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# **“THE HOUR”**

## **A BIBLE STUDY FOR THOUGHTFUL BELIEVERS**

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A reprint from “The Student of Scripture” (February 1935)

***... I also will keep thee from the HOUR OF TEMPTATION ...***

Revelation 3,10

# **“THE HOUR.”**

A BIBLE STUDY FOR THOUGHTFUL  
BELIEVERS.<sup>1</sup>

“ Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I ALSO WILL KEEP THEE FROM THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” (Revelation 3. 10, 11).

(2)

## INTRODUCTION.

MANY beloved children of God appear to be in some confusion as to the prophetic Scriptures, through a common and erroneous assumption as to “THE HOUR.” Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit has graciously given these Scriptures to be a lamp in a dark place (2 Pet. 1. 19), it is deeply important that all opinions which will not abide the test of “Scripture prayerfully compared with Scripture” should be repentantly put aside by us all, and important also that we should en-

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<sup>1</sup> By God's grace published some years ago, and now enlarged. The Lord was pleased to use these notes then: may He be pleased to use them more now, to encourage intelligent and intense longing for “that Blessed Hope.”

courage and assist one another, with graciousness of manner,<sup>2</sup> and so much the more as we see the Day approaching (Heb. 10. 25). There is no warrant for carelessness as to “one another,” and no room for wrangling, but much room for love and mutual help.

Not a few infer from Revelation 3. 10 that saints of the present dispensation will escape the “tribulation,” (regarding this as “the hour”), and many who see this mistake seek to show that to “keep out of the hour” signifies a coming out after passing through it.<sup>3</sup> May not both be unconsciously at fault? But do not both companies desire whatever is Scripturally set forth, and oneness of mind?

**Scripture gives no evidence for identifying the 1260 days of tribulation and “the hour.” The latter is a very brief period—**

(3)

(a) **AFTER the tribulation.**

(b) **AFTER the Coming of Christ for His people.**

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<sup>2</sup> Unwillingness to ponder, with prayer, and the tendency to attack hastily, or despise a brother as soon as he suggests anything contrary to usual interpretation of the prophetic Scriptures, cannot be viewed as the fruit of the Spirit, but of the flesh.

<sup>3</sup> To **take** out and **keep** out are quite distinct. The former is illustrated by Col. 2. 14, the latter by Acts 15. 29. John 12. 27 and 2 Timothy 4. 17 will also help. Both are found in John 17. 15, “I ask not that Thou shouldest **take** them out of the world (**in** which they were), but that Thou shouldest **keep** them out of the evil” (**in** which they were not, see 1 John 5. 19).

(c) **BEFORE** the linked Descent of Christ with His people.

(d) **DURING** which the vials, or seven **LAST** plagues full of **WRATH**, are **QUICKLY** poured out.

(4) Let the writer frankly say that he sees a heavenly people (not appointed to wrath, 1 Thess. 5. 9), and separated from Judaism, in "the saints of *the high places*" (Dan. 7. 22, 25), and in the Lord's "elect" of Matthew 24,<sup>4</sup> and therefore accepts the promises of Matthew 24. 29-31<sup>5</sup> as now applicable, with regard to believers who are in the body of Christ, passing through the tribulation, though *spiritual* faith leaps over intervening events, and *no* believer is entitled to expect he will die, unless this is specially revealed to him (John 21. 18, 2 Tim. 4. 6, cf. "*We* which are alive," 1 Thess. 4. 15). This attitude of spiritual expectation, and preparation cannot be over-emphasized.

But we would be equally definite as to the believer's sure and certain hope of *entire* preservation from "the hour of the testing," in which the five foolish virgins will be found wanting. When the final events are "beginning to come to pass" (Luke 21. 28) it will be granted unto saints to be caught up to meet their Lord in the air. *This* is, indeed, "that Blessed Hope," and it should have a *daily* effect, in an unworldly life, marked by loving our Lord's Appearing (2 Tim. 4. 8).

The reader is entitled to the evidence for the above statements as to "the hour" succeeding the tribulation. And we only desire his (or her) prayerful perusal, with Scripture, seeking the unbiased mind which glorifies God. That God has a perfect right to use words sovereignly, *just as He pleases*, we would readily acknowledge, but He has deigned to make many things clear by a wondrously *manifest* consistency of meaning, and therefore several occurrences of the word "hour" will quickly render much help to the thoughtful reader in this connexion.

