know what day it was. It was God's day for fulfillment of prophecy. Oh how sad.

Let's go back to Daniel 9 and see what happens now. "Now after the 69 weeks," we pick it up in verse 26, "after the seven weeks and three score and two weeks shall Messiah be," what? "cut off." Is that accurate? At the end of 69 weeks they wouldn't accept Him as a king so they killed him. Messiah cut off means the cross. What happened after that? But not for himself. Isn't that beautiful. Daniel said when he dies it won't be because of himself, He'll be dying for you. And the people of the Prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. What happened in 70 A.D.? They wiped out

Jerusalem. That's going to happen. "And the end of it shall be with a flood and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." Messiah, the Prince will come but you won't know what time it is and you'll kill your Messiah and in 70 A.D. your city will be wiped out.

You say MacArthur that's only 69 weeks. How many left? How many years left on Israel's history? How long is the tribulation? Then whose is the tribulation? Israel's. Look at verse 27. And here's a picture of antichrist. He shall confirm the covenant with many. Many refers to Israel. For how long? One week. Beloved, the 70th week of Daniel is the 7-year tribulation. And isn't it exciting that you don't know the times and the seasons? Why? Because God put a gap between 69 and 70 of an undefined time. In the midst of that seven years the antichrist is going to cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. What happens is he makes a covenant with Israel, gives them back the temple, gives them back their worship and they're having a great time for three and a half years worshipping and all of a sudden he comes cracking down on the worship and he makes it desolate and then there's horrors even until the consummation, "and then that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." Great judgment!

So he says the tribulation. We'll talk more about that prophecy when we talk specifically about the tribulation. What I want you to get there is there's still seven weeks of Israel's history. Let me ask you this: was the church in the first 69? No. What would we be doing in the 70th? We are the parenthesis between the two. The tribulation is for Israel. Now there's got to be a gap between the 69th and 70th week. You know some commentators say the 70th week followed immediately after the 69th? How could that happen? It says that the consummation will follow the 7th week, doesn't it? The consummation of everything. I mean if the seven years came right after the 69th that wouldn't even make it the 70 A.D. to get the temple destroyed, you see. There has to be a gap. And look how in the text there's obviously a connection, there's obviously a gap.

Let me show you another one. This is, I get going on this, Matthew 24, hmm this is interesting. Immediately after the tribulation of those days, now if the tribulation followed the first 69, right? If the first 69 weeks came to April 6, 32 A.D. then the 70th week was from April 6, 32 A.D. to 39 A.D. Now if that happened look at 29, "Immediately after the 70th week or tribulation the sun is going to be darkened and the moon shall not give its light, the stars shall fall from heaven, the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, and then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven." Listen, if there's no gap Jesus came in 39 A.D. Do you believe that? I don't believe that. I don't believe that. Verse 31, "He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet and gather together the elect from the four winds." I mean he did that in 39 A.D.? What are we doing? Can't be. It absolutely can't be. All right there's got to be a gap. What's the gap? The gap is the church. Between God's dealing with Israel 69 weeks and one week God called out the church because this is a period of Israel's unbelief. The church will leave, God will go back to dealing with Israel, He'll judge them and He'll redeem them. At the end of that seven year period the kingdom comes, finishes sin, ends transgression, brings in righteousness, anoints the most holy. Did you get all that? It's a glorious

thing. Isn't it fantastic how accurate Scripture is? It's amazing. I don't see how anybody can deny it.

So the tribulation is _____. Incidentally if you read Revelation 6 to 19, which describes the tribulation, you'll find Israel all through there and never find the church. In Chapter 7 you have 12,000 from every tribe don't you? 144,000. In Chapter 12 you have the woman who is running, and who is the woman? Israel who gave birth to the child who is Christ, chased by the dragon who is Satan and the ground opens and swallows up the antichrist army. I'd like to see that.

