

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA.55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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THE GREAT TESTING

The national crisis, a part of the prophesied future of Israel, which is called in Matthew "great tribulation" (there being no definite article in the Greek), is called in the Old Testament **"the time of Jacob's trouble,"** (Jer. 30:7), and in Hosea 2:15, **"the valley of Achor."** Achor is a Hebrew word that means "trouble." In Revelation 3:10 this short period of time is called **"the hour of temptation (trial), which shall come upon the world to try them that dwell upon the earth."** However, in all these descriptions of this juncture in Israel's history, concurrent blessings are promised which give a different character to this period of time which is far different from the one being set forth by many prophets of doom and despair today.

In Jeremiah 30:7 the promise concerning "Jacob" is that "he shall be saved out of it," and in Hosea the valley of Achor is declared to be a **"door of hope"** wherein Israel in passing through shall sing, **"as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt."** Again, in Rev. 3:10 there is the promise to those who have **"kept the word of His endurance,"** that **He will be keeping them out of "the hour of trial which shall come upon all the world."**

Thus, it is quite clear from Scripture that there will be saints innumerable in the great tribulation, and that it will be a glorious experience for them because of the manifest divine help and safekeeping which will surely be their portion. It will be even as He has promised: **"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."** Isa. 43:2. These facts alone greatly change the character of the great tribulation for all the people of God who will pass through it.

Consider this illustration. Let us suppose that a man without family, friends, money, and all that goes to make up a comfortable life is suddenly stricken with a serious illness. Then another man with a devoted family, a host of friends, and plentiful means is stricken with an identical illness. Would not the first man suffer far more than the second? Even so, in the great tribulation the fact God is going to show openly His love and care for His own, causes all the dire experiences of this time to take on a different character.

In view of this, I for one will boldly say that if God will be with me, I will gladly enter into this time with a song of His goodness and mercies upon my lips, and walk happily through every day of it, saying, **"The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me"** (Heb. 13:6). I have no sympathy for those who are so cravenly afraid of the great tribulation that they joyfully receive the idea of a pre-tribulation rapture that will deliver them out of it. This is a doctrine that can only be supported by ruthlessly severing the words "caught up" of 1 Thess. 4:17 from **"we who are alive and remain unto the parousia of the Lord"** of 1 Thess. 4: 15. God has joined the rapture and the parousia together, and what God has joined together, man should not put asunder.

The declaration concerning "the hour of testing, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth," the "great tribulation," tells us that the experience of Israel is in reality a means of testing all men upon the earth.

If we give it any honest consideration, it can be seen at once that there would be no value in God testing Israel, the nations, or the men upon the earth as long as they are in their present state. Israel and the nations have failed, and any further testing would be about the same as testing a plane that has crashed and is a wreck. Furthermore, the idea of God bringing about a time of testing after His removal of all from the earth who might have passed such a test, is completely without logic. Why test those whose failure is already manifested by their rejection? The failure of mankind is not only obvious, it is admitted by the majority of men. However, if a divine testing of mankind should follow a long period of enlightenment, instruction, discipline, and blessing, it would be proper, reasonable, and of great value.

This is the way it will be. Blessing will come first and testing will follow.

The benign and blessed conditions that will exist in the kingdom of God will be the portion of Israel and all other nations before the great tribulation takes place. This is why I believe not only in a post-tribulation rapture but also in a post-kingdom tribulation. See my study on *New Testament Time Periods* (Issue No.**SB023**).

If we insist on making the words *trouble* and *tribulation* to mean torture, torment, punishment, and persecution, as almost everyone seems to be doing, then there is little hope of ever coming to a true understanding of what the Lord Jesus meant when He spoke of "great tribulation." True, He describes it as being a tribulation "**such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be**" (Matt. 24: 21). Using this statement as a springboard, many have jumped to the conclusion that this will be a time of torture, torment, pain, anguish, and suffering such as has never been before or will ever occur again. From this conclusion, they have described God as acting in such manner that they actually dishonor the One Who is full of love and compassion and set Him forth as a sadistic monster.

An interesting fact here is that our word *tribulation* is derived from the Latin *tribulum*, which meant a threshing sled. This was a heavy, wooden platform, and various means were used to make its underside rough. Oxen were yoked to this to drag it back and forth over the wheat breaking the kernels from the straw and husk. Then with large forks or shovels this mixture of wheat, straw, and chaff was flung high into the air. The wind would then carry straw and chaff to one side, while the grain fell by itself into a golden pile. It can be readily seen that the purpose in all this was not to hurt the wheat, but to separate it from the chaff. This is also the purpose of the great tribulation. And while it is true that in it, Israel will be afflicted, yet in all their afflictions God will be with them.

The declaration that this will be a time of great tribulation that cannot be compared with any other time does not have to do with excessive torment or torture. This will be because the devil has come down to earth, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time (Rev. 12:12). This will be the first time this happens and it will be the last, and this accounts for the exceedingly strange character of this time.

The Greek words that have to do with this time are *thlibo* and *thlipsis*. The first of these is usually translated "trouble," but it means to press or to constrict. The second is usually translated "tribulation," but it means pressure or constriction. An interesting occurrence of *thlibo* is found in Matt.

7:14 where it is translated "narrow" in the Lord's declaration, "narrow is the way."

When God's government of this earth and mankind upon it is spoken into existence, it will embrace all living men. Men come under it because God has assumed sovereignty, and not by any choice of their own. Jehovah will become King and He will govern. He will deal severely with anyone who violates its judgments or resists His will in any manner. The Holy Spirit will then act as the restrainer and He will not fail in His task. Prevention will be His purpose. Then after centuries of blessing and learning under God's government, the world will draw nigh to the time of the personal presence of Christ, even His 1000 year parousia. At this point everything begins to narrow; for none, who are unworthy of it, are going to pass from God's pre-advent kingdom into the personal presence of Christ. So a divine testing of all who dwell upon the earth is arranged by God.

Under this test all the divine restraints are lifted, and even the Holy Spirit is removed as a restrainer. Men are now completely free, and their true character, whether good or bad, will show forth. At this time there is a revolt against the kingdom, but God's government is well able to take care of it. However, Israel must go under the *tribulum*, and so must all men, that the chaff may be separated from the wheat. At this time all the faithful in Israel stand in the place of Christ toward all men and the actions and attitudes men take toward them will be judged as their attitude toward Christ. **"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me"** (Matt. 25:40). These are the words of Christ that will be applicable to these times.

Never in all history will men have faced a time of testing such as this. The pressure from Satan and his followers will be enormous. Some will fail, but those who have learned well the lessons taught by day-to-day experience under God's government will have nothing to fear from this time of testing. Furthermore, it has nothing to do with those who are described as being **"holy and without blame before Him"** (Eph. 1:4). We have met the supreme test of God by believing now. There will be no further testing of those whose faith has conquered in this the dispensation of the grace of God.

Let us keep the divine order straight. There must be the kingdom of God first and this will be followed by a short period of "great tribulation."

END ISSUE NO. SB040

