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Helps for Young Christians.

No. A.7.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION.

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Who will pass through it ?

When will it take place ?

Who will be saved out of it ?

BY

J. H. McCORMICK.

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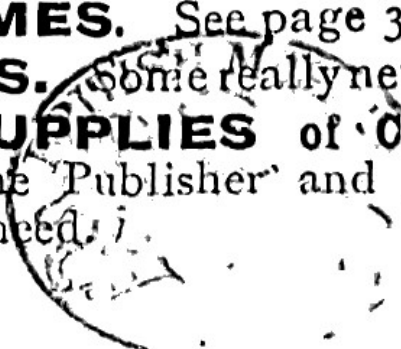
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The Great Tribulation.

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CHAPTER I.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION.

THE hope of the church is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour to the air, to complete the work of her salvation by the redemption of the bodies of His risen and living saints. Then shall the redeemed see the Lord, and in that moment they shall be changed into His likeness, and they shall ever afterwards be with the Lord. Wherever He goes they shall accompany Him, going with Him from the air to the Father's house, the judgment seat of Christ, and the marriage supper of the Lamb; coming forth with Him in power and glory to the earth; sharing in His triumph, vindication, glory and reign, and abiding with Him throughout the day of eternity. But the hope of Israel is the coming of the Lord Jesus as the Son of man to earth, to deliver them from their foes and set up His kingdom in power, righteousness and peace, reigning over the whole earth for the thousand years as David's Son, upon David's throne in Jerusalem, from which all blessings shall go forth to the ends of the earth, and to which all the glory and honour of the Gentile kings and nations shall be brought. Between the fulfilment of these

Two Hopes—

one relating to heaven and the heavenly saints, and the other to earth and the earthly people, Israel—there shall come upon the earth (but specially upon the land of Israel) that awful period of suffering, sorrow and judgment, called in the Holy Scriptures, "the Great Tribulation." Before it comes upon the earth the redeemed of the

present age shall all be taken (at the rapture) to heaven, and when it is taking place upon earth they shall be seated in heavenly glory, serving and worshipping the Lamb, who by His sacrificial death has delivered them from all coming wrath (the great tribulation included), and at its close the Lord Jesus Christ (accompanied by His heavenly saints and His mighty angels) shall come to the earth as Son of man—the hope of Israel—to deliver the godly Jewish remnant from their foes.

It is only in the Holy Scriptures that we have any trustworthy information concerning the future. Man cannot foretell the future course of history, but God has proved by the fulfilment of hundreds of prophecies, written hundreds of years before the events took place, that He can and does foreknow and reveal future history. These events all took place in the very way, at the exact time, and in the place that He foretold they should. Now, if all the prophecies relating to the past history of Israel and the first coming of the Lord have been literally fulfilled, is it not fair to assume that all prophecies relating to coming events shall in like manner be literally fulfilled? Now, the Word of God reveals to us that between the second coming of the Lord to the air and His revelation to the earth, the great tribulation shall take place. It shall begin when the abomination is set up in the holy place of the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, and end when Christ appears in power and glory, coming with His saints to earth.

“Why is the Great Tribulation sent upon Israel?”

When the Jewish people took Jesus and delivered Him to the Roman Governor for judgment, Pilate found no fault in Him, and would have let Him go free, but the Jewish rulers were

determined that Jesus should be put to death, and they moved the people to compel Pilate by their threats and cries to send Him to the cross. "When Pilate saw he could prevail nothing, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it.'" "Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us and on our children." The Lord had told them, a few days before, that vengeance for the righteous blood shed upon the earth would come upon the Jewish nation. They had rejected, mocked and killed Jehovah's prophets, and now they were filling up the cup of their iniquity by murdering their Messiah—Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Lord of glory. Their awful prayer for His blood to be upon them and upon their children was partially fulfilled in the days of vengeance that fell upon Jerusalem when it was taken and destroyed by the Roman armies under Titus, over a million Jews being slain and vast numbers sold as captives and dispersed among the nations. But it will be completely fulfilled in the great tribulation, when their children shall suffer untold horrors at the hands of the Antichrist.