(5)

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<sup>4</sup> Verse 20 may be worded to suggest this. "**Your** flight" implies **willingness** to flee, and actual fleeing, if need be, on the Sabbath, i.e. the hindrance is viewed as from without, (not personal conscience), which is precisely the hindrance the Lord's believing ones would experience in a Jewish land, stirred to orthodoxy by Antichrist's then recent demands.

<sup>5</sup> "The Tribulation Distinguished from the Wrath of God" may help. How many unguarded and unkind words as to those who are wrongly said to obscure the heavenly calling, because they see a heavenly people in the tribulation, would have been never said, had dear fellow believers sought Scripture for their beliefs instead of repeating from one another. The Holy Spirit makes the thought of wrath quite distinct.

## CHAPTER 1.

### THE HOUR IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

(6) The Revelation has, possibly, been often read. If not, it would be well to read it again before going any further. That final message from our adorable Lord contains, comparably with the book of Daniel, several PARALLEL sections and visions. It is not possible to interpret, for example, 8. 3 as historically after 6. 17, nor 13. 2 as chronologically after 11. 15, without doing violence to other Scriptures. Most realize that Daniel 7 goes over the same ground as Daniel 2. And thus is it here. Each section leads up to the goal, the Coming, and Kingdom, and Glory of the Lord. And various somewhat parallel visions, from different standpoints, help to elucidate one another, and to enlarge our view. If we find that these sections have alike a climax in connexion with "the hour," this will be a definite aid both in understanding the whole book, and the meaning of "the hour" itself.

The *first* section concerns the seven churches, it is introductory, and contains letters to warn and encourage. But even here the climax is definitely associated with the hour, as chapter 3, verses 3 and 10 show. To be received unto the Lord before the hour begins is a very clear and precious promise.<sup>6</sup> These passages may hint that the hour begins with the Coming of Christ as in Matthew 24. 42-44.

The *second* section is from 4. 1 and ends in 8. 1,—not 7. 17. The chapter-division is human, and unsatisfactory, for the prayers of saints, and the events of the trumpets cannot be placed after 6. 17.<sup>7</sup> Hence the *seventh*, or final, seal finishes with a reference to an HOUR, during half of which there is silence. But the TRIBULATION of the *fifth* seal evidently finishes with the *sixth* (ch. 6. 9-17). May we not say that at least the half of some striking “hour” is here before us as subsequent to the tribulation? And this is evidently the climax again.

The *third* section contains the seven trumpets, and also leads up to a brief and definite period, which is called “the time of the dead,” and linked with God’s assertion of His own authority (ch. 11. 17, 18). In this connexion it is very remarkable to see that an hour is specially mentioned in connexion with the resurrection of the two (personal) witnesses, and the end of the tribulation period if we rightly interpret the 1260 days of 11. 3, and the reference to the kingdom and the Lord’s prerogative in 11. 15. The chapter on “Difficulties” has more regarding this.

(7)

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<sup>6</sup> The two “angels,” or representatives in Smyrna and Philadelphia, are often rightly compared and contrasted. Note ch. 2. 10 with its ten days’ tribulation, and **death**, as the opposite of 3. 10.

<sup>7</sup> We do not adduce fuller evidence here: if any are uncertain, a special leaflet on this subject is readily at their disposal.

The *fourth* section presents several detailed solemn views of the 1260 days (12. 6, 14, 13. 5). Not *until* the redeemed are seen *in glory*, have we the mention of God's "hour" of judgment (14. 7 as 11. 18). It is not associated with the earlier 1260 days. This is marked as the same time as the fall of Babylon: this, we shall soon see in ch. 18, is significant, and suggestive. Amid all our study, let believing hearts ever say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (ch. 22. 20). O that all meditation may be earnest, and practical, and affecting our daily work.

(8) The vision of the vials *alone* does *not* lead up *to* "the hour." Why is this? Because it seems *entirely* in "the hour." With this accord the following facts:—

- (a) the saints are seen *personally* in glory at its beginning (15. 2): this is quite distinct from the view in other sections.<sup>8</sup>
- (b) the saints are praising from the standpoint of victory, contrast 8. 3 at beginning of the trumpets.
- (c) the vials are specially called "last,"
- (d) the word "wrath" is linked with them<sup>9</sup>
- (e) they are viewed as almost simultaneous, in quick pouring out (16. 1).

