

What Saith the Scripture?

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## The Character of God Is Revealed in the Rapture Or, God Is Faithful to Provide a Way to Escape

"God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it"  
(1 Corinthians 10:13).

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5-4-98

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### **Preface**

One of the first verses of Scripture taught to many young Believers is the promise that the Faithful God has provided us a "way to escape" (10:13) from temptation and sinning. But, can we apply this same concept of escape to the upcoming Tribulation Week? Since God "abideth faithful" (2Timothy 2:13), I believe we can be assured of a "way to escape" (1Corinthians 10:13) from the coming events of the Tribulation Week.

### **Why Should We Escape?**

All of the people of God have been tempted throughout the ages. "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented" (Hebrews 11:37). God has always been faithful to His people. "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, He is God, the Faithful God, which keepeth Covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His Commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9). Help has always been available from God to give a "way to escape" (1Corinthians 10:13) from temptation. "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in His excellency on the sky" (Deuteronomy 33:26).

Why should any of God's people escape from experiencing more or less temptation than any other of God's people? "Resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1Peter 5:9). The Apostle Peter assured his readers that their afflictions were the "same afflictions" (5:9) as other Christians in this world. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man" (1Corinthians 10:13). The Apostle Paul agreed that temptation was "common to man" (1Corinthians 10:13). The LORD Jesus taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation" (Matthew 6:13), as if God would sovereignly regulate the degree and amount of temptation allowed for His people.

Thus, whether or not some may be delivered from all the temptation of the Tribulation Week by a Pre-Tribulational Rapture (as some will) [see our article, "May 31,1998" for our reasoning for this date for the Pre-Tribulational Rapture], or delivered from the "vials of the wrath of God" (Revelation 16:1) by a Pre-Wrath Rapture (as still others will), is in the sovereign disposition of God. "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in Mine hand, O house of Israel" (Jeremiah 18:6).

## The Escape Concept

Is it unrighteous for a child of God to seek escape from the trials and temptations of the Seventieth Week of Daniel (Daniel 9:27)? The LORD Jesus **commanded** His disciples to pray "that ye may be accounted worthy to escape" (Luke 21:36) from **ALL** the events of the Tribulation Week. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (21:36). To escape **ALL** the events of the Tribulation Week necessitates a Pre-Tribulational departure. To "escape... and to stand before the Son of man" (21:36) does not describe being kept from temptation **while remaining** on Earth during the Tribulation Week. To "stand before the Son of man" (21:36) indicates a Heavenly scene uniting the raptured Saints with their LORD.

To "be accounted worthy to escape" (21:36) is the **promised** result of our obedience to the **command**, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always" (21:36). Who accounts us "worthy to escape" (21:36)? The LORD Jesus Christ, the Judge of the Quick and the Dead (2 Timothy 4:11), will render His verdict of unworthy or "worthy to escape" (Luke 21:36). Lest it be objected that this sounds like our worthiness to escape is not the grace of God; like Abraham, we **believe God's promise** of escape from "all these things that shall come to pass" (21:36), and God will reckon or account us worthy. "And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the **Friend** of God" (James 2:23).

Ours is to "**believe God**, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:25), i.e., that we shall "escape all these things that shall come to pass" (Luke 21:36). It is God's part to make us to "stand before the Son of man" (21:36). Our worthiness or unworthiness to escape will not be determined by anyone but a "Faithful God" (Deuteronomy 7:9). "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4). We stand solely by faith in what God said, i.e., that we shall "escape" (Luke 21:36). "**By faith ye stand**" (2Corinthians 1:24).

## Jesus Is Our Escape

God makes for Himself a holy people through the sanctification of the Word of God. "Sanctify them through Thy Truth: Thy **WORD** is truth" (John 17:17). How does the Word of God sanctify us? Christians are sanctified through faith in Jesus, whose "Name is called The **WORD** of God" (Revelation 19:13). We are sanctified by believing the **WORD** of God, i.e., "sanctified by faith" (Acts 26:18).

But, what are we to believe about Jesus that can sanctify us? To become a Christian in the first place, we had to believe that He would save us. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so Great Salvation" (Hebrews 2:3)? Jesus is our Salvation, so to neglect Jesus is to "neglect so Great Salvation" (2:3). *Likewise*, **Jesus is our escape** or deliverance from the "wrath to come" (1Thessalonians 1:10). How does the LORD Jesus Christ **being our escape** sanctify us? Gratitude for missing the entire Tribulation Week, if nothing else, will cause us to be sanctified. "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you... And the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly; and

I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be **preserved blameless** unto the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 5:18,23).

