

NORTHEAST HOUSTON COMMUNITY CHURCH
SERMON – The Promise of His Coming Again Part 5
Who Is the Tribulation For?
Scripture: 1 Thess 5:1-11

03/26/2006

1 Thess 5:1-11 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. 8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. 11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. NKJV

Who is the tribulation for?

From the beginning of time there have been two primary groups of people on the earth. Those who believe God and were counted as His own and those that did not. It was not confined to just Israel because we know that there were non-Israelites among the people that came out of Egypt.

In the NT there became three primary groups of people. There were still the Israelites, and there are the non-believers and there are the believers in Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Savior.

This is very important to understand and will help us to understand who the tribulation is for.

Israel has its position as God's People still. Christ has His people identified as the "Church" made up of true believers and the remaining groups are those that do not accept Christ, called non-believers.

A person can believe in God but still fall short of salvation. That person could be an Israelite or a Gentile. (non-Jew)

Up to this point we have taught that the church will not go through the tribulation. It is the conclusion I have come up with based on my study of the scriptures and study of the writings of others. But it is not enough for me to tell you this and you believe it without having a greater foundation for what you believe.

If you believe this just because I said it then someone who is a more dynamic speaker, more personable, or more famous says something different you may choose to then believe him or her or maybe begin to doubt what you believe.

This church, NEHCC does have a saying that I want you to keep in mind and that is” the word of God is the foundation for our belief and our practice.” When God calls me home the Word of God will still be here for you to stand upon and no man can overcome that.

There are some that teach that the church will go all or part way through the tribulation. These beliefs fall into the camp of “Mid Tribs” and Post Trib” Different from “Pre-Trib” As we look deeper into the tribulation, we will see God working with people, these people are Israel and non-believers.

The first point we must acknowledge is that the church is distinct from Israel.

When God chose Israel for His people, He continued to keep them as His people even though they were disobedient and stiff-necked.

Deut 31:16-17 16 And the LORD said to Moses: "Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. 17 Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured NKJV

Deut 31:20-21 20 When I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey, of which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them; and they will provoke Me and break My covenant. 21 Then it shall be, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify against them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants, for I know the inclination of their behavior today, even before I have brought them to the land of which I swore to give them." NKJV

God knew that His people would mess up yet they remained His people then and will be His people now and in the future. To be a Jew was to be born a Jew. There was no selection on a person’s part to be a Jew. A non-Jew could be counted among the Jews and receive the benefits and live under the laws of a Jew but they were still referred to as aliens.

They were to be an example to other nations and bring them to God, but they themselves went after other Gods.

In contrast the “church” was open to anyone that believed, by choice.

*Rom 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, **for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes**, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." NKJV*

Col 3:9-11 since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all NKJV

In the NT anyone could be a part of this select group of people known as the “Church” So in effect from the two-primary group in the OT, Gods chosen people and the gentiles, a new group of people emerges called the church.

The church is unique in so many ways just let me give you one. Just as in the OT a non-Jew could live among the Jews and benefit from God's blessing upon His people. For example, there were non-Jews that went into the Promised Land. The inheritance of Abraham's Seed.

Those that are in Christ that are not born Jews also are considered heirs as those of Abraham's seed.

Gal 3:28-29 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. NKJV

A Christian participates in the promise just because he/she chooses to receive Christ. But a Jew does not automatically participate in the promises for believers unless he/she becomes one.

You are special. You are the church. The church is distinct from Israel.

So, the question is still, who will go through the tribulation? We have our three primary groups identified.

No one questions that the non-believers will go through the tribulation. The Jews/Israel rejected Christ so they will be counted among the non-believers. The third group is the Christ's TRUE church.

The tribulation is a time when God pours out his wrath on those in the tribulation. His wrath is depicted by the effects of the seven seals, seven trumpets and the seven bowls.

Let's look at what Paul has told the "Church" at Thessalonica.

1 Thess 5:9-10 9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. NKJV

Appoint here means destined. The Church is not destined for His wrath. Jesus died and God's wrath for our sins (those of us that believe and receive) was poured out on Jesus on Calvary. If God were to destine the church for more wrath then when Jesus said, "It is finished" that was not true. Jesus did it all and **Jesus paid** it all for the church.

