Will the Church go Through the Tribulation? Pt. 1

By Charles Feinberg

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This is a message on the subject will the church go through the tribulation. By Dr. Charles Lee Feinberg dean and professor of Old Testament at Talbot Theological Seminary. [Small gap] our message is on the question will the church go through the tribulation. One of those subjects that is constantly coming up and one on which many are divided and even more are in confusion. As a basis for our study of this important theme. Let's turn to The Book of the Revelation Chapter 3 reading verses 7 to 13. You remember this is the sixth of the seven messages to the churches of Asia this is the message to the church at Philadelphia. We read and to the Angel of the church in Philadelphia right. These things saith he that is holy. He that is true. He that hath the key of David.

He that openeth and no man shutteth and shutteth and no man openeth. I know thy works. Behold I have set before thee an open door and no man can shut it for thou hast a little strength and has kept my word and has not denied my name. Behold I will make them of the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews and are not but do lie Behold I will make them to come and worship before thy feet and to know that I have loved thee because thou hast kept the word of my patience I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation or the hour of testing or trial and notice it's keep thee from not through the hour. I also will keep them from the hour of temptation
which will come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold I come quickly. Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the Temple of My God and he shall go no more out.

Now I'll write upon him the name of my God in the name of the city of my god the New Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from my God and I will write upon him my new name he that hath an ear. Let him hear what the Spirit said unto the churches. In times of world distress such as those in which we are living in an age of world upheaval that the question concerning the church's going through the tribulation is increasingly asked by those who are acquainted in some measure with God's prophetic plan. Now there are those who emphatically state that we shall not go through the Great Tribulation because they themselves do not want to go through a time of great trial with them. Then the whole matter resolves itself into one of wishful thinking.

Now there are others who are always ready to judge by world conditions and outward circumstances some with a period of disaster or war or economic upheaval comes about. They are certain that we are to go through the tribulation period and for that matter we may be in the beginning stages of it. At the present. Now is there no surer guide in the matter than personal desire or outward circumstance. Yes the word of God speaks plainly on the matter. To those who think that we have no right or benefit in studying matters such as these. We would like to direct such ones to the important words of our Lord Jesus Christ in the gospels for instance in Matthew Chapter 16. It's verses 1 to 3 where we hear him saying the Pharisees with the Sadducees came and testing him desired that he would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them when it is evening you say it will be fair weather for the sky is red and in the morning it will be foul weather today for the sky is red and overcast oh ye hypocrites.
You could discern the face of the sky. But can ye not discern the signs of the times. Now that's a very clear statement that the Lord Jesus Christ expected his contemporaries and doubtless those who are interested in the Word of God in any age he expected them to know and to learn and to pay heed to discern the signs of the times to be aware and alert on such matters of prophetic importance. It's in Luke's Gospel the twelfth chapter we read in verses 54 to 56. And he said also to the people when you see a cloud rise out of the West straight way you say there commeth a shower. And so it is. And when you see the South wind blow you say there will be heat and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites. You could discern the face of the sky and of the earth. But how is it that you do not deserve this time if you are interested in telling the weather how is it that you do not know the times, the important times in which you live. And this is not just some item or some feature that is particular or characteristic of the New Testament alone.

For instance in First Chronicles we read in that great book of events in the Old Testament going all the way from Adam on up into the time of the monarchy and Second Chronicles ending with the Babylonian captivity. In that important book First Chronicles Chapter 12 we read in Verse 32 and of the children of Issachar who were men who had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do. So there were some in Israel especially of the tribe of Issachar who had understanding of the times in order that they might know how to conduct themselves. So to those who think we have no right or benefit in studying these matters we direct them to these important words of our Lord in the Gospels and to the word of the sacred writer in First Chronicles. Well someone may ask what's the difference. Either way is it a matter of tremendous importance. My dear friends it is so important that if the church does go through the tribulation then the hope of the believer is bedimmed.
You say how do you make that out. What does going through the tribulation have to do with the ultimate hope of the believer? How does it bedim. How does it becloud the believer's hope if the church does go through the tribulation it seems in the thinking of many that it's just a minor matter. Could it have such important consequences? Well remember that the Apostle Paul through the Spirit of God in Philippians 3 verse 20 and 21 says for our citizenship is in heaven for which also we look for the savior of the Lord Jesus Christ not for some period of trial but our first and foremost hope. The goal of all our expectation is looking for the savior the Lord Jesus Christ who shall change our lowly body that it may be fashioned like his glorious body according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things unto itself. You see that hope in Philippians 3:20 and 21 is definitely bedimmed if something comes in to intervene and to put a time of agony before it in First Thessalonians many believe that's the first Epistle that the Apostle Paul ever wrote in First Thessalonians.