The *next* section (chapter 17-18) shows the "hour" as the time of an awful confederacy against the Lord Jesus (17. 12-14), and "one hour" is mentioned three times in con-



nexion with the sudden destruction of the rebuilt city of Babylon (18. 10, 17, 19).

The last chapters plainly begin with glory: the holy triumph is made in ch. 19, the power of the dragon is laid low in ch. 20, and ch. 21 commences with the new heavens and the new earth. Hence these also do *not* lead up to "the hour." Thus there is perfect harmony, and wondrous simplicity in the arrangement of this precious book. If we are rejoicing in the finished work of the Lord Jesus, and thereby delivered from coming wrath (1 Thess. 1. 10), let us look expectantly for His Coming in the air, and for the Marriage Supper with Him. And then will there be the Judgment Seat of Christ. The searching question comes, Shall we reign

(9)

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<sup>8</sup> The twenty-four elders in ch. 5 cannot be viewed as the saints **personally**, for "one" of them comes and speaks to John more than once (5. 5, 7. 13): any explaining away of the literal personal elders is one of the strange misinterpretations of this book: yet many accept the seraphim of Isaiah 6 as real beings, and "one" of them went to the prophet.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. 14. 10, 19, 19. 15. *Θυμός* is not used, as from God, while a heavenly people are on earth, and thus is **not** applied to the great tribulation, **nor** to the time while that lasts.

with Him, as joint-heirs (Rom. 8. 17)?<sup>10</sup> Are we preparing for this, ever seeking with meekness to follow His steps (1 Pet. 2. 21)? How prayerful and earnest each redeemed one should be, living, in the Holy Spirit, unto the praise of the glory of God's grace (Eph. 1. 6).

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## CHAPTER 2.

### SOME THOUGHTS ON PARALLELS.

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We have seen that Scripture is wondrously arranged, and that many of our difficulties are through chapter-divisions, prejudices, and assumptions. It may be our gracious God will grant yet further light on this solemn and precious subject, through other passages, that, with intelligent joy, we may be more fervently looking for "that Blessed Hope."

It is noteworthy that *five* times in Daniel, in connexion with Babylon, and its kings, the word "hour" is used with regard to a brief crisis (3. 6, 15, 4. 19, 33, 5. 5). Such language is *not* accidental. But, interesting as is *this* illustration of God's will for His people to compare Scripture with Scripture, *another* is yet clearer, and more quickly striking. We are already acquainted with Satan's parodies of the things of God—and even of His *Triune* nature (Rev. 16. 13) and of the resurrection of Christ (Rev. 13. 3). But have we also noticed any *time*-parallels, manifestly appointed by God? Luke

13. 7 would suggest that the public ministry of the Lord was about the same length as the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years of Revelation 13. 5. Judas, the son of perdition disguised himself during a like period, so Antichrist is partly religious during the *first* half of his covenant with Israel (Dan. 9. 27). During the public ministry of similar length in Christ's earthly life what have we constantly in view? Surely "*the hour!*" John's record is very emphatic,—7. 30, 8. 20, 12. 23, 27, 13. 1, 16. 32, 17. 1. Nor must we forget the sidelight of 16. 21, and, in the light of 12. 23, probably 2. 4 has a closely related thought. This is sufficient to show a stress on the "hour" throughout. This "hour" was, apparently, not a literal 60 minutes but it was a *brief* time, at the *end* of the work given to our beloved Lord to accomplish.<sup>11</sup> John 12. 27 shows how

(11)

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<sup>10</sup> Leaflet gladly sent.

<sup>11</sup> Rev. 11. 11 may give a certain parallel, since this is likewise at the close of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years. A beloved brother has impressed that, as human ideas regarding what can be done, in a given time, will not apply when God arises, all events may take place in the "one day" of Zechariah 14. 7, parallel with that of Joshua 10. 14 (cf. Isa. 28. 21). This seems certain as to the display of power at Jerusalem, and **could** also include the catching up of saints, the descent to Edom, and coming thence (Isa. 63. 1), with the journey in the South (Zech. 12. 7), ere the Lord's feet stand on the Mount of Olives. This journey from Edom (cf. Isa. 34) is often overlooked by many who speak as if the Lord descends on Olivet.