All right, then because of what the tribulation is the church isn't going to be there. Secondly, it is for the ungodly. The tribulation is designed for the ungodly and quickly I'll just show you a couple of points on this. In the time of Nebuchadnezzar Gentiles captured Israel, Gentile nations. And it has been under Gentile rule ever since that time and this is what is known as the times of the Gentiles. Now Israel has gained back some control of its land, but not all of it. You remember in the covenant originally given to Abraham the land was from the Mediterranean to what? The Euphrates River. Now they don't have anywhere near that. They're barely squeaking on the east side of Jerusalem. And you know when you go down to Jericho it's interesting, you take a trip down to Jericho, which is down and everybody is very careful. We went down to Jericho and went up the road and tanks are crossing in front of the bus, you know, and the Arabs are up on the other hill over there taking pot shots at the people down at the Dead Sea, so you can't claim that Israel is in its land in the full sense of the promise. Gentiles still control it.

Now watch, during the tribulation even more Gentile control is going to be exerted. The revived Roman Empire is really going to lay controls on the whole world. But God is going to judge the godless nations and the tribulation time is a time of judgment. At the end of the tribulation according to Matthew 25, there's what is known as the judgment of the nations and we'll study this in detail as well. Matthew 25 describes how God's going to judge the nations that are ungodly, as to how they treated Israel, judgment on living Gentiles. And it's a condemning kind of judgment. There are many passages, many verses I should say that we could read, but let me just read you this statement: he talks in Matthew 25 about the specifics of judgment. He says, "depart from me you cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Now this is a time of horrible judgment.

Now the church isn't even there. The church doesn't belong there. This is Israel's time and it's God's time to judge the ungodly. Let me show you another verse in Luke 21:36, which I'll just read it to you, you don't need to look it up. Luke 21:36, "Watch ye therefore and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." You know you have an alternative. He says to Israel you don't have to go through the tribulation. All of that judgment that's coming upon the living nations you may escape it all and you won't be there, you'll be standing in the presence of the Son of man. I believe I'm going to be with Jesus in His very presence when all the judgment's going on. That's the alternative offer. You know God set a precedent, II Peter 2:6. You know I read you earlier, but he says here, God is going to

condemn Sodom and Gomorrah but he says he delivered just Lot cause he was righteous. You know what that does? That says that whenever God gets ready to judge he delivers the righteous. God got ready to wipe out the world with water, but who did He deliver? Noah and his family. You know something? Watch God, He tends to be consistent. And if God was consistent enough to deliver the righteous all the way along when it comes to the full fury of His wrath on the ungodly then in the consistency of the nature of God He'll remove the righteous. Look at verse 9. "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation and to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment. The tribulation is for the unjust. It's for the ungodly. God know how to deliver the godly out of those kind of things. He's done it in the past. He got Lot and the whole gang out of Sodom and Gomorrah except Lot's wife who was really a part of Sodom and Gomorrah.

So there's a general principle of God delivering saints from times of judgment on the ungodly. God doesn't include the saints in judgment on the ungodly. To those who are in Christ there is no condemnation, no judgment. He reserves that for the ungodly.

Let me summarize that point in Ezekiel 36. Verse 28 kind of summarizes, okay? This summarizes the point I've been trying to make. "And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers and you shall be my people and I'll be your God." This is future for Israel. "And I'll save you from all your uncleanness and call for the grain and increase it and lay no famine upon you." Now go down to verse, this is the blessings coming, but verse 31, "Then shall you remember your own evil ways and your doings that were not good and loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this saith the Lord God, be it known unto you, be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel."

In other words it's all by grace. "Thus saith the Lord God, in the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities and the wastes shall be built." Now verse 36, "And the nations that are left round about you shall know that I, the Lord, build the ruined places and plant that which was desolate. I the Lord have spoken it, I will do it."

Now go back to verse 22 and 23. "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake." You know why God does what He does? For His own glory! "Which you have profaned among the nations and I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the nations."

