

Escaping the Tribulation to Come

#S270R #235rdg

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To escape the coming wrath of God, is to trust the living God in this life, for all things pertaining to life. Many world events taking place in recent years indicate the soon return of Christ for His true believers. Many things that are described in the Book of Revelation have happened, or, are taking place on a global scale (with military conflicts in many countries and government takeovers as are common today. All of these things that take place are just a prelude to the 'wrath of God' to be unleashed on a wicked, rebellious, and sinful world of mankind. Those serious events and trouble to come upon the world are most commonly referred to as 'The Great Tribulation'.

Jesus wants each one of us to escape all that to come, and He loves us so much that He took our place on the cross to pay the price for our pardon when we were sinners and enemies of righteousness. And He promised those who would repent of their sins (Matt.5:6) "Blessed are those who thirst for righteousness, for they shall be completely satisfied." (And vs.8) "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." [With the many things taking place around the world being a prelude to the wrath to come, and so, the soon return of Christ for His true believers becoming more and more evident, the 'time to repent' is today, and for all to 'thirst for righteousness' as Jesus told us to do, and so, have His Promise fulfilled for us in the end.

The Antichrist, however, is to be the opposite and to be totally controlled by Satan himself (who hates us with malicious hatred). His one desire is to destroy our faith in God and take us along with him to Hell forever. This Antichrist will be the most wicked tyrant ever, and he will pass a law to force everyone to accept an identification number, or to lose their life.

(Revelation 13:16-17) "And [the Antichrist] causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."

Labor unions were formed years ago, to compel workers to join the union, or be barred from employment. Forced inoculations for public school students; compulsory liability insurance for automobile drivers or construction workers; (and the more recently passed Federal Healthcare Insurance Law to have medical insurance or to be fined), are just some precursors [forerunners] of the 'Mark of the Beast.'

The serious legal and financial problems facing the Catholic Church in recent years, and on a global scale, resulting from those within the church acting in very unscriptural and wicked ways, seem to clearly point to that church's eventual destruction by the ten kings during the Great Tribulation.

The vast accumulation of wealth by individuals and corporations—thousands of billionaires (and billionaire businesses), is another

sign that we approach the end of this world as we know it. The apostle described that greed and accumulation of wealth in this way (James 5:3) "This treasure you have accumulated, [or, you have hoarded wealth in the last days], will stand as evidence against you on the 'day of judgment'."

[And that coincides and agrees with the familiar Words of Jesus in response to the wealthy ruler (Luke 18:22)" On receiving this answer Jesus said to him, "There is still one thing wanting in you. Sell everything you possess and give the money to the poor, and you shall have wealth in Heaven; and then come, follow me." Those words of Jesus and those the apostle was inspired to say, make it very plain and clear how that 'accumulation of wealth' must be relinquished for any individual or head of a corporation to escape the 'day of judgment' at the end times.]

The spiritual condition of the world today, shows how close we are to the Great Tribulation. Jesus said (Luke 17:26) "Just as it was in the days of Noah [when only eight were saved], so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man." He added (vs.28) "It was the same in the days of Lot," [when only three people escaped]. (vs.29-30) "Fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed."

With so much 'lack of interest', absolute apathy in some cases, and persecution of the Christian faith and of professed Christians worldwide (as Jesus predicted), it seems more evident than ever that that 'end time' 'great tribulation', and God's 'Day of Judgment' could take place in the near future.

No specific time is mentioned in the Bible for the Great Tribulation to begin, and there is no exact time given for the Lord Jesus to return to this earth. Many people have tried to predict the day, but they all have been wrong. We are just told and warned (Luke 12:40) "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

By just having some spiritual knowledge and divine enlightenment of God's Word, enables us to realize how close the end of the world really is, and that the 'first century kind of faith' that Bible Christians had, is seriously lacking in a world of unbelief today. Faith within the Christian church of the 21st century, does not even remotely resemble the faith of the Early Church of the 1st century.

The 1st century Church in the New Testament was composed of true followers of Christ, those people who had truly repented and were delivered from their unbelief. Those 'followers of Christ' had surrendered their lives to God and were filled with His Holy Spirit. They learned under His teaching and training to live according to His will and in obedience to His Word. They trusted God for every thing and situation, and they received answers to prayer concerning those Scriptural requests and things as needed or desired.

Denominational church members today are not truly born again, and they do not sincerely live a life of faith and trust on the living God. The teaching they hear in the churches does not mention the surrendering of their life to God, nor of being filled with the Holy Spirit, as people in the Bible heard. Being informed of God's full Truth does not happen for them, because they are not willing to believe or trust on an 'unseen God' (while the Bible informs us that

the Holy Spirit of God is to be received by 'believers'. (John 12:44-46) "Then Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness." (Again, God's Promise of the Holy Spirit to inspire those who strive to live in 'obedient faith', (as Jesus said that we should 'strive to enter the Kingdom of God, and so to escape the wrath of God in that 'great Tribulation' that is yet to come. (Acts 5:32) "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

Jesus said that no one could enter the Kingdom of Heaven unless they were born again, of the water and of the Spirit. Also, (1 John 2:4-6) "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (meaning, walk in humility of spirit and faithfully trusting God.)

