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The Great Tribulation

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William Lincoln

This important question is being raised frequently in the body of professing Christendom today, perplexing the minds and hearts of many believers. Our unhesitant answer to this inquiry is — **THE CHURCH WILL NOT GO THROUGH THE GREAT TRIBULATION!** This fact is definitely seen in that body of truth in respect to God's coming judgment upon the earth, the Book of Revelation.

The Book of Revelation reveals the evil principles of earth coming to maturity, being manifested at their greatest height! The true position of the Church within the Revelation, is looking **DOWN** from heaven, and even coming down **FROM** heaven, when the judgments of God fall or are about to fall upon the earth. The post-tribulation theory teaches the opposite, the Church looking **UP** at what is coming down. This is true of Israel's prospect, but **NOT** the Church! The following facts from the Revelation give support to the truth that the Church will **NOT** go through the Great Tribulation.

1. Note three things in chapter 1, (a) The Church has a song of triumph verses 5 and 6. (b) Israel has a wail of grief, verse 7. (c) Christendom's exposure and its judgment is known, verse 7.

2. When the decadence of the Church is apparent on earth (Rev. 2), in the letter to Thyatira, a remnant is definitely separated from the great professing body of Christendom, being encouraged to endure faithfully

until the Lord comes. The “morning star”, symbol of the Church’s hope, is given them (Rev. 2:28) for this widely differs from the rising of “the Sun of Righteousness” which is the hope of Israel! (Mal. 4:2). The Lord reaffirms this fact in Rev. 22:16.

Very definitely in chapter 3 is a distinct guarantee given that those who keep the Word of His patience, shall be kept (not through) but OUT of the hour of trial to come upon all the earth. This necessarily involves the previous removal of such saints from the earth scene before the experience begins. (Chapter 3:10). Chapters 4 and five clearly present the saints as being in heaven, represented by the 24 elders, enthroned in heaven, before a single note of judgment is heard! The prophetic plan of the book, commencing with chapter 4, assumes and reveals the Church in heaven at the starting point of prophetic events covered by the period of prophecy to be fulfilled. The blessed promise of our Saviour in John 14:3 will have been fulfilled in chapters 4 and 5.

5. The description of “departed saints” in chapter 6:9-11 and their cry for vengeance, is positively contrary to the blessedness of the saints seen in chapters 4 and 5. The complete dissimilarity of these two classes points to the former being of a Jewish character and the latter being of a Christian character. Vengeance is never the prayer of the Christian! See Romans 12:19-21.

6. The 7th. chapter draws a clear distinction between Israel and the nations, between Jew and Gentile! In the Church, NO such distinction is ever taught, rather the opposite is known. See 1 Cor. 12:13, Eph. 2:13-18, and Gal. 3:28.

7. In chapters 8 and 9, where “woe” judgments commence, on the earth and on men, it is directly attributed to the prayers of the saints mentioned in chapter 8, verses 3 to 5. Surely this proves the Jewish character of those saints who have called for vengeance upon their foes in chapter 6:9-11. The Christian’s cry to the end is — “Father, forgive them” etc. See Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60.

8. In chapters 10 and 11, the Lord in Angelic glory descends, a rainbow encircling His brow, the certain pledge of His covenant with the earth and His voice speaks as “when a LION roareth”. His distinct reference to “TIME” has nothing to do with His relationship to the Church (Acts 1:7) whatsoever! See also 1 Thess. 1:10. He is also seen in this vision as **STANDING** — a position belonging to Israel and the earth, for throughout the calling of the Church, Christ is known in a **SITTING** position at the right hand of God! See Hebrews 10:11-14.

9. There is a great parenthesis in chapters 12 to 15:4, describing the awful wrath of God’s enemies upon the elect remnant of Israel. Chapter 12 reveals the principal and invisible agent, Satan. Chapter 13 describes the awful period under the Beast and False Prophet. Chapter 14 discloses the happy and victorious outcomes of the Tribulation. Their preservation is attributed to the fact that their names are in the Lamb’s book of life “FROM the foundation of the world” — see Matt. 25:34. The Church, a heavenly people, is predestined “BEFORE the foundation of the world” Eph. 1:4, 3:1-11 and Tit. 1:2.

10. The general subject of chapters 15:4 to 19:3, is “the wrath of God” without dilution, especially under the vial judgments! Everywhere we see BLOOD, BLOOD, BLOOD! How strange that anyone should place the Bride of Christ in the midst of such judgment on her wedding eve!

11. The Lord personally and visibly returns to the earth WITH His saints in Chapter 19. This is consistent with Apostolic teaching in 1 Thess. 3:13, Col. 3:4 and Jude 14.

12. In Chapter 20:4 the enthroned Church is distinguished from the suffering saints following the Rapture.

13. The New Jerusalem, the Church, heavenly in character, and the saved nations, earthly in character, are seen as two distinctive realms. “The glory of the celestial is one” and the “glory of the terrestrial is another”. Rev. 21:9 to 22:5.

14. The closing chapter reveals the relationship of Christ to Israel as “the Root and Offspring of David,” but to the Church as “the Bright and Morning Star”. There is no reply recorded from Israel, but the Bride answers “COME!”

Digests from Wm. Lincoln’s Exposition on The Revelation by J. W. Bramhall.