

IN THE TRIBULATION GOD IS OUR REFUGE

Author John Holland

There is no way of escaping the time of tribulation that is consistently prophesied to come upon the world at the close of the age. Those who have been prepared will know that “the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel [the Church].”

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Chapter 1

THE NATURE OF THE END-TIME TRIBULATION

IN THE TRIBULATION GOD IS OUR REFUGE

The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel." Joel 3:15-16.

IT IS A TIME OF GOD'S JUDGMENT.

Judgment of the Church

"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God"? 1 Pet 4:17

The end-time tribulation is a time of God's judgment, firstly on the church, and then on the nations, or those who have rejected God.

Premillennialists would have us believe that the church does not have to face God's judgmental tribulation. Supposedly she is to be raptured into heaven before it happens. However before we try to evade God's imposed tribulation, we should understand its purpose.

Throughout the history of God's dealings with mankind, the same pattern emerged. God would bless His people--they would turn away from Him and commit apostasy with the surrounding nations--He would send tribulation by allowing them to be bound in servitude--they would repent and return to Him.

Tribulation leads to repentance and returning to the Lord. It opens the door to cleansing and refinement. If the church is to turn away from its apostasy and be prepared as a bride fit for the return of the Lord, then she must accept her measure of tribulation.

Judgment of the World

"Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine. I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible." Isa 13:9-11.

Tribulation Spiritual in Nature

The Tribulation is essentially spiritual rather than physical in nature, just as the battle of Armageddon is spiritual rather than physical. In the battle of Armageddon, the members of the world-wide church will not be congregated at Jerusalem, and surrounded by physical armies

under the control of Satan. Armageddon is a spiritual battle between Antichrist with his anti-Christian confederacy, and Jesus Christ and His church. It is a conflict in which spiritual truth is besieged by deceit, error, and apostasy--a battle imperilling the very existence of the church.

A key factor that precipitates the Tribulation period will be the withdrawal of God's restraints on the operation of Antichrist, so that his working may be brought out into the open.

"Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He (the Holy Spirit) who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one (Antichrist) will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming." 2 Th 2:5-8.

This withdrawal will bring about the following outcomes.

That which was so subtle that it had the capacity **"to deceive, if possible, even the elect"** will now become obvious. The working of **"the lawless one (Antichrist) will be revealed."** Antichrist will be revealed, not as a world acclaimed human identity, but as a spirit being who has been operating in the church throughout its existence. The Tribulation is very much about the increased activity of Antichrist and his deceiving spirits operating in both the world and the church at the close of the age.

Because Antichrist's restraints will have been removed, there will be increased demonic activity, accompanied by a pall of spiritual darkness due to increased deception and lying wonders.

Many will become disillusioned, and leave the church. Paul warned, **"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..." 2 Th 2:3.**

With the revelation of the works of Antichrist and of apostasy in the church, many previously deluded Christians will be faced with the decision to repent and **"Come out of her,"** or remain and suffer God's judgment. **"And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her (the apostate church), my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.'" Rev 18:4-5.**

Hordes of Demon Spirits

The Book of Revelation and the prophet Joel pinpoint hordes of demon spirits (described figuratively as devouring locusts) as God's agents of judgment in the tribulation period.

Revelation

"And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke (false doctrines) arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air (spiritual light and truth) were darkened because of the smoke of the pit (spiritual darkness and deception provide the necessary climate for demons to operate). Then out of the smoke locusts (demons) came upon the earth. And to them was given power (as God's protection is removed they were given power they previously did not have), as the scorpions of the earth have power (scorpions sting with their tails. Tails are as symbol of lies and deception). They were commanded not to harm

the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, (these are the things that locusts eat--showing that these are not natural locusts, but symbols for demons) **but only those men who do not have the seal of God** (the seal of God's ownership--those totally consecrated to Him) **on their foreheads. And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment** (inflict distress and anguish) **them for five months** (five months is the normal duration of a locust plague--however this is not a literal time, but rather the time necessary for God's purposes). **And their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them** (this is a mental and psychological distress where to die would seem a relief). **The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle** (cavalry--ordered and disciplined: c.f. Joel).