Now go down in that same verse, "And the nations shall know that I am the Lord." And you know something beloved? In those few verses you have two things. God is coming in a time of tribulation. First of all for what nation? Israel. Secondly for the nations. You see it? He's saying Israel shall know, the nations shall know. The tribulation is for Israel and the ungodly nations. Church is not in here.

There's another factor in the tribulation, third one. Speaking of the nature of the tribulation it tells me the church can't be there. II Thessalonians 2:7, oh this is just terrific. II Thessalonians 2:7, now this again is proof the church can't be there because of what the tribulation's like. Let me ask you a question. Where does the Holy Spirit live? In us, right? In the church or in the believer, not in the building. Now watch this: "For the mystery of iniquity," verse 7, II Thessalonians 2, "the mystery of iniquity is already at work." Now he's talking about tribulation time, this whole section here, "But he who now hinders will continue to hinder until he be taken out of the way, then shall that wicked one be revealed." Who is it who in the world hinders evil? Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit. Some of the saints in Thessalonica, as I told you, thought they were in tribulation. But Paul says that's impossible because it can't have happened. There has to be the man of sin, the mystery of iniquity and all these things, the wicked one, the lying wonders and all that and you haven't seen that, and he says in verse 7, that the Holy Spirit will be taken away. He will be taken out of the way. Now beloved, this is terrific. In whom does the Spirit live? Us. If He goes, guess what? We go! Right! You got that one. See the indwelling Spirit is the mark of the Christian. Jesus said to His disciples, He shall be in you, John 14. That's the mark of the believer. If He goes we go. He's not going to leave us here without the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 2:22 says the church is built together for inhabitation of the Spirits. If the church goes the restrainer goes. If the restrainer goes, the church goes. You say doesn't He do something in the tribulation. Sure. He works like He did in the Old Testament. Not in an indwelling sense, but in a work like in the Old Testament. You see then just from three simple things about the tribulation, it's for Israel, it's for godless nations and the Spirit won't be here that we can't be here?

Lastly, and I'm just going to rattle off a few thoughts I'll get 'em. We're not going to be in the tribulation because the second coming, the nature of the second coming disallows it. You say what do you mean by that? I mean this: you can't have, you say will we go through the tribulation and we're raptured at the end. Then you know what we get, that thing we talked about last week, up and down. Rapture and back see. If you've got the rapture and the second coming at the same time how can we be going up to meet him in the air while He's coming down to set His feet on the Mount of Olives? There's going to be a collision.

Now let me show you. At the rapture Olive is untouched. The Bible says nothing about Mount of Olives at the rapture. At the second coming it's split. At the rapture living saints are translated. At the second coming no saints are translated. At the rapture the body goes to heaven. At the second coming it comes to earth. He comes for His saints and then He comes with His saints. At the rapture the world is not judged and sin gets worse. At the second coming the world is judged and sin is dealt with. At the rapture is imminent, no signs, no warning. The second coming is preceded by very specific detailed signs. The rapture concerns only the saved. The second coming concerns the saved and the lost. Beloved they have to be separate. They have to be. So the tribulation will come. And you know what will happen in the tribulation? Men will probably repent with all that judgment. Well

Revelation says they blaspheme the God of heaven because of their sores and they would not repent. Sad isn't it. It's a terrible time for sinners. I don't think it's a time for Christians. I don't think so. Let's pray.

Our Father we know that we're not appointed unto wrath and like the early church at Thessalonica we're looking for the Lord Jesus Christ who has promised to deliver us from the wrath to come. And we believe, Lord, that You can't begin the judgment until we get out of here. Father we're looking for Jesus and we believe that He could come at any moment, but oh Lord, even as we heard earlier there are lonely voices in this world who's loneliness is only going to be infinitely multiplied in such a terrible time because they're going to be left. God may it not be so. If there's anyone in this place tonight who had not settled their life issue with Jesus Christ, may they do it tonight. May they be one of His children for whom He comes. May they be with us looking for His appearing, for that day when we meet Him face to face and are like Him. Father as we sing a closing hymn speak to hearts. Give us a sense of urgency. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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