Chapter 1 we read in verse 9 and 10 the spiritual biography of these believers in that Greek city of Thessalonica says Paul for they themselves show us what manner of entering in we had unto you what kind of reception we had how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead Jesus who delivered us from the wrath to come wrath. Friends of all kinds not only wrath eternal that is certainly involved but wrath temporal as well who has delivered us from the wrath to come. It's in Paul's letter to Titus in the second chapter where we read beginning with verse 11 for the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared Titus 2:11 the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men teaching us the denying of ungodliness and worldly lusts. We should live soberly righteously and godly in this present age looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing. Look my dear friends at what we're looking.
What are we anticipating? What is it that we are in expectation of that blessed hope and the Glorious Appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself or people of his own zealous of good works. So Titus 2:11-13 indicates the hope of the believer and then that the hope of believers is indicated very clearly in First Thessalonians chapter 4 when Paul says that our hope are comforting hope is that dead saints and living things will be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord wherefore comfort one another with these words. It's going to be as Paul indicates in First Corinthians 15. First Corinthians 15 verses 50 to 58. It's going to be in a moment in the twinkling of an eye. What is it of such significance? You ask if the church does go through the tribulation. If it does then the hope of the churches be dimmed. More than that the interpretation of the whole book of the revelation is confused.

If we do not place the rapture of the church in the book of the revelation before the tribulation ever begins then the whole explanation of the book of Revelation is involved in confusion in order to keep the interpretation in proper order and arrangement and sequence in chronological order the book of revelation must be interpreted in such a way that the Rapture takes place revelation 4:1 takes place before ever a seal is broken, before a ever a trumpet is blown before ever a bowl judgment is poured out. Another reason why the matter of the churches going through the tribulation is of such significance if the church goes through the tribulation then there is a sad confusion of the distinction between the church and Israel in First Corinthians 10:32 Paul exhorts the Corinthian believers to give no offense to Jew to Gentile or to the Church of God.
There are the three great spiritual divisions of the human family. Jew Gentile unbelieving parts of the human family and then the great body of believing Jews and Gentiles the Church of God. Now friends as long as the church is on Earth no Jew or Gentile can accept Christ without coming into the body of Christ. Paul says in First Corinthians 12:13 that we both, believing Jew and Gentile, are baptized by the one spirit, the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ if we have a saved remnant of Israel on Earth restored in Jerusalem as Matthew 24 indicates then the church is no longer on earth. If the 144 thousand of revelation seven are saved and they are for the seal of God is placed on them and they are witnesses of God's message in that terrible time of tribulation. If the 144 thousand are saved and they are out of all the twelve tribes if the church is still on earth how is it that they are still designated as of Israel. No believing Jew today when the church is on earth has any spiritual connection with any group except the body of Christ. It matters not to him. What tribe he came from physically no one knows that for that matter.

If the church is still on Earth in the tribulation time why these believing ones would be part of it. And remember God's wrath is being poured out as in Chapter 6. Now will the church go through the tribulation. We believe it will not. There are numerous reasons but for the sake of time we shall just take certain pivotal reasons such cogent reasons why the church will not go through the tribulation. And here is a very telling. Here is a very emphatic reason we believe the church the body of believers today will not go through the tribulation time. First of all because there is no reference to the church in connection with going through the tribulation. And here is a very telling. Here is a very emphatic reason we believe the church the body of believers today will not go through the tribulation time. First of all because there is no reference to the church in connection with going through the tribulation. The references on the tribulation. These are prominent ones they are not the only ones but the references on the tribulation period are Deuteronomy 4 verse 30. We read there when thou art in tribulation, he's speaking Moses is to Israel when you as a nation are in tribulation and all these
things are come upon thee even in the latter days, that's the latter days of Israel. If thou turn to the Lord thy God and shall be obedient unto his voice.

