

The Tribulation *distinguished from* The Wrath of God.

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 Thessalonians 5. 9.

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.”

Revelation 20. 6.

“This is the Father’s will Which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.”

John 6. 39.

MANY dear children of God still seem to misunderstand the great tribulation. Their affection for the Coming of Christ is refreshing. We would only intensify *this*, but, as *truth* sanctifies, is it not important that we should seek the whole of God’s truth, and view everything in the light of

the sanctuary? The Holy Spirit Himself distinguishes the tribulation from the AFTER-tribulation and judgment on them who cause it (2 Thess. 1. 6). *The great tribulation* is the time of *Satan's* wrath (Rev. 12. 12), and the Holy Spirit, when speaking of believers, never links the great tribulation with God's wrath, but expressly *keeps back* both the words "wrath" and "indignation" in the book of Revelation till the *sixth* seal, and the *seventh* trumpet. It is viewed as a pruning time of blessing for saints, and definitely associated with a *heavenly* people, quite as much as with Israel. Daniel 7 emphasizes the saints of the *high places*, and Daniel 8 the *stars*; Rev. 12 shows a woman with a heavenly position. There is NO *Scripture* which removes this heavenly people before the tribulation, NO *promise* of separation from it, away from this earth, is to be found, but clear testimony, on the other hand, that there will be a receiving in the air afterwards,¹ and that the time of promised *rest* is the *revelation* of the Lord Jesus in flaming fire (2 Thess. 1. 7).

¹ The Coming to deliver Israel's remnant is down to the earth, as Zechariah 12 shows, and from Edom (Isa. 63. 1) via the tents of Judah (Zech. 12. 7) to Jerusalem: quite a contrast with Matthew 24. 31.

To many this comes as a *surprise*. They have pointed to 1 Thessalonians 5. 9 (“ God **hath not** appointed us to *wrath* ”) and read Revelation 3. 10 (“ I also will keep thee from the *hour of temptation* ”), and have assumed, without any real Scriptural evidence, that the great tribulation, the wrath, and the hour are identical.² But the Holy Spirit has NOT identified them. He has used *different* words, and shown contrasts in *characteristics*. Saints WILL be kept from the hour, but the great tribulation is NOT placed in “ the Day of the Lord ”; on the contrary, in *man's* day (Acts 2. 20 with Matt. 24. 29, 30).³ It has been objected, reverently and earnestly, that we ought to distinguish “ the day of the Lord ” from “ the great and terrible day of the Lord. ” Every quiet and serious suggestion of this kind should be prayerfully weighed.

² May we lay stress on this tendency to repeat the attractive words of others, **without Scripture proof**? When almost all infidels refer to Genesis 4, and MISquote it, we lament the parrot-like use of arguments against God's words. How much more saddening is the attitude of believers, if they quote others without seeking more definitely to know their Lord's exact words.

³ Leaflets on “ The Hour ” may help.

Has there not been too much offhandedness among God's dear people in the past? But this suggestion hardly seems to stand. The proposed proof-passages that "the day of the Lord" starts before the signs in the sun and the moon, are Isaiah chapters 13, 24 and 34, and Joel 2, but both Isaiah 13 and Joel 2 emphasize rather that the day of the Lord is "*nigh*," and the word "then" is only in the English of Isaiah 24. 23: there is no postponement in the Hebrew, but a stress on the characteristics of the change of dispensation, and the glory of the Lord beyond everything in nature. Isaiah 34 seems to me to synchronize with that which is brought before us as the manifestation of the Lord's sword "bathed in heaven": would any one suggest that verse 2 is *before* "the great and terrible day of the Lord"? If *not*, there seems no evidence here of an earlier beginning for the day of the Lord at all. Returning to Joel 2, I have rather thought that verse 11 implies that "the day" is definitely "the great and terrible day" of verse 31, and that this great day is the beginning of the 1,000 years' day (compare the literal day when Adam died legally and morally, and the 1,000 years' day within which his body died). Let our only object be God's glory, and love to Him

