Grace Evangelical Free Church January 15, 2023

**John 14:3** The Church and the Tribulation

In our last study we saw that the Tribulation is a period of unparalleled trouble because of God’s judgments. Where will the Church be when this terrible time is ushered in?

**John 14:3**: **“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.**”

* **Grammatical Usage:** “will come” or in the Greek, “erchomai” affirming both a promise and action.
* **Literal Interpretation:** “**It is true that I am going away to prepare a place for you, but it is just as true that I am coming again to welcome you into my own home, so that you may be where I am.**”
* **Contextual/Comparison:** God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. The Church will be removed from the earth before the Tribulation. Grounds for this:
1. When we consider the nature of the Church, her calling, her place in the divine program and her relationship to Christ, the Church cannot go through the Tribulation.

The Church is a “**called-out**” company of believers, of Jews and Gentiles from every nation under Heaven (**Acts 15:14**). The place of the Church in the divine program is in the nature of a parenthesis, and that parenthesis ends with the “**mystery**” of the Rapture (**1 Cor. 15:51-53**; **1 Thess. 4:16-17**). When the Church has been completed and raptured, then the prophecies relating to Israel will take up their course again. Moreover, consider the relationship of the Church to Christ (**Eph. 5:31-32**). The Church is the Bride of Christ, and to make the Church go through the Tribulation would be to subject Christ Himself a second time to the visitation of God’s wrath, negating Jesus’ statement on the cross, “**It is finished**” (**John 19:30**). Specifically, see **Revelation 3:10**.

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

If it had been part of the divine program that the Church should pass through the Tribulation, would not our Lord have referred to this fact and have warned His disciples and us of it? Yet in **John 13-17**, where He was speaking to “**His own**”, not a mention is made of the Tribulation. He only spoke of this in **Matthew 24-25**; **Mark 13**; and **Luke 21**. But these statements and warnings have no relation to the Church at all. Our Savior’s great word to the Church is **John 14:1-3**. In addition to this, when we turn to the Epistles, which were written specifically for the Church, here again we find there is no word of warning to believers to prepare for the Tribulation.

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

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

1. The scriptures expressly teach that the believer is delivered from wrath and that judgment is past; but the Tribulation is a time of fearful judgment, the “**wrath of the Lamb**”.

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

1. In the **Revelation**, most of which is a panoramic view of future events, the

Church is represented as being in Heaven before the Tribulation period begins.

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

1. In the Old Testament there are three typical analogies which are violated by the teaching that the Church will go through the Tribulation:
* The translation of Enoch before the judgment of the Flood (**Gen. 5:24**; **Heb. 11:5**) - typical of the rapture of the living saints (**1 Thess. 4:17**), prior to the time of fearful judgment upon the earth;
* The preservation of Noah and his family through the flood (**Gen. 7:1,16**) - typical of the preservation of Israel during the Tribulation when, because of the fierceness of the time, God will shorten the period of judgment for His elect’s sake (**Matthew 24:22**).
* The deliverance of Lot from Sodom (**Gen. 19:22**) - the Lord says of His Church now, “**I cannot do anything (in judgment)**” until Lot and his family are safe.
1. Believers in this world are declared to be God’s Ambassadors beseeching sinners to be reconciled to Him (**2 Corinthians 5:20**).

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

* **Conclusion**: To avoid the Tribulation, one must have confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior with your mouth – reflecting your heart’s desire for forgiveness and salvation.