For the Lord thy God is a merciful God he will not forsake thee neither destroy thee nor forget the covenant of thy fathers that's the covenant with Abraham Isaac and Jacob. So we know of a truth beyond a peradventure of a doubt that Moses is speaking here to Israel. God's not going to forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them. So Deuteronomy 4:30, a very important passage, is speaking of the Tribulation time. But it's speaking of it with reference to the people of Israel. Jeremiah was a great prophet of God who had to speak to Israel words of judgment the judgment of the Lord because they were on the toboggan on the decline ready to go into Babylonian captivity and so far gone were they that God had to say do not intercede for them. To me anymore do not intercede for them.

It's in that book we read in Jeremiah 30 Verse 4. These are the words that the Lord spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah, for thus saith the Lord. We have heard a voice of trembling of fear and not of peace. You notice how this passage begins concerning Israel and concerning Judah and not the church. Verse six, ask now and see whether a man doth travail with child. Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in travail and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas for that day is great so that none is like it. It is even the time of Jacob's trouble Mark you. It is the time of whose trouble the time of Jacob's trouble. But he shall be saved out of it. He is going to be saved out of it. It's his time of trouble. And then Daniel Daniel is speaking concerning his own people and in the last chapter of that incomparable prophecy just twelve chapters in Daniel but in that last chapter he has yet a word to say about a future time of trial of agony of distress of tribulation for Israel and Daniel 12:1 reads in this way;
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says Daniel the prophet; There's coming a time and at that time shall Michael stand up. He's the Archangel the great prince who standith for the children of thy people.

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. That's Daniel's people. Everyone that shall be found written in the book. They will be delivered through the tribulation not from it. It's a time of trouble just as Jeremiah thirty verse seven called it the time of Jacob's trouble and upon whom does it come the children of thy people. Daniels people at that time. At that time thy people twice over in that verse it's indicated that the Great Tribulation relates to Israel. And at that moment no one else. Matthew 24, in the Olivet Discourse, 24 verse 16 we read concerning a time of agony that lies before Israel. We should begin with verse 15 when ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation. That's an idol spoken of by Daniel the prophet. Stand in the holy place whosoever read it let him understand then let them who are in Judea flee unto the mountains. Who's going to flee into the mountains? Those that are living in Judea. He's not thinking of Gentiles he's thinking of Jews as Israel. Let him who is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house.

Neither let him who was in the field returned back to take his clothes. Let them who are in Judea. The word is very clear and Mark's Gospel that has the parallel passage to this. It's in Mark Chapter 13 and verse 14. Notice of whom our Lord is speaking. But when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing where it ought not let him readeth understand. Then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains. All these references are to Israel and to Israel alone. Now will unbelieving Israel be the only ones in the time of the Tribulation. No. There will be unbelieving Gentiles as well and that we find in Ezekiel Chapter 3. Just as in Jeremiah 30 it indicated, scripture did, the time of Jacob's trouble in Chapter 30 of
Ezekiel. It's in verse 3 we read for the day is near. Verse 2 says Son of Man prophesy and say thus saith the Lord God will wye alas for the day for the day is near. Even the day of the Lord is near a cloudy day it shall be the time.

Now not of Jacob's trouble. It shall be the time of the nations the time of the Gentiles. So the gentiles will be there and in Revelation seven we read that certain gentiles will be there who through a testimony of the hundred and forty four thousand will be redeemed. How do you know that they are gentiles? Well the scripture goes very explicitly to tell us in Chapter 7 of the revelation verse 13 14. One of the elders answers saying to me who are these who are arrayed in white robes. And from where did they come. Notice one of the Elders who was crowned is asking the Apostle John and I said to him Sir thou knowest. He didn't know himself. Now don't tell me the Apostle John didn't recognize the church and notice the answer the elder he said to me these are they who came out of the great tribulation. The Greek tells us it's the tribulation. The great one and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb and of what group are they constituted well verse nine tells us it was a great multitude that no man could number of all nations not of Israel of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues stood before the throne and before the land clothed with white robes and palms in their hands.