On their heads were crowns (crowns speak of authority--demons would have us believe that they have legitimate authority, whereas in truth they have none at all), **of something like** (a counterfeit spiritual authority) **gold and their faces were like the faces of men** (this speaks of human traits--sensuality, anger, jealousy etc., through which demons gain control and torment). **They had hair like women's hair** (they are enticing--like the mythical siren, but lead to destruction), **and their teeth were like lions' teeth** (symbolising their deadlines)." Rev 9:2-8.

Joel

Many of the figurative pictures in Revelation have their counterpart in the Old Testament. This is one of the many examples. Joel commences by picturing the scope of the invasion--not just one type of locust or demon attack, but many. **"What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; what the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; and what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten."** Joel 1:4.

Joel likens the locusts to an army. Later they are called God's army of judgment. **"So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, my great army which I sent among you."** Joel 2:25.

Their teeth being "the teeth of a lion" establishes the figurative nature of the language, and its connection to Revelation 9:8. **"For a nation has come up against My land, strong, and without number; his teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has the fangs of a fierce lion."** Joel 1:6.

"He has laid waste My vine (a symbol of the church), **and ruined My fig tree** (Israel); **he has stripped it bare and thrown it away; its branches are made white."** Joel 1:7. They have stripped the bark off the vine and the fig tree--symbols of the church and Israel. The bark carries the vital sap and nutrients to the leaves. If a tree is 'ring-barked' it withers and dies. This is a picture of the cutting off of the Holy Spirit, and the resultant spiritual darkness and death that accompanies the tribulation.

Both Israel and the church will be restored to their rightful spiritual inheritance through tribulation and refinement. Hosea writes of Israel's restoration, **"Therefore, behold, I will allure her** (Israel), **will bring her into the wilderness** (symbolising privation, suffering and refinement), **and speak comfort to her. I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor** (Lit: 'trouble') **as a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt."** Hosea 2:14-15.

"...the priests mourn, who minister to the LORD." Joel 1:9.

This will be a time when false ministries will be exposed. Those who were not prepared and anointed by the Lord will lament because they will be powerless because of their lack of true spiritual knowledge.

Verse 10 outlines the result of the spiritual attack. **"The field is wasted, the land mourns; for the grain is ruined, the new wine is dried up, the oil fails."** Joel 1:10.

"The field is wasted"--It is a time of spiritual barrenness. Jesus predicted a time of darkness when no man could work. **"I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work."** John 9:4.

"the land mourns"--The world is in a state of depression.

"the grain is ruined" Grain is a symbol of spiritual truth--which is polluted by deception.

"the new wine is dried up" New wine symbolises joy and gladness.

"the oil fails." Oil symbolises the Holy Spirit. People seek after pleasurable spiritual manifestations rather than the real Spirit of truth, and so received lying signs and wonder.

The world is in a state of economic depression: **"Has not food been cut off...seeds shrivel under their clods...storehouses are desolate...barns are torn down"** Joel 1:16-17.

Chapter 2 continues this figurative account using similar terms to those used in Revelation 9. **"Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! (Let the prophets warn the church). Let all the inhabitants of the land (the world) tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand: A day (period) of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick (spiritual) darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like swift steeds, so they run. With a noise like chariots (symbols of war) over mountaintops (exalted peoples and institutions) they leap, like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble (worthless works), like a strong people set in battle array. Before them the people writhe in pain; all faces are drained of colour."** Joel 2:1, 4-6.

Why Does God Allow This Attack?

This is the nature of God's judgment--to confront people with the fruit of their corruption. **"I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings."** Jer 17:10.

In this case people have chosen to fellowship with demons. Paul warned, **"Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons."** 1 Cor 10:20. When we accept and engage in things under the control of demons, we are in fact paying homage to demons. God's judgment is to allow demons to take control so that iniquity may be revealed. People covet spiritual power--they receive demonic lying signs and wonders. They reject truth--they receive spirits of deception.