Jesus "Christ, Who **is** Our Life" (Colossians 3:4) has intended Himself to be the answer to every need of our lives. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption" (1Corinthians 1:30). The application of the LORD Jesus to our lives, by faith in His WORD, on a daily basis, is the ongoing sanctification of our lives-- perfecting the Body of Christ. "For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). To those who are Pre-Tribulationally Raptured, **Jesus is Our Rapture**. After all, are we not told that the appearing of Jesus is Our Blessed Hope? "Looking for that Blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of The Great God and Our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). Whatever need we have in life, Jesus is The Supply for that need. "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

### **Who Qualifies to Escape the Tribulation?**

The innocent and righteous slay Thou not" (Exodus 23:7). The LORD Jesus Christ, "the Righteous Judge" (2Timothy 4:8), will not slay the innocent (nonmoral agents), i.e., unborn babies, newborn babies, very young children, the severely mentally handicapped. Neither will He slay the righteous. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). The innocent and righteous will escape the Tribulation.

Why did the LORD Jesus **command** His disciples to watch and pray that they would be "accounted worthy to escape" (Luke 21:36) the Tribulation Week events? Because it must be necessary to watch and pray in order to escape in, what is commonly called, the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41). What about those who do not honestly know or understand this watch and pray command? They will obey **The Rapture Command, "Come up hither"** (Revelation 4:1), and will be Pre-Tribulationally Raptured, because an honest heart **always** obeys the LORD. "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the WORD, keep it" (Luke 8:15). When the time comes that the WORD goes forth, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; **go ye out to meet Him**" (Matthew 25:6), all honest hearts will respond, "Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

Not only does the LORD Jesus demand that we "watch... and pray always" that we would "be accounted WORTHY TO ESCAPE" the Tribulation Week "and to STAND before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36), but King David agrees. Notice how similar are his inspired Words. "Who shall ASCEND into the hill of the LORD? or who shall STAND in His holy place? He that hath CLEAN HANDS, and a PURE HEART, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation" (Psalm 24:3-5).

### **Will the Backslidden Be Left?**

Yes. If the backslidden can be Raptured, then we need not live a Godly life to be holy. "Follow peace

with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the LORD" (Hebrews 12:14). If holiness is something that is ascribed to us regardless of our heart attitude, then why did the Apostle Paul beseech us to present our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Romans 12:1)?

If The Rapture Command, "Come Up Hither" (Revelation 4:1), is given, the Backslidden will not obey. "If ye be **willing** and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it" (Isaiah 1:19-20). A backslider is not willing; instead, he has the heart of a rebel. He is not ready to obey, because he has not yet repented. "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Luke 12:40). To these unprepared Backsliders, Jesus said, "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (Revelation 3:18).

### **Jesus Is the Good Shepherd**

When we walk with the LORD, we know that He is our Good Shepherd. "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). We are assured of His character and our destiny, i.e., Heaven. On the other hand, when we backslide away from the LORD, we lose our Holy Spirit supported *assurance* of our acceptance with Him. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar, and The Truth is **not** in him" (1John 2:4). After all, the Good Shepherd only comforts and assures us when we walk in loving obedience. "He that hath My Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will **manifest** Myself to him" (John 14:21).

How does the Good Shepherd manifest Himself to us? The "fellowship of the Spirit" (Philippians 2:1) makes us to feel the comfort of our Shepherd's presence. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: **for Thou art with me**; Thy Rod and Thy Staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4). Though we may presently walk through the "valley of the shadow of death" (23:4), we do sense the foreboding of an upcoming plunge of this world into the abyss of the Tribulation Week (Daniel 9:27). But, "none of these things move me" (Acts 20:24) from "perfect peace" (Isaiah 26:3) because we are trusting our Good Shepherd.

When we **abide** in loving obedience to the Good Shepherd, we have confidence about our security. "And I give unto them Eternal Life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:28). We are assured by His promises. "For all the Promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2Corinthians 1:20). We know that the Good Shepherd will not leave us without a "way to escape" (1Corinthians 10:13) from any temptation or Tribulation.

### **Jesus Is the Door**

Just as the Good Shepherd has manifested Himself in every area of our lives for good, He gives Himself as the "Door of the Sheep" (John 10:7). As The Door, He opens to us "one fold, and one Shepherd" (John 10:16). As sheep, who pasture in the hills of the Church of Philadelphia, He has set

Himself before us: "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an Open Door [the First Door, the Pre-Tribulational Rapture], and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My WORD, and hast not denied My Name" (Revelation 3:8).

As The Door, He opens to us the escape of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture. "Because thou hast kept the WORD of My patience, I also will keep thee **from** the Hour of Temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Revelation 3:10). Notice that we can enter through The Door even though we only have a "little strength" (3:8). Since no one but Jesus holds open The Door for us to leave at the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, then "no man can shut it" (3:8). "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Corinthians 15:57)!