That's Chapter Seven. And the church has been raptured. We're going to be seen to in the fourth chapter. So this is after the church is gone. Now there is a mention of the Church in relation in these passages. We have been dealing with but as a mention of Israel in the tribulation. There is a mention of Gentiles in the tribulation. Now let's look at revelation 3:10 the passage that we'd read at the beginning of our study revolution 3:10 because that has kept this this is the church of Philadelphia speaking that which obtains with reference to believers because the house kept the word of my patience. I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which
will come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth and that word dwell is a very strong word in the original. That means those who settle down as Earth dwellers and the church is not such we are pilgrims and strangers on the earth.

As Peter tells us in his first epistle because thou hast kept the word of my patience I also will keep thee from that hour of temptation. I'll keep you for the time of tribulation. Friends. The only reference that mentions the church only tells us that it's going to be kept out of it. Now if the church is in view in the tribulation and there's so much room given to the tribulation in the book of Revelation why is it that we do not find the church mentioned in Revelation from Chapter 3 to 19 where she appears as the bride of the lamb and Chapter 2 has much about the church? Chapter 1 has Chapter 3. Many references to the churches in those chapters suddenly from Chapter 4 until we get to Chapter 19. There is no mention of the church. I think that silence in the book of revelation in those pivotal chapters is devastating evidence along what line? That the church is not in the tribulation time.

So this is our first proof reason that there will not be a church. The church present in the tribulation time there is no reference to it in that connection. And then there's a second reason why the church will not be in the tribulation. The silence of the Epistles on this subject. Now all who have studied the epistles of the New Testament with any perception at all? Know. Know full well that the epistles treat at great length concerning the church her position her possessions her privileges her walk her wealth her warfare her duties her love, her service her ministry and her hope or her expectations. Friends instructions are explicit. Frankly they are very very detailed for every phase of Christian life. Is there a problem in the home? The Epistles have the answer to that in the Christian home. Is there a desire concerning some attainment in the world some life work some personal relationship some personal problem social problem mental problem
economic problem spiritual problem. I say every single phase of Christian life every facet of the Christian life is treated in the Epistles of the New Testament. Now throughout these epistles numbers of subjects are treated. But please find me one reference where the tribulation is mentioned in reference to the church. It is not mentioned once. Is it possible that the church is to go through this fearful period of trial and not have one single word from God on the matter? No instruction how to prevail in it.

We've been speaking concerning Titus two. Notice. We have the past for the church the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. We are saved and after we're saved. What is God's program? What is God's plan for us we're to be taught salvation by grace teaching in Grace instruction in Grace teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lust we should live soberly righteously godly in this present age and then it goes on to the future, the Christian life past present. Now what's future? Well you'd better get ready for the tribulation. No looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. I submit to you here and now that that would've been the right place and the prominent place and the proper place and the sufficient place to bring something concerning how the church is to prevail in a time of unprecedented agony. Our Lord Jesus himself said in Matthew 24. It's going to be a time of trouble such has has never been before. My dear friends is it possible that the church is to endure that fearful fearsome period of trial and not have one word from God on the matter.

No instruction how to prevail in it why the New Testament epistles have so many instructions on matters that one may deem of lesser importance. My friend to ask the question is to answer it two whole epistles two entire epistles. Speak distinctly particularly of the coming of the Lord. First and Second Thessalonians. But there's not a single mention of the church in that
relationship as going through the tribulation. So for these two reasons and we shall continue our study for these reasons. We believe the church will not go through the tribulation. The answer thus far then to the question will the church go through the tribulation is an emphatic and resounding no. Well why not. There is no reference to the church in that connection and secondly the silence. The remarkable silence of the epistles on the subject if anyone believes that the church will go through the tribulation that one has the burden of proof on him to explain why the epistles are so remarkably silent on very very important matter and subject. No the Church will not go through the tribulation time.

[End Part 1]