People turn their backs on sound doctrine because it is too hard or uncomfortable, and choose instead **"doctrines of demons"** (1 Tim 4:1) because they are more pleasant and palatable. It is much easier for instance, for people to accept the proposition that the saints will be raptured before the tribulation, than having to endure it.

The bottom line is this: people have rejected truth and turned to the "**doctrines of demons**" because they have not received the love of the truth. "**The coming of the lawless one (Antichrist) is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.**" II Th 2:9-11.

Tribulation Symptoms Prophesied by Jesus

Jesus foretold signs of the tribulation that will occur at the end of the age. It should be noted that they are spiritual rather than physical in nature. E.g.

Lying Signs and Wonders--"...and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect." Matt 24:24.

In recent decades there has been a major shift in the way people have approached Christianity. Throughout the ages the bible has been our 'text book,' and our acceptance of the governing role of doctrine provided us with a dependable guide in our practice of Christianity. But now a growing number of people have supplanted doctrinal integrity with the New Age approach of acquiring personal satisfaction through soulish works of the flesh, through spiritual empowerments, and other forms of self-gratification. Paul warned that "**the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears (that are only receptive to the things that they like to hear), they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**" 2 Tim 4:3-4. In justifying this approach, these people make the assumption that if the results are personally satisfying it must have God's approval.

The underlying thought that if it makes you feel good it must be right, has provided fertile ground for the introduction of charismatic lawlessness, as in the Toronto and Pensacola 'revivals,' where '*Holy Spirit baptisms*' and the resultant spiritual experiences have been given more credence than doctrinal integrity. Instead of doctrine being the beginning and end of truth, the initial assumption is that the experiences must be right, and subsequent efforts are made to make doctrine accommodate them.

When our search is for spiritual manifestations rather than truth, we are a ready prey for lying signs and wonders, which have their origin in the spirit of antichrist.

The resultant signs and wonders are so convincing that they **can "deceive, if possible, even the elect."** It is common for recipients to feel tremendously uplifted, experiencing a sense of deep peace and well being, and testify to having a much deeper love for the Lord and His body. This feeling of spiritual exaltation is so intoxicating, that desire for it is insatiable. It is common for the same people to present themselves for 'the experience' over and over again. But it should be understood that the desire for such experiences emanates from the soul and not the spirit. The end result is a final spiritual deadness and disillusionment that is hard to reverse.

Hatred and Betrayal--"And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another." Mtt 24:10.

Being offended, hating one another, and betraying one another, occurs when one sees in another's ministry that which he intensely disapproves, and so he reacts with personal hatred and vilification.

Lawlessness--"And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold." Matt 24:10-12.

At the heart of lawlessness is a rebellious self-centredness, which does not submit to doctrinal restraints, and which in reality is opposed to Christ and His truth. This will affect others in the church, causing disillusionment and the loss of their first love.

Earthquakes Famines Pestilences--"And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven." Luke 21:9-11. This speaks of both spiritual and physical manifestations of upheaval and trauma.

International Turbulence--"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring." Luke 21:25-26.

This verse is couched in figurative language depicting international turbulence. The analogy of the sun, moon, and stars being darkened is used frequently in the Old Testament to foretell calamity and overthrowing of nations. The sea symbolises the nations, and waves upheaval and instability.

Fear and Anxiety--"men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken." Luke 21:25-26.

Tribulation Symptoms by Other Prophets

Falling Away--Paul prophesies of the last days, when disillusionment, and a falling away or departure will follow a gross spiritual darkness from the faith.

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons..." 1 Tim 4:1.

"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first..." II Th 2:3.

But Isaiah predicts that though spiritual darkness will envelop the world, it is in this climate that the true children of light will shine forth.

"For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you." Isa 60:2.

And likewise Daniel: **"Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever."** Dan 12:3.

False Prophets--"Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many." Mtt 24:11.