(12)

definitely He lived with this prospect, and, as we have already seen, His very *first* miracle was not without a mention of it.<sup>12</sup> Fittingly, His other *first* words referred to the things of the Father (Luke 2. 49), of which John 17. 1-4 tells the glorious completion alluding to the "hour." Truly that "hour" manifested His perfection, for in the test He was attested, and in the proving He was approved. If the wickedness of Anti-christ is displayed in the hour at the end of his career, the holiness of our precious Lord shines out in His hour. And it is therefore appropriate that the future hour of crisis should be the background for the revelation of His glory over all the earth.

But this is not the only thought. From His standpoint "the hour" was associated with perfect obedience, but if we think of Satan, and those who were Satanic instruments against the Lord of glory, the nature of the "*hour*" becomes more evident, and the connexion with the Book of Revelation. And it is in accord with the distinct characteristics of the four gospel narratives that we find this aspect also prominently before us as in the first three evangelists.

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<sup>12</sup> Mary, the Mother of the Lord Jesus, is again seen in connexion with "the hour" in 19. 27—a fresh beginning for her being there linked with it.

Matthew 26. 40, 45, 55, Mark 14. 35, 37, 41 should now be noticed ("one hour" is particularly named, as in Rev. 18). The "hour" is *not* simply associated with the cross, and the bearing of wrath, but in *each* Gospel is linked with Christ's anguish *before*, i.e. with the solemn lessons of Gethsemane, and with the permission for *men* to lay unholy hands on Him (observe Luke 20. 19. Nor does John's gospel exclude this aspect, see 7. 30 and 8. 20). *Nothing* could be done till the "hour." And with *whom* was the conflict in the garden? Have we forgotten John 14. 30?—"The prince of this world cometh, and hath *nothing* in Me." (Satan's judgment is in connexion with the "hour" in John 12. 27-31). How suggestive is Luke 4. 13—"And having ended every *temptation*, the devil stood away from Him until an appointed season" (literally). Then the devil returned, and Gethsemane contained another temptation. Adam had fallen in a garden, and Israel in a wilderness: Christ must be revealed as *standing* in both. The number *three* is stamped on Gethsemane's temptations, just as on Matthew 4. And the very word "temptation" or "testing," which we have found in Luke 4. 13 is repeated in

(13)

Revelation 3. 10. May we not almost regard this as a quotation? Now we can understand Matthew 26. 41 with John 18. 8, 9. The Lord of Glory would stand *alone*. He would sustain "the hour of the testing," in His own matchless love and power. The prayer of Matthew 6. 13 *now* has added force, not for an *earthly* remnant, but for a heavenly people delivered from the "hour" of Revelation 3. 10.

(14)

Another passage seems to impress the writer almost beyond all others, in this connexion—"When I was *daily* with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against Me: BUT THIS IS YOUR HOUR, AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE DARKNESS" (Luke 22. 53, cf. Matt. 26. 55). This latter expression occurs in Colossians 1. 13, where there is a manifest allusion to Satan (see Acts 26. 18). "Your hour" refers to men: but Satan was there as well. And that *future* corresponding "hour" will be one of a final confederacy of Satan and men against the Lord, and against His Messiah<sup>13</sup> but how marked is the contrast.

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<sup>13</sup> Rev. 17. 12 may suggest this last unity of ten, as in Ps. 83 (the children of Lot are Moab and Ammon)—plainly after Dan. 11. 41, and evidently at the same time as Dan. 11. 45.

We have noticed the “judgment” of the “hour” in Revelation 14. 7, 18, and the reference to a *cup* (14. 8, 10). Nor are these words absent from the “hour” at the time of Christ’s temptation in Gethsemane (John 12. 31, Matt. 26. 39); and each hour alike culminates in an earthquake (Matt. 27. 51, 52).<sup>14</sup>

Beloved friends, these similarities are not accidental. Have we not a striking illustration of the fact that Antichrist’s 3½ years, as those in the ministry of the Lord Jesus, will conclude with one “hour,” in which men whose place was not substitutionarily taken by the Lord of Glory will be *tested*, and found wanting—in which, as of old, man’s iniquity will reach its height; but, overruling all, our glorious God will manifest His own glorious ways! The “hour” gone by ended with “It has been finished,” and our Saviour’s death; that which is to come shall be marked by the “It has become” of Revelation

(15)

<sup>14</sup> The point is so important that believers will not regret a double stress by a more tabular view, going through the Book of Revelation, with words emphasized.