### **What About Those Who Are Left Behind?**

God's purpose behind the Rapture of the Saints is to complete a much larger plan that He outlined to the prophet Daniel. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people [Israel] and upon thy Holy City [Jerusalem], to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity [Jesus as the Messiah on The Cross], and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy [Jesus as KING OF KINGS at the Second Coming]" (Daniel 9:24).

God, in His wisdom, knows best how to accomplish His purpose that ultimately He may be All In All. "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him [Jesus], then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him [the Father], that God may be All In All" (1Corinthians 15:28). He knows how best to gather His Wheat from the world's tares. *Tares are also known as darnel, which is a poisonous grass resembling wheat when it is in the blade, but it can easily be distinguished from wheat when in the ear at harvest.*

"Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together **until the harvest**: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into My Barn" (Matthew 13:24-30).

"An enemy hath done this" (13:28) refers to Satan (13:39). Notice that God the Householder (Matthew 13:27)-- "Whose house are we, **if** we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of The Hope firm unto the end" (Hebrews 3:6)-- refuses to pull the tares too early. His refusal is not because He cannot recognize the difference between His wheat and the world's tares, but because it would unwisely harm the wheat, i.e., "lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them" (Matthew 13:29). Instead, the reapers, "who are the angels" (13:39), are to gather "together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (13:30). **God is patient. He will harvest in the wisest progression.**

This brings us to "the doors" (Matthew 24:33) of Jesus' Olivet Discourse and the destiny of those left behind after the Pre-Tribulational Rapture. Jesus said, "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matthew 24:32-34).

The fig tree is Israel, i.e., "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree" (Hosea 9:10), when the modern nation of Israel was planted on May 14, 1948. Israel put forth leaves, i.e., expanded to the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, the Sinai, and recaptured Jerusalem's Temple Mount, on June 7, 1967. Since I believe that a generation is 14,000 days [see the "How Long is a Generation?" section of our article, "1998: Year of the Apocalypse (Part 3)" for more on this 14,000 day calculation], 14,000 days from June 7, 1967 terminates upon October 4, 2005 (Feast of Trumpets, or Rosh HaShanah), when the Pre-Wrath Rapture occurs. This is the concluding Harvest of the Church, when "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound [7th Trumpet Judgment, 8-9 days before the End of the Tribulation Week], the Mystery of God should be finished" (Revelation 10:7).

A Second Door, the Pre-Wrath Rapture, coincides with the Resurrection of the Just-- as typified by the resurrection of the Two Witnesses, i.e., Moses and Elijah. "And they heard a Great Voice from Heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to Heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them" (Revelation 11:12). The 7th Trumpet is the Last Trump (1Corinthians 15:52) which is described by the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians: "For the LORD Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with The Trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the LORD in the air: and so shall we ever be with the LORD" (1Thessalonians 4:16-17). The LORD Jesus Christ is truly The Resurrection (John 11:25).

Our God will not abandon His own, though we often abandon Him. "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). He has masterfully designed all sorts of chastisements to bring His wayward people back to Himself. "For whom the LORD loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Hebrews 12:6). The Tribulation Week will not only judge the world, it will first of all cleanse the Backslidden Church of Laodicea. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My Voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" (1Peter 4:17).

This Second Door offered to the Church of Laodicea (Revelation 3:20) represents the Door of the Pre-Wrath Rapture, which occurs 8-9 days before the End of the Tribulation Week, when the same command that went out to Philadelphia at the Pre-Tribulational Rapture-- "Come up hither" (Revelation 4:1)-- will sound for the Church of Laodicea-- "Come up hither" (Revelation 11:12). The LORD of the Harvest (Luke 10:2) will not leave any of His sheep behind. "There shall not an hoof be left behind" (Exodus 10:26).

## Conclusion

I believe that the Alpha and Omega firmly controls "the beginning and the end" (Revelation 22:13). No one can condescend to God. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33). What He has planned for the consummation of this Age, we can only piece together crudely. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1Corinthians 13:12).

And, what we do know, comforts us. "For I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2Timothy 1:12). I know that "God so loved the world, that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life" (John 3:16). I know that "whosoever will" means me. "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take The Water of Life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

The greatest thing is the love of God. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1Corinthians 13:13). What does God require of us, but perfect love? "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the First And Great Commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37-39).

God is perfect love. "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is Love; and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1John 4:16). Though He has made available His Spirit through the New Covenant for us to dwell in His love, we have often ignored Him. When we do stand, we are "bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1). "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have **boldness in the day of judgment**: because as He is, so are we in this world" (1John 4:17). But, thanks be to God, we know that we will dwell in His love forever when we see Him. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1John 3:2). And, best of all, **God is love**.