Jesus also told us that anyone who did not obey His *Words*, would not enter His Kingdom. The only way to know the will of God is, by surrendering our life to God. (Rom. 12:1-2) "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

The average attendant thinks that their salvation is secure because they belong to a Christian church; they are living a decent moral life; they appear to be a religious person; and they know about the historical facts of Jesus' death and resurrection. If our righteousness is based *only* on those things, we would not enter God's Kingdom. Our heart must be converted from rebellion to submission to God's Word and will.

Jesus said (Matthew 18:3) "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." A small child goes right to a caring parent with their every need, and at the first sign of any trouble, big or small.

It is what the apostle meant when he told believers (Phil.4:6-7) to "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Or we could also say, fear not **anything or circumstance for God is with you by faith, and He promised to never leave our side.**)

The Bible teaches us to trust in faith on the living God alone for everything that concerns *this life* on earth, and this includes trusting Him in faith to prepare us for the eternal life to come. Jesus foretold us about the lack of a fear of God in the age that was to come, as He made an important prediction concerning the spiritual condition of the world at His return. He told us about a widow and the judge to whom she went for a deliverance from an oppressor, and to have a wrong corrected for her.

The judge refused to do anything for the woman at first (Luke 18:4-5), "but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me."

There is already not much 'fear of God' in the world today, and not much faith and trust on Him for daily needs, which is what God requires of His children. The only thing that people in general fear, is being short of something, that of not having enough food or money not only for today, but for far into the future. We know from Scripture, however, (Psalm 111:10) that "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."

Many solemn admonitions are given in Scripture for believers (all those who want to escape) that 'great tribulation' and God's Judgement that is to come upon the inhabitants of the world. (Psalm 25:12-14) "Who is the man that fears the LORD? Him shall God teach in the way He chooses. He himself shall dwell in prosperity, And his descendants shall inherit the earth. The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, And He will show them His covenant." (That is God's Promise of spiritual enlightenment from His Holy Spirit.)

Also (Psalm 89:6-7), "For who in the heavens can be compared to the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the LORD? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, And to be held in reverence by all those around Him."

And then a wonderful Promise of God's blessings (Psalm 128:1-2) "A song of Ascents. Blessed is every one who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways. When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you."

And apostle Paul proclaimed to the crowd who listened to him (Acts 13:26) "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and 'those among you who fear God', to you the 'word of this salvation' has been sent."

An angel in Heaven also gives people a serious warning in a loud voice (Revelation 14:7) "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

Everyone will have to heed that warning, trust God in faith, and live in the 'light of His Truth', because 'the penalty' is so severe. (Revelation 14:11) "The smoke of their torment ascends 'forever and ever'; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

The story of the unjust judge (Luke 18), who gives a poor woman what she needed, because she persisted with her request, and did not give up (nor consent to the devil's discouragement), should remind each one of us about being persistent in prayer. In the next verse, Jesus applied the situation to us and His Heavenly Father, who loves us as much as He loves Him. He said (Luke 18:6) "Hear those words of the unjust judge", "because this widow troubles me [or keeps asking] I will avenge her."

This story should mean to us, that if a poor woman can obtain all she needed from a wicked judge, how much more would a Bible believer obtain all they need from a loving God, Who is always just and right in His dealings with us, (many times more, of course). Jesus closed by

asking (Luke 18:8) "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

The terrible spiritual condition of the world today, and the so-called religious community of professing(but not sincere), Christians, makes the time ripe for the return of the Messiah. Only because of God's love and mercy, has the time been postponed. (2 Peter 3:9) "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

Only our God would know who the last person on earth is who is willing to repent and be converted. When everyone has repented who will truly repent, then (vs.10) "The day of the Lord will come like a thief [in the night ^{av}]. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire [melt with fervent heat], and the earth and everything in it [shall be burned up]."

Now that we know from God's Word of the impending doom and horrible judgments that will take place on this sin-cursed world, we should be a little more enthusiastic and a little more zealous about our faith and trust in the living God. (vs.11 gives us solemn warning) "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought 'you' to be [in all holy conversation and godliness]? You ought to live holy and godly lives."

Living by faith in Almighty God is the only way to be holy in His sight. Maintaining our faith and our trust on the Atonement Blood of Christ regarding all relevant issues in our life, is the only way to be righteous before God; and to confess our shortcomings and sins before God in personal submissive prayer, is the only way to be forgiven of sins before the judgment seat of Christ. (2 Peter 3:14) "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

And we can close with the Promise given in the encouraging Words of admonition and Promise of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior of all mankind, "Be not afraid, only Believe.", (He told us). That is our 'way of escape' from that 'great tribulation' to come!!

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S270R- A MAIN POINT:

1. The terrible spiritual condition of the world today, and the so-called religious community of professing(but not sincere), Christians, makes the time ripe for that Tribulation', and return of the Messiah. Only because of God's love and mercy, has the time been postponed.

To escape the coming wrath of God, is to trust the living God in this life, for all things pertaining to life. "Be not afraid, only Believe.", (Jesus told us). That is our only 'way of escape' from that 'great tribulation' to come!!

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The First Century Gospel Church/Philadelphia