Revelation.	In the life of Christ.
3. 10, Temptation.	Matthew 26, 40, 41.
11. 13, Earthquake.	Matthew 27. 51.
14. 7, Judgment (18. 10).	John 12. 31.
14. 15, Reaping with a sharp sickle.	Swords, Matthew 26. 55, 51 (and 31).
17. 12, Authority.	Luke 22. 53.
18. 16, 19, Desolation.	Matthew 23. 38.

16. 17, and His Kingdom. In the heavenly aspect, there will be the Marriage Supper, as of old there was the Lord's Supper, nigh the beginning of this period. The apparent "conclusion" of John's gospel in 12. 37-50, and the new beginning in 13. 1, with "His own" distinct from the "His own" of 1. 11 may help to impress our hearts. And may the Holy Spirit cause our deeper appreciation of the love so wonderfully revealed, that our lives may be more unto the praise of our Triune God, and *more*, not less, in living, active hope of the soon Coming of our adorable Lord Jesus.

(16)

## CHAPTER 3.

### SOME DIFFICULTIES.

It will be asked, "Are there no *difficulties* if we accept the interpretation that *the hour* of Revelation 3. 10 etc. is distinct from the *tribulation*, and subsequent to it?" Through *our* failures, and ignorance, we find *certain* difficulties in almost everything, and the writer, while rejoicing in Proverbs 8. 8, 9 as God's own encouragement, would not suggest that every believer, graciously released from some error, will at once have every problem removed: we all learn slowly, yet, if we are meek, our Father will teach us *His* way (Ps. 25. 9). Is not this our experience?



Many objections to the Coming of the Lord Jesus for His bride after the tribulation are somewhat vague, *or* based on Revelation 3. 10. Further evidence against them, is found in the “*last trump*” of 1 Corinthians 15. 52, and in the fact that the *momentary* resurrection of that verse must include those slain under *Antichrist* (Rev. 20. 4). The important argument from *silence* has, moreover, its due weight in this connexion. Since Revelation 3. 10 must now be rightly explained *otherwise*, there remains *no promise at all* of a rapture before the tribulation. Surely dear children of God, who want Scripture for everything, will take this to heart. All the *seeming* corroborations of an interpretation fall, if the *one* promise on which it rested has *another* Divine meaning. “*Probable Types*,” based on our “*thinking*,” can *prove* nothing, they can only *support*. And if Scripture does not warrant them, they must be rejected as imaginations. If this were realized, “*theories*” as Anglo-Israelism would disappear. Further, the promise of deliverance from the *hour*, after the *tribulation*, would itself be weakened, if the deliverance were actually  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years before! The silence of Scripture as to *any* rapture, or *any* resurrection before the “*first*” (Rev. 20. 5), becomes a wondrous witness in such cases. O that we may be led by the Holy Spirit never to add to God’s truth.

(17)

But we would not wish to *hide* difficulties. The marvel is they are so few, in connexion with such an important change

of current belief. *Truth* alone can stand *prayerful* investigation. It may be that the following lines will bring before some the *strongest apparent objections*. God's glory, not merely temporary and verbal victory, is the object of these meditations, and frankness befits children of God. Moreover, some may *feel* more restful if they see that the greatest difficulties can be quietly pondered before the Lord. Every problem is an invitation to a blessing, and this we humbly expect.