False prophets with world-wide television ministries have already risen, and by showing miraculous signs and wonders, they have gained world-wide credence.

A prophet's main task is to reveal the state of the church, so that people may repent of sin or apostasy and return to God, and so escape His impending judgment. In Ezekiel, God warned the false prophets, **"Ye have not gone up into the gaps** (a breach or break in their wall of spiritual protection), **neither made up the hedge** (of protection by establishing them in truth and righteousness) **for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD."** Ezek 13:5.

Instead of boldly disclosing the church's apostasy, and warning of God's judgment, false prophets have proclaimed **"peace; and there was no peace..."** They have prophesied to please men, declaring forthcoming blessings—like global revival, individual acclaim promising world-wide ministries, and so on. **"They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word."** Ezek 13:6

A Shaking of all Worldly and Religious Institutions-- Paul reinforces Haggai's warning of a world-wide shaking of all institutions. **"Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven."** Now this, **"Yet once more,"** indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Heb 12:26-27

All institutions will be shaken, or be put under extreme pressure, to ascertain their origins. All that cannot be shaken has its foundations in the Lord, and so it will stand firm. All that is of man or the flesh will not survive intact. Paul warns that each man's works will be subject to severe testing.

"According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones (legitimate works), wood, hay, straw (fleshly works), each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire (judgmental shaking); and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." 1 Cor 3:10-15.

Chapter 2

WHAT WE ARE TO DO IN THE HEAT OF GOD'S JUDGEMENT

The prophet Joel not only warns of the coming spiritual judgment, he outlines the measures we should take to know God as our refuge.

Be Watchful

Joel foreshadows the Lord's warning to all generations that they should watch for the signs of the last days. **"Hear this, you elders, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the land! Has anything like this happened in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about it, let your children tell their children, and their children another generation."** Joel 1:2-3.

Sound the Alarm

"Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain (the church)! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand" Joel 2:1.

The prophets and teachers have the responsibility of warning of the coming judgment when the day is at hand.

Repent

"Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm." Joel 2:12.

"Gird yourselves and lament, you priests; wail, you who minister before the altar; come, lie all night in sackcloth, you who minister to my God; for the grain offering and the drink offering are withheld from the house of your God." Joel 1:13.

Repentance must be whole-hearted--not merely with a show of words. True repentance will result in forsaking the indulgences of the world and the flesh, and indifference to the presence of apostasy in the church. It will result in returning to the Lord and being fully consecrated to Him. Those who minister to God are especially singled out because they have allowed the church to fall into apostasy.

Consecrate a Fast

"Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast...let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, and the bride from her dressing room." Joel 2:15.

To consecrate a fast is to dedicate it to the Lord. Because this is to be a prolonged fast, it is more than setting aside a brief period for not eating. An example is in the instruction **"let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, and the bride from her dressing room."** This is not so much an instruction to abstain from sexual relationships, but rather to not allow

them to interfere with our personal relationship with the Lord, and the pursuit of His work. Jesus used this as one example in His parable of the great supper.

"Then He said to him, 'A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'" Luke 14:16-20.

Jesus cautioned that prior to His coming, people would be so engrossed in their worldly pursuits that they would miss the warning signs of His coming. **"But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."** Matt 24:37-39

The essence of this fast is to turn away from pre-occupation with the things of the world and of self, and be totally consecrated to the purposes of the Lord.

Assemble the Elders

"Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD." Joel 1:14. And, **"...assemble the elders..."** Joel 2:15.

In the pattern of the early church, it was the elders (plural) who had the responsibility of oversight, and spiritual care of the local church. **"The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder...Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers..."** 1 Pet 5:1-2.

For the sake of expediency, this pattern has been replaced with the practice of hiring a professional clergyman to take care of the affairs of the church. The true role of elders has all but disappeared. However it is the Lord who prepares and presents elders to the church (Eph 4:11), and He honours and anoints their role as overseers and shepherds. Now the call is to re-establish the office of the elders, so that there is true oversight at this critical time. It is important that they lead the congregation in anointed prayers of supplication.