Jeremiah's Prophecy concerning the Great Tribulation

(chap. xxx. 1-9), is one of great importance, for the Lord commanded him to write it in a book, for the days would come when He would cause His Jewish people to return to their own land and to possess it again. They shall return in unbelief, rebuild the temple and establish temple worship again, with a Jewish priesthood, and the sacrifices, Law and Sabbath observed in the land. But they shall return to pass through a time of terrible sorrow, which shall come upon "Israel and Judah," not upon the Church; called "the time of Jacob's trouble," because the Jews, and not

the Church, shall pass through it. The terrors of the tribulation shall cause men to tremble in the present and fear concerning the more terrible judgments yet to fall on the guilty people.

Scripture tells us that "that day is great, so that there is none like it." We search the records of the past in vain for such a time of national calamity, and such days the earth shall never experience again. But though Satan has stirred up men to attempt Israel's destruction at this time, yet Jacob shall be delivered out of his time of trouble. The yoke and bonds of Gentile rule shall be broken, and they shall become the servants of the Lord, worshipping and serving Him, and Christ shall sit upon David's throne in Jerusalem.

Jeremiah clearly teaches us (1) that Israel will be back in their own land when Jacob's trouble comes; (2) that it will concern Israel and Judah, the two branches of Jewish people, but not a word about the Church; (3) that it will be the time of Jacob's trouble. When it takes place the Church will be seated in heavenly glory as the enthroned elders (Rev. iv.); (4) that Jacob will be saved out of it. The Jewish people have never yet been gathered back to their own land—only a small remnant returned from the Babylonian captivity, and they are now scattered throughout the earth, groaning under Gentile rule. But then national salvation shall come to the Jewish nation and individual salvation to every Jew. "All Israel shall be saved"; (5) they shall serve David, their King (*i.e.*, their Messiah—Christ), whom they now despise and reject.

Daniel speaks of those Days (chap. xii. 1-4)

as a time of trouble such as there had never been in national history in the past, or would be in the future until the tribulation came. Then shall Michael, the great angelic prince, stand up and,

as the first step towards Israel's deliverance, he and his angels shall cast Satan and his hosts out of the heavens down to earth. Satan, coming down to earth in person in great wrath, seeks to destroy the Jewish people, whom he hates because they were God's people, and because of them the Messiah—his great adversary—came. In order to achieve His purpose, he obtains control of the mighty Roman Empire, and sends forth the man of sin—the Antichrist, the second beast of Rev. xiii.—whom the Jewish nation welcome as their deliverer and Messiah. Alas, they soon find that Antichrist is not a lamb, but a devouring lion like his great master, and soon the great tribulation bursts in all its fury upon them. But despite all the power of Satan and his earthly hosts, the purposes of God must stand, and so we read that Daniel's people (*i.e.*, the Jews) shall be delivered at that time (*i.e.*, at its close) by the personal appearance of the Lord to smite all their foes. The mass of the Jewish nation shall perish in the troubles of this time, but an elect remnant "everyone that shall be found written in the Book" shall be delivered, and that remnant shall become a strong nation destined to become the head of the nations during the kingdom age. Daniel's people were not delivered at the siege of Jerusalem. On the contrary, they were defeated by the Romans and dispersed through the world; nor have they since been delivered. They are yet scattered in every land, the servants and captives of the Gentile nations. This fact stamps the great tribulation as being a future event.

CHAPTER II.

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE.

IN the word of the Lord to Jeremiah and Daniel concerning the great tribulation, three great facts are clearly stated—

(1) That the tribulation shall be upon the Jewish people.

(2) That the tribulation shall be a time of unparalleled suffering.

(3) That the Jewish people shall be delivered from their enemies at its close by the appearing of the Lord in glory. In the Olivet discourse recorded in Matthew xxiv., our Lord confirms these three great facts, and also revealed to His disciples, in answer to their questions, the sign of the beginning of the tribulation and the cause of its sudden termination. The disciples asked Him three questions—(1)

When shall these things be?

This question is not answered in Matthew's Gospel, but is fully answered in that of Luke, chapter xxi., verses 20 to 24, where our Lord told His disciples that when "they shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies then they shall know that the desolation thereof is nigh. . . ." Warning them to flee out of the city, for these 'be the days of vengeance on Israel for their rejection and murder of Himself (the days of vengeance were fulfilled at Jerusalem's siege, almost 1,900 years ago, but the great tribulation is yet future)—when there shall be great distress in the land (*i.e.*, of Palestine), and great wrath upon this people (*i.e.*, the Jews), and in that awful siege His prophetic word was fulfilled. "They shall perish by the edge of the sword (over 1,100,000 perished in the siege), and shall be led captive into all nations (they were sold as slaves in such numbers that ere long no man would buy them), and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles (be under the rule of Gentile nations) until the times of the Gentiles (*i.e.*, their world power) be fulfilled."

