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THE FATHER'S HOUSE

W. FRASER NAISMITH, Scotland

The Tribulation Theory

Some today are living in the dread of passing through the Great Tribulation. Tribulation will be a portion to the saints during their pilgrimage, as the Lord indicated in John 16:33.

There are six definite allusions to the Great Tribulation in the Holy Scriptures and a careful examination of these will clearly indicate that they have no direct bearing on the believers of this present economy. The first reference is found in Jeremiah 30:7 and is termed 'the time of Jacob's trouble.' This has its peculiar reference to Israel's children of a coming day who shall pass through the fierce trials of the Great Tribulation. The second reference is in Daniel 12:1 where we are informed 'At that time shall Michael stand up, the great Prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.' It is patent to every Bible student that this period to which Daniel refers has no bearing on this present time, but relates again to Daniel's people who are the Jews. The prince which standeth for Daniel's people is Michael, and other references to him will confirm that his appearances are always in connection with God's earthly people. The third allusion is in Matthew's Gospel 24:21. The Lord Jesus Christ is the speaker here, and what He says is part of the Olivet Discourse. The greatest prophecy ever uttered is found in Matthew chapters 24 and 25 for it was spoken by the Lord Himself. This discourse is divided into three parts. The disciples had asked two questions—'What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age?' This question is answered by Matthew. The other question is 'When shall these things be?' and this is answered by Luke in chapter 21. The first division of this great discourse is from Matt. 24, verse 1 to verse 44, and the Lord deals with His coming in relation to the Jew, His earthly people. (It is out of this section we have selected the verse which refers to the Great Tribulation). The second division is from Matt. 24:45 to Chap. 25:30 and in this section the Lord Jesus speaks

of His coming as it relates to Christendom. The third division is from Matt. 25:31 to 46, where Christ tells of His coming in great glory and how that coming affects the living nations. The context of the first section makes it transparently clear that Christ had in mind His earthly people. So terrible will those days be that except they should be shortened no flesh should be saved. The fourth reference is in Mark 13:19. The period of time is similar to that to which Matthew has referred. Prophets of old and the Lord Himself had exclusively in their thoughts a period of dreadful persecution which should befall Jewish people in a day yet future.

The Book of Revelation has two distinct references to this period of great tribulation. In Rev. 3:10 the Lord Jesus, addressing the Church at Philadelphia, says 'I will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.' This is addressed to the church at Philadelphia and possibly someone has got the idea that the Great Tribulation has some bearing on the church. The promise from the Lord is that He will keep them *from* the hour of temptation. How will the Lord keep His saints in this church period from the hour of temptation? 'The hour' is not sixty minutes, but a measured span of time. This measured span is over a period of three years and a half. How does the Lord keep His own out of this measured span of time? It is simple—He comes, as He said to this same church—'behold I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown,'—and takes the saints into eternity. 'For every setting sun brings us nearer and nearer to a world where suns will never set' as Sir Edward Denny once exclaimed. The last allusion is in Rev. 7:14. The scene is one of holy splendour as John observes the one hundred and forty-four thousand out of all the tribes of Israel together with an innumerable host crying 'Salvation to our God'. The question is put to John regarding the company arrayed in white robes and whence have they come. He is unable to answer, and so the elder gives the answer, saying 'These are they which came out of Tribulation the Great. . . .' This company of sealed Israelites and this host that no man could number out of every tribe and nation have

come through the throes of the Great Tribulation and pass into the joys of the millennial earth. Not one single thought in the six references to the Great Tribulation is proposed of the saints of this present dispensation passing through the Great Tribulation.

One has discovered that those who hold either of the theories,—i.e., The Selective Rapture or The Tribulation Theory, are confident that they are going, while those who are less faithful shall live through the fierce persecutions of the Great Tribulation.

The Father's ouse

The background of John 14 is a very dark one. In chapter 13 the Lord had washed His disciples' feet and indicated in doing so that He required a moral suitability to Himself—thus the reason that every spot of defilement should be removed. The Lord's Supper is not found in John's Gospel: what we do get is the necessity for moral suitability to the Lord at the supper, yea, and throughout every step of the homeward journey. When the intruder, Judas Iscariot, has gone then the Lord is free to unbosom Himself to His own. He would comfort them in view of His leaving this earth. 'The Blessed Hope' is the brightest orb in our spiritual firmament; and to obliterate it would be to lose the grandest thrill that a soul can possibly have consequent upon the knowledge of sins forgiven through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. 'Judas went out and it was night' and it has been night ever since! The Lord is now in a position to divulge the secrets of His heart to His own. He would comfort them in view of His departure, saying, 'Let not your heart be troubled.' The Lord was going away from His followers and so great was His interest in them He sought, before divulging the secrets of His heart, to console and comfort them. The words He spoke were not meant exclusively for eleven men. Down the ages many tried and tested saints have found comfort in the words of the Lord. Those words come ringing down the ages with all their freshness and fragrance to troubled souls, and what an amount of consolation can be derived therefrom. The departure of the Lord caused a sadness in the hearts of His followers and as they smart under the trial He comes in with His balm of comfort just as He is about to leave this scene.

