

## SALVATION IN THE TRIBULATION – PART A

What I want to do from this point forward is to study the remaining end times events in the actual order in which they occur. I am not going to do a detailed study on the Tribulation. We have studied Revelation in the past, and I will leave it at that. What we will study will probably be as follows:

The Basis of Salvation in the Tribulation

Armageddon

The Second Coming of Christ

The Millennium

The Resurrections and the Final Judgment

The New Heaven and the New Earth

The Heavenly City – Jerusalem

The Eternal State

This morning I want to begin the section on what is the basis of salvation during the Tribulation. Obviously, this is not an issue for a believer, but it certainly may be an issue for people that we know who are not saved. What we know with certainty is that **the basis of salvation has always been and always will be the same – faith**. The word “**faith**” is a word that implies entrusting our life to Christ. It certainly involves an intellectual assent to the facts of Scripture, but it is much more than merely understanding something. It is entrusting your life to someone, committing your life to them, and then living out that commitment in your life as an evidence that you truly have believed. Faith cannot and does not operate in a vacuum. **Biblical faith (saving faith) cannot exist without biblical fruit.** We have expressed all of this in the past as saying that justification guarantees sanctification. I.e., genuine salvation guarantees some observable level of genuine spiritual growth. Salvation has always been by faith and always will be by faith.

Someone is going to most likely ask the question as to why even study this. The answer is because even though the basis of salvation will be the same, it appears that the events during this time and what we might consider to be the normal methods of people coming to Christ will actually be dramatically different. **It will be a world without the church.** Now, there will still be institutional churches, but they will all be filled with lost people and lost leaders who were left behind at the rapture. Think of it this way. At the exact moment of the rapture when the true church is removed, there will not be one single Christian on the planet – not one Christian. Just that one fact alone makes things very different. Secondly, **it will be a world without the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit.** He will still be very active during the Tribulation, but whereas during the church age He worked through the church, during this age He will most likely work through 144,000 Jews who have been set apart, through two prophets, and through an angel orbiting the earth preaching the gospel. I am convinced that He will also be working through the indescribable events of tribulation, anguish of an unimaginable destructive magnitude, and even through persecution of those people who attended churches that taught the doctrine of the rapture. They were members of a local church, but were not saved, and quickly gave their life to Christ when they realized that they had been left behind. Then to make matters worse, the world will

eventually fall under the rulership of Satan and the Antichrist, and at the midpoint of the Tribulation people will take the Mark of the Beast just to be able to purchase the necessities needed to live and survive.

Now, none of this is meant to demean the fact that in all likelihood that many will be saved. Unfortunately, those that are saved will most likely be martyred over time in the Tribulation if they have not already died from the judgments that are being poured out on the earth during that time. It appears that many of the Jews in Israel that will be saved during that time will certainly have to flee to the mountains and be supernaturally protected by God ([Matthew 24](#)). [Revelation 6:9-11](#), speaking of some of those who were saved and slain early in the Tribulation, says,

**Rev 6:9 (NKJV) When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. <sup>10</sup> And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" <sup>11</sup> Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were*, was completed.**

[Revelation 7:13-14](#) says,

**Rev 7:13 (NKJV) Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" <sup>14</sup> And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**

[Revelation 12:10-11](#) says,

**Rev 12:10 (NKJV) Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. <sup>11</sup> And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.**

This is a picture of real Christianity and what it produces in a person's life.

Now, I want to talk just a little bit about the ministry of the Holy Spirit during the time of the Tribulation. Relative to our topic, this is one of the primary issues. The other main issue has to do with the eventual salvation of Israel and how that takes place. In some ways, the ministry of the Holy Spirit will be similar to His ministry to Israel in the Old Testament. He was at work in the Old Testament saints, but the Holy Spirit did not indwell them at that time. Even in that, He was still responsible for the salvation of those who believed. In [John 3](#) when Jesus is talking to Nicodemus, it must be appreciated that Jesus made it clear that salvation was through the operation of the Holy Spirit. He told Nicodemus these words in [John 3:5-8](#),

**Jn 3:5 (NKJV) Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born**

**again.' <sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."**

Nicodemus was still under the old dispensation, under the economy of the Old Testament. Christ had not yet died and the Holy Spirit had not yet been given, but still Nicodemus had to be born of and by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the executor of the plan of salvation. He always has been and always will be. He is the member of the Godhead who executes God's plan of salvation on the earth. So, in the Old Testament it was His work that brought men into God's kingdom, but He did not indwell them at that time. In like manner, during the Tribulation it will still be the Holy Spirit who is administering the work of regeneration most likely in exactly the same way as He did in the Old Testament. The Scriptures do not define whether or not people saved during the Tribulation will actually be indwelt by the Holy Spirit as were believers in the church age. During the church age, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is God's specific gift to those who come to Christ and become a part of the Bride of Christ. What we do know with certainty, however, is that the salvation that will be offered must still be received and embraced by faith and it will be made effectual through the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit.