(2) Their second question was:

"What shall be the Sign of Thy Coming?"

In answering it the Lord warns them that before His coming to earth (i.e., in the first half of Daniel's 70th week, verses 4 to 31) many false Christs shall appear; there shall be wars and rumours of wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes shall be in divers places; and these are only the beginning of sorrows, for worse is to follow in the great tribulation of the second half of the 70th week. The sign of the beginning of the great tribulation shall appear in the setting up of the abomination of desolation in the holy place in the temple in Jerusalem.

The great tribulation shall burst suddenly upon the Jewish people who have entered into covenant with Antichrist, and are looking to him to maintain them in their religious liberties and privileges. The Lord Jesus has left on record in this Scripture, for the guidance of His people in those awful days, the sign that will mark the beginning of the tribulation; how they shall act when they see the sign, and the signs that will accompany its close and His own personal appearing in glory. Everything in the directions for flight is characteristically Jewish, showing quite clearly that the Church is not before the Saviour's eye, when He beholds and speaks of these coming events on earth. Those that are in Judea are to flee (the Church is in all lands) they are to pray that their flight may not be on the Sabbath Day (the Jewish Sabbath will then be again observed and the law kept in Palestine. Christendom does not observe the Sabbath—the seventh day, but the Lord's Day—the first day of the week) because they could only go a short distance—a Sabbath day's journey—on that day. Then there shall arise false messiahs (Christians acknowledge Christ as Saviour and Lord), and false prophets showing great signs and wonders (false teachers, denying the Lord whose name they

profess, are the curse of Christendom in the closing days as Peter foretold), and in the rebuilt temple the priesthood will again offer Jewish sacrifices according to Jewish ritual.

Then the Saviour speaks of the terrible severity of those days: "Then shall be great tribulation such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no—nor ever shall be." The only hope of escape for the godly Jew will be in immediate flight, forsaking everything in order to preserve his life, not even returning to his home if he happened to be in the field when the sign appeared in the holy place. For Antichrist will immediately compel all, on pain of death, to be branded with

The Mark of the Beast

(which will mean eternal torment at Jehovah's righteous hands) and to worship his image. The dangers to the saints will be spiritual as well as physical, for false Christs and prophets will arise, seeking to turn them away from God. Against them the Saviour warned His disciples, telling them in His word, "that the coming of the Son of man will be a public event, seen as clearly by all as the lightning that flashes from the one end of heaven to the other can be, and that those who in the wilderness, or in the secret chambers profess to be Christs or prophets merely prove the falsity of their own claims by their secrecy."

In the great tribulation the Jewish nation shall be forsaken of God, and shall receive at His hands penal judgment for the murder of His prophets and His Son.

(3) The Gospel of the Kingdom

shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and when that testimony is completed by Jewish saints then shall the Jewish age

(which was interrupted by this present age of grace) come to a close. The Gospel of the kingdom (*i.e.*, the announcement that Jesus is coming as King) has not been preached for 1,900 years, and will not again be preached until after the rapture of the heavenly saints; the coming of the Lord in glory will end the Jewish age, and will take place immediately after the tribulation of those days, being preceded by signs and wonders in the heavens and shakings on earth; and "the sign of the Son of man" will then appear in heaven and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn as they see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He will come in person, and His coming will be visible to all.

CHAPTER III.

"WILL THE CHURCH PASS THROUGH THE GREAT TRIBULATION?"

THE great tribulation will come upon Christendom as a righteous judgment for her rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and her refusal of the Gospel of the grace of God. Why should the Church, which has shared His rejection and been saved by acceptance of the Gospel, share the awful punishment of those who have rejected Christ and refused His Gospel? Why should the Church, whose judgment was borne by Christ on Calvary, be called upon to pass through judgment again?