Unite and Sanctify the Congregation

"Gather the people, sanctify the congregation...gather the children and nursing babes..." Joel 2:16.

This is a time for unity--for the true church to be solidly united. Even the very youngest must be included, and the whole congregation consecrated to the Lord God and placed under His protection.

Psalm 133 associates unity with the blessing of the Holy Spirit on the whole congregation. **"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron (a picture of Jesus our High Priest), running down on the edge of his garments**

(encompassing His children)." Ps 133:1-2. We are sanctified by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

True Ministers are to Cry Out to God

"Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar; let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD, and do not give Your heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, "Where is their God?"" Joel 2:16-17.

In the New Testament pattern, the true ministers were prepared and anointed by the Lord. **"And He (the Lord) Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers (or elders)..." Eph 4:11.** In the apostate church these true ministerial positions have been substituted with a hired clergyman, who attempts to minister to all the needs of the church. The ministerial offices are to be restored, and those who minister to the Lord are to unite in prayers of repentance and supplication. They are to stand in the breach between God and His children as Moses did, asking God to intervene and restore what was lost.

Then God Will Restore

God will never forsake those who turn to Him with repentant hearts, and so we are comforted with promises of restoration.

"Then the LORD will be zealous for His land, and pity His people. The LORD will answer and say to His people, "Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, and you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations." Joel 2:18-19.

PUT ON OUR SPIRITUAL ARMOUR

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints." Eph 6:10-18.

We are to stand **"in the power of His might."** We must forsake reliance on our own inner resources, and put our trust in the might of the Lord in us.

"gird your waist with truth" We are to take our stand in what the Word says--particularly concerning the benefits of the cross. We are to wield **"the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."** When we testify to what the word says, applying it personally to ourselves, it becomes a spiritual sword that the Holy Spirit can wield against our enemies.

"put on the breastplate of righteousness" We should be consistent in our application of the blood of Jesus, and our acceptance of the righteousness He procured for us by bearing the punishment for our sins in His own body on the cross. This removes every claim of Satan against us.

"having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace" The Greek word *'hetoimasia'* usually means 'preparedness,' or 'readiness,' but in Hellenistic Greek it was used in the sense of *'establishment,' or 'firm foundation'*--which is more applicable to this reading.

"your feet" speaks figuratively of your direction or pathway, and so the reading may be interpreted, "Let your spiritual pathway and your decisions to be firmly founded in the peace of the Lord," or more simply, "be guided by peace."

"take the helmet of salvation" This speaks of more than our eternal salvation. The Greek word *'sozo'* to save, has these additional meanings: *'keep safe and sound'*--*'to rescue from danger or destruction'*-*'to make well, heal, restore to health'*

God is continually watching over us to keep us in all our circumstances. Paul refers to the saving power of the indwelling life of the Lord. **"For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved (kept, healed, etc) by His life."** Rom 5:10.

Take **"the shield of faith"** We are to put on the faith of the Lord who resides in us. In other words we are to trust the Lord to release His faith in us to meet our needs.

"being watchful to this end with all perseverance" In like manner, Peter warns, **"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."** 1 Pet 5:8. As well as advising us to be alert, Paul stresses the need for perseverance and endurance.

"prayer and supplication in the Spirit" Paul echoes Joel's instruction to direct prayer and supplication to God--such prayers to be **"in the Spirit."** It is He in us who prays--with our co-operation.

Chapter 3

THE BLESSINGS PROCURED BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS

It is important that we do not neglect the blessings procured for us by the blood of Jesus.

The Pattern of the Passover

"And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. Then they shall eat the flesh on that night..." Exod 12:7.

"Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt." Exod 12:13

"And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning." Exod 12:22.

God had allowed the Israelites to suffer hard bondage under the hands of cruel taskmasters in order to turn their hearts away from the luxuries of Egypt, which is a type of the world. When they cried out to Him, He sent Moses, a type of Christ, to deliver them.