(18)

Revelation 17. 12 has, I suppose, the fullest "difficulty," not from what it says, but from what it can be easily made to suggest. Yet we *must* beware of reading anything into the inspired words. The simplest explanation of the passage alone would be that, in the last "hour," Antichrist leads a certain confederacy which makes war with the Lamb. This is strictly in accord with Zechariah 14, and *all* Scripture, and reveals the unimproved nature of fallen man. It is plain this conflict is *not* till the last "hour" has set in. "Where then is the problem?"—may be the thought of not a few. In the fact that in Revelation 13. 1 we seem to have ten kings crowned *with* Antichrist *forty-two* months before the "hour" (5). But let us not be quick to decide. In Daniel 7 we find there are *ten* kings *before* the beast (24): these are distinguished from those of Revelation 17. 12 ("receive authority *with* the beast"), especially as he plucks up *three* of them. Thus there are *at least* two confederacies of *ten*. May there

not be more? We remember the confusion brought through an attempt to *identify* the Lord's addresses on the mount and plain (Matt. 5 and Luke 6), as if they were one and the same. Let us beware of a similar error. Moreover, the Holy Spirit not only omits detailed stress on the horns in Revelation 13, but He leaves out the word "kings."<sup>15</sup> This is not an accident. Moreover in an earlier study (Chapter 1), we saw that the confederacy of Psalm 83, which is *final*, includes Amon, Edom, Moab, who are plainly against Antichrist only a little time before (Dan. 11. 41). Thus here we have a *fresh* unity (Ps. 83. 4, 5), after tidings out of the east and north have troubled the wilful king.<sup>16</sup> Now we can see the force of Revelation 17. 12—"But *receive* AUTHORITY as KINGS *one hour with the beast.*" the *subsequent* verses are before Christ comes, and, therefore retrospective. The horns are *not* called kings there: they give their kingdom, not kingdomS, to the beast, and, further, the order of their actions is suggestive. This interpretation may indeed clear up another

(19)

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<sup>15</sup> That they have subsidiary "kingdoms" seems probable from the term "diadems"; the derivation of which is sadly suggestive of an unholy unity.

<sup>16</sup> At the beginning of his career, he plucks up **three**, at the close adds **three** in another **tenfold** fellowship:—both alike contrasts with Christ's three parabolic ten's, Matthew 25. 1, Luke 15. 8, and especially Luke 19. 12-17. A sad type is seen in Jeremiah 41. 1.

difficulty. In Psalm 83 we do *not* find the great nations of to-day, and in Revelation 18 some "*kings of the earth*," at least, are viewed as *away* from Antichrist, and near Babylon, at the same time (verse 9). Satan will have gathered many (Rev. 19. 19), but, it would seem, will be too late with others (Rev. 16. 12—16). Will not Isaiah 10. 8 then have its awful illustration and fulfilment? Let us not forget the solemnizing message of all these verses. Let our "study" be always for the heart, and not only in the head.

(20)

Secondly a reader will suggest that the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years can after all be viewed as one *hour*, because there are twelve hours in the day (John 11. 9), and the day of temptation in the wilderness was 40 years (Heb. 3. 8). We would not argue as to  $3\frac{1}{3}$  or  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , but would at once suggest prayerful thought before grasping at such "illustrations." These have no weight against direct Scriptural exposition. On the other hand, we gladly acknowledge that the Holy Spirit by use of certain similar words will help us in study of the passages together. The  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years will be a time of temptation as the twelve times longer testing period between Christ's death and the destruction of Jerusalem.—An hour of temptation, indeed, but not "*the* hour of temptation" of prophecy. There are many preparatory parallels. Strikingly during "the hour" they will be dealt with in a new way, and differently as Revelation 7. 1-8 blessedly shows. The "hour" is for those who "dwell on the

earth."<sup>17</sup> To make the hour a period of years, or to identify it with the tribulation is impossible in the sections concerning the seals and trumpets and signs, as well as in Revelation 18. To oppose these clear indications from God, and give a forced interpretation to ch. 3. 10 would be out of harmony with the whole book.

It is somewhat interesting to see the appointed parallel with Israel's 40 years of temptation in the 40 *days* of Matthew 4. 2. Thus the Lord Jesus had a contrast with Israel's day, as well as His "hour." It is noteworthy that we do find  $3\frac{1}{2}$  literal days in close connexion with the ending of Antichrist's rule (Rev. 11. 11). We would not say, "The hour will reach this length," but it is interesting to compare Scripture with Scripture the more so as Revelation 11. 13 contains a third "difficulty." Is the hour here a distinct one, and before the seventh trumpet? We would suggest that this difficulty too, though a minor one, may be helpfully met. Revelation 10. 1-11. 13 is plainly *parenthetic*, its beginning plainly preceding the *sixth* trumpet, as 11. 1-3 indicates, though in the record inserted after 9. 14. Elsewhere we are shown that the "hour" begins with a great earthquake (Rev. 6. 12-17), and termin-