A Righteous God will never Permit

such an unrighteous thing, and so Holy Scripture expressly teaches that the Lord will take His Church out of this world before that hour of trial and sorrow comes upon it. The Church is seen in

heavenly glory in the enthroned elders, before a single seal is broken, a trumpet blown, or a vial of wrath outpoured upon this guilty scene. She is saved out of it by being taken home to heaven a few years before the tribulation begins.

In Revelation iii. 10, the risen Lord, speaking through John, makes the solemn pledge—"Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I will also keep thee from (Greek, out of) the hour of temptation (or trial) which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly."

Let us notice (1) *upon whom the hour of temptation will come*—"it shall come upon all the world." We have already seen it raging in all its fury in Palestine; now we behold it reaching to the utmost confines of the globe, coming upon all who are under the guilt of the Saviour's murder. Now the Church's very name signifies

"The Called Out Ones,"

viz., those separated from the world, its guilt and judgment, by their acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour; they are crucified to the world by the cross of Christ and delivered from it by His blood. For a time they are permitted to remain in it as heaven's ambassadors, declaring the good tidings of the Gospel. But soon the embassy will be withdrawn, and then the hour of trial comes. The world's friendship is enmity with God, and those who are its friends constitute themselves God's enemies. How then could the tribulation come upon the Church which has been called out, separated, crucified, and delivered from the world and is heaven's embassy to it?

(2) *It will come to try them that dwell upon the earth.* Testing in a most unmistakable way that class of men (several times mentioned in Scripture) called earth-dwellers (*i.e.*, men whose

thoughts, desires and aspirations are bounded by the things of time), men who are apostates from Christianity, and who will be left behind when the Lord comes for His Church. They shall believe the Devil's lie in the mouth of the Antichrist and shall be delivered up to eternal judgment. Righteous judgment shall come on those who have heard the glad tidings of the Gospel in all its wondrous truth concerning God's attitude towards the sinner and have rejected it—the truth—that they should believe and rest upon the Devil's lie, and be eternally ruined in consequence.

(3) *Who will be kept out of it, and how?* “I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation.” The message is to the Church and the pledged word of the Saviour is that

He will Keep His Church Out

of that awful time on earth, and in the next verse He indicates how He will do it. “Behold, I come quickly,” and Paul tells us that the Church will be kept out of the great tribulation by the rapture. “We shall be caught up . . . meet the Lord in the air . . . be for ever with the Lord.” The two great Scriptures dealing with the rapture are 1 Thessalonians iv. and 1 Corinthians xv., and other Scriptures must be interpreted in the light of these two portions.

Shall only the watching Saints be caught up?

The Scriptures declare “we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up,” the “we” including all the living saints, and “we shall all be changed,” not the “watching, waiting, sanctified ones” only, but all the saints of God shall be changed at the same moment (for it will all happen in a “moment, in the twinkling of an eye”), so it is impossible for any child of God to be left behind to pass through the horrors of the great tribulation.

Salvation is all of grace, and the work of our redemption will only be completed when we who are living when He comes receive glorified, immortal bodies, and the risen dead receive glorified incorruptible bodies. All believers shall receive glorified bodies at His coming. If, as some allege, only the watching ones are caught up, what about the christian dead? Will only the dead who lived and died watching for the Lord's return be raised? It is well known that for 1,600 years the hope of the Lord's return was forgotten by the Church. What of the multitudes of christians who died without even knowing that He was coming? Will they be raised? or will they be punished for their unwatchfulness by remaining in the grave for a thousand years longer? If it is necessary to be watching for His return, they certainly will not be raised at the rapture. But the Scripture is clear, full, emphatic and final, "The dead in Christ shall rise first." "They that are Christ's at His coming."

The Holy Spirit has chosen these two sentences, "The dead in Christ," "They that are Christ's," to make it clear beyond the shadow of a doubt, that all the christian dead shall rise at one time, viz., at His coming. And if all the christian dead (irrespective of watchfulness) shall rise at one time, shall not all the christians living (irrespective of watching) be changed and caught up at the same time? If it be otherwise, then the righteous Lord would be punishing His living saints who had failed to watch (by allowing them to pass through the world's judgment in the tribulation) and allowing His sleeping saints, who were guilty of the same fault, to go free. It is impossible! All His living and sleeping saints shall be caught up to meet Him in the air. Are you one of them?

J. H. McCORMICK.

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