As I have often mentioned, the Bible teaches/preaches the same lessons/message more than once. Those of you that were here when we went through the letters from Jesus to the seven churches will remember some of what I am about to say. The churches represent church history, types of churches and types of people in the church.

His letters contained commendations and condemnations.

And one referred to the false churches and people represented in the church in Laodicea

Rev 3:16-17 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. NKJV

Within in every church there are the true believers and the false believers/hypocrites. It is the false believers that a great tribulation is associated with. The false church/believers will be vomited out away from Christ into the tribulation. These people are NOT the true church.

Compare that to what is said by Jesus about the true believers referred to in the letter to the church of Philadelphia.

Rev 3:10-11 10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. NKJV

The true church/believers will be kept out of the trial that will come on the whole world. The tribulation /God's wrath will not be regional but worldwide.

I am so afraid that there are many people that are living in a false sense of security. People that think they are saved and they are protected from the tribulation and will spend eternity in heaven with Jesus.

We preachers must share the blame for this because we preach how easy it is to become a Christian and people repeat a few words they are told to repeat and join the local church and believe that this is all they have to do and they are righteous with God.

We also preach so hard about how we are saved by grace and not by works that nobody wants to do any work for God. This is misapplied logic. It is true that we cannot earn salvation through our own works, **but when we have received salvation it is time to work.**

That is not unlike the thinking of the Jews. They feel that because they are the children of Abraham that their position with God is secured.

John the Baptist Said:

Matt 3:8-10 (Luke 3:8) 8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, 9 and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 10 And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. NKJV

Jesus Said:

John 8:37-40 "I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. 38 I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father." 39 They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. NKJV

I cannot truly judge your salvation. Only you can and Christ can and the fruit you bear shows it.

Let me sum it up. The tribulation is reserved for Israel, false teacher, sinful people, and idolatrous churches all true unbelievers. In the book of the Revelation from chapter 6 to chapter 19, the tribulation accounts, Israel is mentioned all over the place. Specific reference I made in Chapter 7. But the church is not mentioned at all.

This is because the church, the true church and the true believers are not there. In fact, some believe that any reference made to the church shows the church in heaven. (*24 Elders, Rev 4:10, 11:16, 19:4*)

I must give you this last example from the word of God. God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Jesus referred to himself 5 times as the first and the last. So, there is consistency with the two of them.

God brought His wrath on the whole earth once before. Do you remember how he treated the righteous back then? (Noah)

Gen 6:7-8 8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. NKJV

Noah did not go through the wrath of God because

1. He believed God
2. Because he obeyed God he was viewed as righteous before God
3. Because was righteous before God the grace of God was given to him and extended to his family.

They did not go through that tribulation

Another example of the wrath of God is in the story of Sodom of Gomorrah. It was because of the righteousness of Abraham that grace was granted to Lot. Lot was saved.

Gen 15:6 6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. NKJV

1. Abraham believed God
2. Because he obeyed God he was viewed as righteous before God.
3. Because he was righteous before God the grace of God was extended to Lot.

Lot did not go through that tribulation.

How does this apply to you and me?

1. We must believe God and receive His Son
2. If we believe and receive, we must obey (fruit)
3. If we believe, receive and obey we will be accounted righteous because of Christ righteousness
4. Because of Christ's righteousness we are saved by the extension of God's grace.

We can look forward to NOT going through the tribulation. Be sure in your hearts that you are truly saved. If Jesus were to look for your fruit how much would He find?

This message is to do what the scripture say in verse 11

11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

I pray it is comforting for you all. If anyone is not comforted now is the time to make it right.

Message Scriptures: **1 Thess 5:1-11**, *Deut 31:16-17, Deut 31:20-21, Rom 1:16-17, Col 3:9-11, Gal 3:28-29, 1 Thess 5:9-10, Rev 3:16-17, Rev 3:10-11, Matt 3:8-10 (Luke 3:8), John 8:37-40, Gen 6:7-8, Gen 15:6.*

End