(21)

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<sup>17</sup> These heart-searching words, as to Antichrist's followers, the contrast of a heavenly people, may be traced through Revelation 6. 10, 8. 13, 11. 10, 12. 12, 13. 8, 12. 14, 17. 2, 8. See the opposite in 13. 6.

ates with one yet greater (Rev. 16. 18). Hence 11. 14 may look back before the parenthesis to 9. 21 (cf. 9. 12), and lead on to the climax of 11. 15. If this is not the solution, and if the hour of 11. 13 is distinct, it would not invalidate the interpretation of other passages, yet it would somewhat obscure the harmony of the book as a whole, and I rather think any other explanation would cause more difficulties in chapter 11 itself. Parentheses are common in Scripture.

(22)

Another fourth difficulty may be found by some in 1 John 2. 18. "Little children, it is the last time," literally "hour." Probably most believers, however, will be helped by this passage. The Holy Spirit always uses or omits the article with perfect wisdom, and here it is *not* "THE hour." "*A* last hour" was granted, and the "wrath came anticipatively" (*φθάνω*) in 1 Thessalonians 2. 16. Many types of future judgment were granted in the period which reached its climax at the destruction of Jerusalem. So "a last hour" is here linked with "many Antichrists," but "the last hour" with the Antichrist himself. Thus God gave a definite warning, and His mercy shines out. Seeing that we know these things are surely coming, what manner of persons ought we to be: and how grateful our hearts should feel for so great a salvation from so great a death in our beloved Lord and Saviour, for *Whom* we wait, and to Whom our longing, loving prayer should ever be "Come, Lord Jesus."

## CHAPTER 4.

### THE PRACTICAL POWER OF A RIGHT INTERPRETATION, AND A CONCLUDING APPEAL.

In the grace of our God, we have seen that “the hour of the testing” of Revelation 3 is *after* the tribulation, and that, if we are “in Christ Jesus,” we shall not even enter that gloomy and solemn season of wrath and judgment, but shall have been already caught up to meet our Lord in the air. We have thought of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and, in passing, of the glorious reigning with Christ, which are held out as prospects for the redeemed, whom He has purchased with His precious blood. We have seen that an erroneous interpretation, often entwined around good intentions, *adds* to God’s promises, and so really takes from them, and hinders the true perception of His teaching. I believe we may go further: though from the loving hearts of those who have, alas, embraced this error, there has been *much* devotion to the Lord, *in spite* of the error, it has, nevertheless, considerably weakened the usefulness unto Him of not a few.

(23)

Are there not believers, living with *some* worldliness, who yet proclaim the return of the Lord Jesus, *before* the tribulation? Are there not others, who settle down, either in Christendom’s ruin, or in a measure of disorganization, because of thinking that Christ’s any-moment Coming is the only reviving to be sought? But 2 Peter 3. 9, as to wandering believers

("usward," or "you-ward"), is so clear otherwise. Truth sanctifies, and the absence of parts of truth involves a certain absence of spiritual experience. And, further, there has been a tendency to speak lightly, or even unkindly, of those who have differed as to the order of prophecy, and to say, "Ah, you expect signs, not Christ." Such a manner has held back many from the study of God's will, and has produced "camps" of opposite opinions, instead of encouraging a disciple-like gathering together, and a humbling before God, to come to oneness of mind.

(24)

We would not say that the perception of God's truth in this matter ensures an all-round, spiritual unworldliness, but, realized in the Holy Spirit, it *should* have this effect more and more. All *realization* of God's instruction is partial:—we know in part. Nevertheless, truth, because it is truth, is precious and resultful, not only on the lines on which it primarily leads, but throughout the believing life, even as food nourishes the *whole* body, though bone, and flesh, and energy be so distinct, in appearance, from materials used to build them up. Beloved friends, if we see the Lord's own teaching about the hour, do we not feel anew the fulness of His work for us? His life closed with the "hour," and He endured wrath: this dispensation shall close in like manner, but from wrath we are graciously freed. Tribulation is our portion, but *not* wrath



(1 Thess. 3. 3, 5, 9). We do not come into judgment, being in Christ Jesus (John 5. 24). Grace is, indeed, wondrous.