and His truth. The *Scripture* is clear. To assume the raising up of saints in man's day *before* the day of the Lord, or *before* the last day, would contradict the testimony of the Lord. Is not this a grievous peril? The writer would speak frankly but tenderly. He has not shunned literature upon this subject, and is not unmindful of the earnestness and godliness of the writers. He praises God for their concern that believing hearts should say "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." But this does not justify error. Years ago he, too, wrote from their standpoint. It is not from lack of love that he now speaks plainly. Surely those who know other publications issued will feel there is affection for saved ones who differ, though we long that our love to others may ever GROW. But one thing mars the literature which urges the Coming of Christ *before* the tribulation. It contains many helpful and striking thoughts, but *no* direct Scripture *evidence* on this point. Earnest men, who CAN bring Scripture easily for *other* parts of their belief, unconsciously change their mode of writing, and make general assertions or assumptions, or sometimes state that "all are agreed," or that "all students of prophecy acknowledge," (when it is not so), or rest on "parallels" which the Holy Spirit does

not give, or plead for “inferences” which they draw quite apart from *His testimony*, when dealing with this subject. Rightly concerned that none should say, “My Lord delayeth His Coming,” they have confused this with the simple confidence of a believer as to Revelation 20. 4, and as to the principle of Luke 19. 11. He Who warned against the *unholy* words of delay, ALSO told Peter he would become OLD and die (John 21. 18). Did He rob the early Church of that blessed Hope? The issue is momentous. Again I ask,—Did HE rob the early Church of that blessed Hope, by *these words*? If not, knowledge of intervening events need NOT hinder a spiritually-minded saved one, though *everything* will hinder one who is not spiritually humble. *Godly condition affects everything.*

To return:—1 Thessalonians 5. 9 is definite, but the tribulation of God's people is NOT said to be God's wrath. Only when it *finishes* have we the vials of *wrath*. It is the *devil's* wrath (Rev. 12. 12), but that is vastly different. If we rightly see the great tribulation in Revelation 6. 11, how is it we do NOT find the wrath of God till 6. 12-17, i.e. till the very events which are said in Matthew 24. 29 to be “*after*” the

tribulation? The majority of believers will acknowledge the same tribulation is found in Daniel 7. 21, 8. 10 and Revelation 13. 7. But in *none* of these passages have we the wrath of God. The Divine stress on the fact is so remarkably *repeated*, and the evidence is added that when the saints of whom Revelation 15. 2, 3 speaks are in heaven, at once we read there IS wrath ("in them is filled up the wrath of God," verse 1). "The day of the Lord" *begins* with wrath. The saints *there* have a victory "*over the beast*"—they are delivered from the enemy's wrath.

If, then, the usual interpretation, that the tribulation cannot come while the Lord's people of this dispensation are on earth "*because it is wrath*," is itself based on a MISunderstanding of HIS words, should it not be put aside, with confession of error, and of unconscious misrepresentation of other beloved servants of His? And what shall we say as to other arguments? Revelation 3. 10 has force only if we *assume* "the hour of temptation" is the tribulation, but just the *opposite* force when we see that the Holy Spirit in Scripture *distinguishes* them, and, therefore, this promise *rather* confirms the thought that the deliverance is NOT earlier. And what

about 2 Thessalonians 2. 7? Whether the expression "until" He be taken out of the way" would be rightly and reverently applicable to the Holy Spirit, may be questioned. But what shall we say to the fact that there is NO stress on the word "He" (not any Greek that would *imply* a capital *h*, or a Divine Person), NO word for "taken," NO word for "way," but, on the contrary, a "*becoming out of the midst*," on the part of the lawless one, apparently, from the ephah of lawlessness in mystery seen in Zechariah 5!⁴ Beloved friends, let us test everything by Scripture, and so will our hearts beat in response to His precious promises. He says "I come QUICKLY." We long to see Him, "Amen, come, Lord Jesus" is the joy of the heart, and He delights to hear the words of love. A true view of truth will not hinder love, and never, *NEVER*, *NEVER* will His humbled people say, "My Lord delayeth His Coming." The hope is wondrously bright, the hope is gloriously near! "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." 4 Leaflets gladly sent.

PERCY W. HEWARD