[Matthew 24:9-14](#) speaks about the “gospel of the kingdom” being preached specifically during the Tribulation when it says,

**Mt 24:9 (NKJV) Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. <sup>10</sup> And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. <sup>11</sup> Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. <sup>12</sup> And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup> But he who endures to the end shall be saved. <sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.**

The Scriptures do not define for us who will actually be preaching this “gospel of the kingdom”. Some think that it will be the 144,000 Jewish servants of [Revelation 7 and 14](#), but there is nothing in Scripture that says that is what they are going to do. It seems reasonable that that is exactly what they would do, but the Scriptures do not say that. What we do know, however, is that an angel will be preaching the gospel to the entire world. [Revelation 14:6-7](#) says,

**Rev 14:6 (NKJV) Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth--to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people-- <sup>7</sup> saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."**

You have to appreciate that the term the “gospel of the kingdom” is a somewhat debated term that some believe is supposedly different than the “everlasting gospel” preached by the angel. To me personally, the gospel is the gospel – Christ died, Christ was buried, and Christ arose from the dead. That being said, I take the position that the two are basically synonymous terms. We do this all the time. We call it a car or an automobile. We say one pound or 16 ounces. We call it a house or a dwelling, or that a plane is an aircraft, or that a ship is a vessel. The “gospel of the kingdom” does not appear to be a term that is specific to Israel or to some specific time. [Matthew 24:14](#) says that the “gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world during the tribulation”, and that is exactly what the angel is doing in [Revelation 14:6](#) – preaching the gospel. If anyone is ever going to be a part of God's kingdom,

whether Jew or Gentile, then they must place their faith in Christ for salvation. The reality of [Acts 4:12](#) is really very simple when it says,

**Ac 4:12 (NKJV) Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."**

For me personally, there is no issue. The gospel is the gospel no matter what you call it. You need to be saved. That has always been the message. It was by faith in Christ in the Old Testament, by faith in Christ in the New Testament, by faith in Christ in the church age, by faith in Christ in the Tribulation, and by faith in Christ in the Millennium. It is the gospel of the past kingdom, the present kingdom, and the future kingdom.

After the rapture, we know that the Second Coming will be the next great eschatological event, and at the Second Coming of Christ, He will establish His millennial kingdom on the earth. We know those things to be accurate (if you believe in the rapture). So, during the Tribulation there will still be the offer of the “everlasting gospel” of [Revelation 14:6](#) by an angel. However, that does not exclude the offer of salvation by anyone who is saved, understands the gospel, and clearly proclaims it to those who are lost.

In [Revelation 11:3](#), we are told that there is the preaching of the “two witnesses”.

**Rev 11:3 (NKJV) And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."**

We also have what is known theologically as the “remnant”, or those Jews who are saved during the Tribulation prior to the Second Coming. It is assumed that this “remnant” most likely occurs because of the witness of the 144,000. That cannot be proven from Scripture, but is generally assumed. [Revelation 12:13-17](#) speaks of this remnant group when it says,

**Rev 12:13 (NKJV) Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child*.<sup>14</sup> But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.<sup>15</sup> So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.<sup>16</sup> But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.<sup>17</sup> And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.**

The better translation of “have the testimony of Jesus Christ” is better translated in the NASB, ESV, and NIV as “hold the testimony of Jesus Christ”.

Clearly, in this passage when the “woman” is spoken of it is referring to the nation of Israel. So, the “dragon” persecutes the “woman”, but in the midst of that persecution God gives the woman divine protection. [V17](#) seems to indicate that some of the woman’s offspring are obedient to God and clearly hold to the testimony of Christ. I.e., they are a believing remnant within Israel, and they become the object of special persecution by the dragon.

The point in all of this is simply to affirm that God still retains many different vehicles and means through which He will communicate the gospel message during the Tribulation – an angel, probably the 144,000, people who get saved, and a remnant of Messianic Jews who are saved during the Tribulation.