But there are many around us who wrongly conceive that this view of "the Blessed Hope" prevents true watching. Is it not our privilege to answer their objection by our *lives*? Faith, we say, is not *mere calculation*. We do not look for intervening events, we do not really "look" for events at all, but for Christ. We would be looking *off* unto Him. Doubtless we fail in this simplicity toward Himself, but would earnestly desire it. Spiritual hope should be, and is, independent of circumstances. It is blessed to realize that God has so arranged that only true believers, walking in the Holy Spirit, can *truly* watch for Christ. Ordinary hope *could* anticipate that which is immediate in the way in which we are asked to anticipate; but for this, with affection toward those who ask us, we must say we find *no* warrant in the revelation of God.

(25)

The practical power of a right interpretation may be felt the more when we see that any other belief, though more naturally enjoyable, is apt to lead us away from suffering, and away from exactness in Scripture study to "seeming" types and "possible" hints. Grace often counteracts these influences, but they are existent nevertheless. O that we may be kept back from sin in these matters, and live as saved ones should, unto the praise of God's grace.

Possibly some children of God to whom these thoughts are partly new may be willing to re-read these notes, almost immediately, as ever with *an open Bible*. They are asked to observe that the interpretation takes account of *all* references to “the hour” in the Book of Revelation. Can any other interpretation be said so to do? Further, they are asked to ponder why, if the usual identification of the tribulation and the “hour” is a fact, no Scripture can be found to prove or suggest this. The more generally held view as to the order of prophetic events seems to rest very largely on three things —

- (26) (i) The assumption that the tribulation is the time of God’s wrath, and cannot therefore be fitting for a heavenly people.
- (ii) The supposition that the Holy Spirit will be taken away before the man of sin is revealed.
- (iii) The thought that believers are promised deliverance from the tribulation because they will not be left for “the hour” of Revelation 3. 10.

But strikingly the Holy Spirit uses more than one word for “wrath,” and expressly omits these very words when speaking of the tribulation: i.e. omits with regard to *God’s* wrath. Hence the true inference is very different from that of most.

As to the *second* point there is no mention of the Holy Spirit in 2 Thessalonians 2. 7, nor are the words "taken" and "out of the way" found in the simple statement of the Original. "Taken" is "become," and "out of the way" is "out of the midst," a rising up of Antichrist being before us.<sup>18</sup> As to the *third* opinion, we have seen that this, too, is without a Scripture foundation. Should we not be deeply concerned when any interpretation depends primarily on assumptions which are directly against the Scripture use of words, and on an erroneous translation? Every thoughtful believer should feel how important this is, and the remarkable similarity of all these insecure props would seem to suggest that the true interpretation, which is obscured thereby, is something very precious for the life and witness of believers, and therefore the enemy would keep us from realizing it, if he can. And surely this is so, for if we see God's emphasis on true revival in view of the Lord's Coming, how precious it will be to His glory, and for our spiritual profit (2 Pet. 3. 9). The devil hates repentance and hates revival.

(27)

It is not expected that the exposition, humbly and hopefully sent forth, will meet with immediate *general* acceptance. Indeed Matthew 24. 26, shows that a belief in a secret coming, and presumably before the tribulation has run its course, may

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<sup>18</sup> A booklet giving other passages where God uses the same words gladly sent.

(28)

remain among *some* till near the end. Far be it from us to link dear children of God with those whose sins are found in Matthew 24. 26, but the thought is this—The error THERE may well be Satan's development from certain errors NOW. Surely believers do not wish to hold anything that is against God's Revelation, and to be made a basis for such an evil development. Tenderly, yet earnestly, would the writer ask for prayerful pondering of the Scripture *once more*, and if any belief does not stand this test, however many godly men have held it, let there be a definite setting aside, that "the Blessed Hope," in its primitive glory, may have a right hold on our hearts and spiritual affections, and that, in the Holy Spirit, we may pray with ever increasing love, "Come, Lord Jesus,"—and likewise make known, by life and lip, that "the Coming of the Lord draweth *nigh*" (Jas. 5. 8).

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