When God was about to execute His last climactic judgment, He instigated a practice that was to save all those obedient to His decree. They were to kill a lamb without blemish, and sprinkle its blood on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. When the angel of death saw the blood of the lamb, he was to pass over the house, leaving its occupants untouched by God's judgment.

Lessons From the Passover

The blood of the Passover lamb is a type of the blood of Jesus Christ. Therefore the lessons of the Passover lamb point to our application of the blood of Jesus Christ. **Jesus is our Passover Lamb.** **"For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."** 1 Cor 5:7

The blood of the Passover lamb protected the whole household--the whole family. The angel of death had to pass over the house when he saw the blood of the lamb. We may apply the blood of Jesus (in prayer) as a protecting cover over our whole family, declaring them consecrated to the Lord.

The blood was a sign that those in the house belonged to God. They and all their possessions were consecrated to Him. Similarly, we may cover all our possessions with the blood of Jesus. We should consider that we, and everything pertaining to us, are the Lord's, and subject to His protection.

"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Acts 20:28.

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Cor 6:19-20.

The Israelites were required to stay in the house. If they ventured out of the house, they lost their protection, and were subject to death. When we are subject to spiritual warfare, we too must remain 'in the house,' **"hidden in Jesus Christ in God,"** sheltering under the blood of Jesus our Passover Lamb. This is not the time for independence, or striving, or seeking the protection of the world. It is a time to enter God's rest, trusting in His faithfulness.

They were told to eat the Passover lamb. Similarly we are told by Jesus to **"eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood,"** in order to experience the power of His indwelling life.

First we are to receive the full blessings procured for us by His sacrificial death--redemption, righteousness, justification, the forgiveness of sins, nearness to God, and so on.

Secondly, we are to abide in Him. **"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him."** John 6:56. Abiding is to remain in a state of union with the Lord. We are not to strive in the power of our own flesh, but to rely on His love and faithfulness, and His almighty power residing in us to meet our needs.

Thirdly we are to feed on Him. **"As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me."** John 6:57. Jesus likened Himself to a vine, and we the branches, constantly drawing life from the vine. We are to constantly draw life from He who dwells in us, and who promised us that He would be a source of abundant life to those who put their trust in Him.

All Things Were Purified and Consecrated by Blood

"Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you." Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves (purified) with better sacrifices than these." Heb 9:18-23. The Greek word which is translated 'purified' has the additional meanings, '*to consecrate by cleansing,*' '*to free from the defilement of sin.*'

In the earthly dispensation of Moses, almost all things were purified and dedicated by the blood of the sacrificial lamb. These things were copies of the things to come. And now that Christ has appeared, the writer of Hebrews says that the **"things in the heavens,"** or spiritual things of the new covenant, should also be purified and dedicated **"with better sacrifices"**--with the blood of Jesus, our sacrificial lamb.

In the Old Covenant, the blood of the sacrificial offering was sprinkled or smeared on the objects to be dedicated. In the New Covenant dispensation, the blood of Jesus is applied through prayer. We should apply the blood of Jesus to our whole being--body, soul, and spirit, to our

work, our possessions, our ministerial tools, to our spiritual walk—everything should be purified and consecrated to the Lord and placed under His protection.

Priests and their Vestments were Purified with Blood and Anointed With Oil

"Then you shall kill the ram, and take some of its blood and put it on the tip of the right ear of Aaron and on the tip of the right ear of his sons, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar. And you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar, and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and on his garments, on his sons and on the garments of his sons with him; and he and his garments shall be hallowed, and his sons and his sons' garments with him." Exod 29:20-21.

The putting of the blood of the sacrifice on the tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the big toe of the right foot, was to consecrate all their faculties to the service of God—the ears to hear His commands, the thumbs or hands as instruments of ministry, and the toes or feet, signifying their walk or direction. The putting the blood on their garments signified their need to be clothed in righteousness—in our case by the righteousness provided by the Cross of Christ.