'Ye believe in God, believe also in Me.' This is not initial belief for salvation obviously—for the eleven were converted, attracted and captivated men, drawn to Him because of His love, His personality, and His presence. 'Ye believe in God' and yet they had never seen God—for 'no man hath seen God at any time.' Paul declared in 1 Tim. 6:16, 'Whom no man hath seen, nor can see.' They believed in God whom they had never seen—and this is where faith shines. Faith is a world of its own: it is not governed by human senses. We may not be able to explain—we may not even understand—but W. Kelly aptly stated 'God never asks us to understand, He commands us to believe.' They believed in One whom no 'man hath seen'—and so do we by faith: for 'he that cometh to God must believe that He is.' The Lord would convey to their hearts this truth—'I am going away: I shall be the invisible Christ at God's right hand; and when you do not see me by the natural eye believe in Me.' Invisibility tests us! Moses was forty days out of the vision of the people of Israel and they said 'Up, make us gods that will go before us; for as for this Moses we wot not what has become of him.' There are two adages which might be applied here—one says 'absence makes the heart grow fonder'; the other reads 'out of sight, out of mind.'

Do our hearts grow fonder as we realise that the person of our Lord Jesus Christ is still absent: or is the fact of His absence from our vision making us indifferent to Him and His claims? The reader should answer the question in the presence of God where nothing but transparency can abide.

In the Gospel of John the 'Father' is spoken of over one hundred and twenty times. 'My Father's House', however, is quite a new thought in this Gospel. In chapter 2 the Lord Jesus said 'ye have made my Father's House a house of merchandise'; but there Christ had in mind the temple where Jehovah had been pleased to place His name. When He referred to 'My Father's House' in chapter 14 He was obviously speaking of a realm outside this world altogether. It is where the great family gathering shall take place, as the Lord Himself shall declare 'Behold, I and the children whom God hath given Me!' It is that scene where joys untold, never to pass away, shall into exile drive

the cares of time. The atmosphere is love, and the ransomed of the Lord shall dwell in undisturbed delight enjoying to the full that ineffable love of the Lord. It is a place of 'many abodes' for the redeemed of the Lord shall take up eternal residence there. The only ground of admission is the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ—nothing less, and nothing more! No soul shall ever claim priority over another in the Father's House; for it is a scene where all are loved by the same love, and all are equally near to the heart of the Father. The Lord Jesus would not have kept this a secret and then slipped away without communicating such knowledge to His own. If such a glorious prospect could never be realised the Lord would not have had the eleven disciples following Him and then slip away and leave them without any hope. He went to prepare a place for His own. It would seem that He would virtually say 'this earth is not good enough for you'! What has this passing scene to offer to those who have attachments outside it altogether? He went to prepare a place for His own, and His one entering in has made that place secure for all His redeemed of this and prior dispensations. We are reminded that He has, as the forerunner, entered within the veil. It is impossible to have a forerunner if there are not others to follow. We shall surely follow Him where He has gone. The place is ready and presently He shall come to take us with joy into the Father's House. At present He labours to keep us from falling; for He, one day, shall present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

'If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' The going away of the Lord Jesus meant for Him the agony and blood-like sweat of Gethsemane; the mock trial of Gabbatha, and the sorrow and judgment of Golgotha. It also involved His triumph over death and Satan; for it was through what might seem defeat that He won the meed and crown. Consequently at heaven's investiture God has decorated Him with glory and with honour. God has raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand 'far above all'. He has gone—and today there is a Man in the glory of God; and the glory of God shines.

out from the face of the Man on God's right hand. He who has gone has given us the promise that He will come again. Yes! Himself and none other—the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout'. He shall not be satisfied till He has all for whom He bled and died with Himself in cloudless glory. There is nothing buoys up the saint of God amidst the stormy billows of this scene as the assuring words of our Lord 'I will come again'. Our attitude towards Him, our affection for Him, our loyal service to Him are surely the estimate we have of the Man who today is out of sight.

For what purpose is Christ coming again? To receive us unto Himself! It is noticeable that the Lord does not paint the glories of the Father's House. He does not describe heaven at all: He says 'to receive you unto Myself'—and that is enough for the soul that has already tasted of His grace. There will be the summoning shout calling His own to meet Him in the air—the trysting place—then He shall with joy conduct us into the Father's House where heavenly delights shall banish all the cares of time.

'That where I am, there ye may be also,' such words are pregnant with meaning for the believer. It should be noticed afresh that Christ does not describe the wonders of that realm to which we are hastening but says 'where I am'. 'Where I am' is all the heaven I want! The fact that Christ is there makes heaven all that the redeemed can ever wish or hope for. The Father's House cannot be described. It will only be when we are at home in the Father's house that we shall appreciate to the full all that Christ wanted to convey when He said 'Where I am'.

We are not anticipating the grave! We are not expecting to pass through the Great Tribulation! We are not amongst those who presume to have superior piety to our fellow believers; in fact at best we are 'unprofitable servants'. We shall not participate in any 'selective rapture', but 'we which are alive and *remain*' shall respond immediately to His shout and then 'forever with the Lord.' Scan the horizon, for the Morning Star is about to appear—then all the joys of the Father's House shall be our eternal portion. Blessed hope, and no haunting nightmare for the believer. Can we respond 'Even so, come Lord Jesus'?