It certainly appears that even though the church has been removed that the message of salvation will be very prevalent during the Tribulation. I.e., it is not just a time of judgment, but also a time of a great proclamation of the gospel worldwide. It is my personal belief that many will come to Christ during the Tribulation. There are many unbelievers who are currently a part of a local church who are not serious about their relationship to Christ. They are playing the waiting game and trying to get as much as is possible out of their earthly life and are just going through the motions of salvation. However, at the rapture everything changes. They have been taught about the rapture and when it happens they are left behind. At that moment they are awakened to salvation and may come to Christ. They begin to call people who they know were saved. It could be their parents, some friends, maybe their pastor, and no one is answering the phone. Millions of people have disappeared and for the first time in their life, they realize that they are lost and cry out to God for salvation. However, the part that they do not understand is what Paul said in [2 Thessalonians 2:9-12](#),

**2Th 2:9 (NKJV) The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,<sup>10</sup> and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.<sup>11</sup> And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,<sup>12</sup> that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**

Will God be merciful to them? I do not know. Will they be swept up in this very powerful delusion that God sends? Most likely they will. For me personally, these are some of the most frightening and sobering verses in the Bible for those that we dearly love who may not be saved and who are left behind at the rapture. It says that “**they should believe the lie**” and that “**all may be condemned**” who have “**had pleasure in unrighteousness**”. My caveat to this passage and how it should be interpreted is that “**the lie**” mentioned in v11 is referring specifically to the antichrist setting himself up as God at the midpoint of the Tribulation / Great Tribulation. It is like God says “*If you do not want Me after all that I have done for you, then be assured that you cannot have Me. I give you the antichrist. You can let me know later how that turns out for you.*” I am not sure that that is the most correct way to say it, but you get the point. If God decides to send this strong delusion on you, then you can be assured that you will not believe. [2 Thessalonians 2:3-5](#) speaks of this event and says,

**2Th 2:3 (NKJV) Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,*<sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.**

I have said it over and over during this study, but we live in the age of grace and not the age of judgement, and it behooves you to not let this age of grace pass you by when the offer of salvation is so clear and so real and so important. God is offering His grace freely to all who will come to Him.

We know that people will believe the antichrist because they will take the “**mark of the beast**”. [Revelation 13:15-16](#) speaks of this and says,

Rev 13:15 (NKJV) **He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. <sup>16</sup> He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, <sup>17</sup> and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.**

I hope that you can clearly recognize that in the world in which we live that there is a monumental tide of marketing and aggression that is undermining everything that is Christian. It will impact you if you are not discerning and you can be assured that it is impacting your children in ways that you may not even recognize. I praise God for those young people who have not yet succumbed to the culture and who remain faithful to Christ, but no matter what we may think, that number is shrinking by the thousands every day. The “cancel culture” is really working quite well.

The main vehicle for the cancel culture is social media, and it is the currently engrained practice of withdrawing and canceling support for any entity (companies, public figures, conservative groups like the church, etc.) who have said something or done something that someone else considers to be objectionable or offensive. It is a well-known fact that the more that you tell a lie, the more that people will believe it. It is social media’s way of trying to take away a person’s or an organization’s platform and power. Former President Donald Trump was such a target, and so is the church when it speaks out on moral issues associated with the LGBTQ movement. The social media gurus look for certain words and then take down from the social media platform what may have been said by someone or a conservative entity. Just as an example of how far reaching this is, the Washington Redskins football team has announced that it will change its name after intense pressure from team sponsors. There will be more to follow. The symbols of the confederacy are being removed, and even statues of Christopher Columbus. If the culture does not like the church or Christians, they will find a way to cancel both – and that is underway full steam ahead today. We know that God and prayer have been removed from public schools because it offended someone, and what we preach is probably next on the chopping block for offending people.

I guess that the point is really very simple. Salvation is not something that a person can just fool around with like they have all of the time on the planet to decide if they will truly commit their life to Christ. It is my deep conviction that the church at large has multitudes and multitudes of people who fall into this category. They are religious, but lost. They have been baptized in water, but never into the body of Christ. They are members of a church, but not a member of the kingdom of God. They made a religious decision, but not a redeeming decision. This is the reality of organized Christianity in America – those who have chosen the wide gate and broad way that lead to destruction rather than the narrow gate and difficult way that leads to life. These are the ones who will say “**Lord, Lord**”, but will never enter into God’s kingdom. These are the ones who will hear Jesus say “**I never knew you; depart from Me.**” Those are the absolute worst words that someone could ever hear. May God help us!