Chapter 4

ENTERING INTO THE SHELTER OF GOD'S ABIDING PRESENCE

We should reckon the way into the presence of God is now made open by the sacrificial flesh and shed blood of Jesus. The writer of Hebrews invites us to enter boldly through the veil of Christ's flesh, cleansed and sanctified by His blood, and present ourselves to our Father in heaven.

"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." Heb 10:19-22.

We are to enter the shelter of His presence, there to abide in His protective care. It is here that we are to enter His rest, relinquishing all we have and all our circumstances into His care and keeping, trusting in His love and faithfulness. To rest is to stop striving, to stop fretting, or anguishing over our provision and the affairs of our life, and to relinquish all things into God's care. Our lives should now be **"hidden with Christ in God."** Col 3:2-3.

God Will Not Remain Silent

"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people: Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." Ps 50:3-5 This language is derived from the notion of a universal judgment.

"Gather My saints (those who are truly His) **together to Me"** is not referring to a physical joining of the saints, but a spiritual joining in a unified knowledge and commitment to God's will.

"those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." This speaks of total consecration. They have entered into a solemn 'covenant' to be totally the Lord's. They **"did not love their lives unto the death."**(Rev 12:11)

"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal (undivided) to Him" 2 Chr 16:9.

God Is Our Refuge

Joel 3:16 "The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel."

Psalm 46:1. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"

Warfare can be very constant and draining. In these readings we are assured that as well as being a shelter, or shield against attack, the indwelling life of the Lord is our strength.

Psalm 61:1-4

**HEAR my cry, O God; attend to my prayer.
From the end of the earth I will cry to You,
When my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.
For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy.
I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings."**

Psalm 91:1-16

**"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust."
Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence.
He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; his truth shall be your shield and buckler.
You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day,
Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.
A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you.
Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked.
Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place,
No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;
For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.
In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.
You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra,
The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.
'Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore
I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name.
He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him.
With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation.'"**

Be Still and Trust in God's Faithfulness

A common theme throughout the Scriptures is that when confronted with the enemies' attack, we are to be still, to be quiet, to trust in God and His faithfulness--to enter His rest. The following are some examples:

"And Moses said to the people, 'Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be still.'" Exod 14:13-14. The Hebrew word '*charash*,' means 'to be silent, to keep quiet.'

"For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning (or withdrawing into God) and rest (with quietness) you shall be saved; in quietness (to be tranquil, undisturbed, at peace) and confidence (trusting) shall be your strength."" Isa 30:15

"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" Ps 46:10.

"Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people from this time forth and forever." Ps 125:1-2

"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed (in an attitude of dependence and rest) on You, because he trusts in You." Isa 26:3

The Battle is the Lord's

In the second book of Chronicles there is a story of how King Jehoshaphat and his small nation gained the victory over a great multitude from three hostile nations. When threatened with annihilation, King Jehoshaphat's immediate response was to unite the nation in seeking help from the Lord.

"It happened after this that the people of Moab with the people of Ammon, and others with them besides the Ammonites, came to battle against Jehoshaphat. Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, from Syria; and they are in Hazazon Tamar" (which is En Gedi). And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. So Judah gathered together to ask help from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD." 2 Chr 20:1-4.

God responded to their cry for help by assuring them that they need not be dismayed, for the battle was not theirs but His. All that they needed to do was to stand still and trust Him to overcome their enemies.

"Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's...You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you.'"" 2 Chr 20:14-15, 17.

It was put on Jehoshaphat's heart to relinquish the battle into God's hands, and to engage in praise and worship.

"And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: "Praise the LORD, for His mercy endures forever." Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated. For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy them. And

when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another.” 2 Chr 20:21-23.

We are in a similar position to Jehoshaphat in that the hosts of darkness confronting us are far too strong for us to overcome them in our own strength. Our only safe recourse is to retreat into the refuge of Almighty God and be still, relinquishing the battle into His hands. When we, with hearts of praise and worship, put our trust in Him, He will save us and keep us.

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.” 1Thes 5:23-24.