

# QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry  
for the Christian community*

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## **WILL CHRISTIANS GO THROUGH THE TRIBULATION?**

I appreciate there is a difference of opinion on this point among Premillennialists. Having often indicated that I do not believe the Church will go through the Tribulation it is only right that I give some of my reasons. First, though, here are a couple of introductory points.

### A. The ages of history

God's dealing with humanity can be divided into seven ages (or eras, or dispensations). The usual division favoured by many Bible scholars is along these lines:

The age of Innocence – Creation to the Fall  
The age of Conscience – the Fall to the Flood  
The age of Humanism – the Flood to Babel  
The age of Promise – Abram to Sinai  
The age of Law – Sinai to Pentecost  
The age of Grace – Pentecost to the Lord's Return (the Church age)  
The age of the Kingdom – the Millennial Reign

### B. The times of God's judgement

At the end of each age there is a time of judgement relevant to the people of that age and their sins:

The age of Innocence – the Curse, Genesis 3 v 14 – 19  
The age of Conscience – the Flood, Genesis 6 5 – 8  
The age of Humanism – the division of languages, Genesis 11 v 5 – 9  
The age of Promise – the plagues and the Red Sea drowning  
The age of Law – the loss of the land and the temple after Pentecost  
The age of Grace – the Tribulation, Isaiah 24 & Revelation chapters 6 to 18  
The age of the Kingdom – the final rebellion, Revelation 20 v 7 - 10

Now we can look at ten reasons for believing we will not go through the Tribulation. Although there are other reasons we could mention, they must wait for another study another time.

1. The Tribulation is not at all the same as the trials and tribulations that have characterised the age of Grace. Jesus said these will always be present and persecutions will happen to the disciples as it did to the Master. There will always be wars and rumours of wars, and all the other features of a creation that "groans and travails" following the Curse. The Bible suggests that the seven years of Tribulation and Great Tribulation will be of an entirely different order of chaos, with a political leader of world-wide messianic-like authority performing incredible signs and wonders; the signing of a previously unattainable peace treaty in the Middle East; the building of a new temple in Jerusalem; vast physical upheavals in space and on earth killing untold millions; worldwide pollution of the oceans and freshwater supplies; and much, much more. Indeed, the Lord told us that if those days are not kept short, no living flesh would survive (Matthew 24 v 22).
2. The Bible makes it plain that the difficulties that Christians have endured in the age of Grace, both through circumstances and through persecution, are not to be seen as judgement. We are not under condemnation and as born-again believers we are not to live in a state of guilt. There may be consequences of sin, personally and nationally, but the effect on the child of God is for sanctification, not judgement. However, the Tribulation is the time of judgement at the end of the Age, as has occurred at the end of all previous dispensations. Just because Christians have endured trials does not mean they also have to endure judgement. There is a clear unambiguous

teaching in scripture that the judgement for our sin was borne by Jesus on the cross. It is surely a blasphemous thing to say that God, having promised to justify us at Calvary on the ground of our faith in Jesus, will then require us to go through a further period of judgement for the self-same sins. See Isaiah 26 v 20, 1 Thessalonians 1 v 10, 5 v 9, and Revelation 3 v 10.

3. The post-tribulation teaching is very divisive as it suggests two classes of Christian; those who died before the end of the age, and will not therefore go through the Tribulation, and those that are unfortunate enough to be alive when it starts and will therefore have to grin and bear it - some "blessed hope"!
4. At the time of judgement at the close of each of the previous five eras of history, those who had put their trust in God were spared that concluding judgement. Perhaps the clearest example is the Flood, which was the time of judgement at the end of the age of Conscience. Noah and the seven other souls with him were kept safe in the Ark through that world-shattering experience and ever since then the Ark has been the picture of God's protection in a time of judgement. Incidentally, Peter in particular uses the Flood as an example of the time of judgement and tells us the period at the end of this age will be similar, but with fire instead of water (2 Peter 3 v 5 – 7). If those who trust God have been spared judgement in all the previous ages, then why should the Church, the bride of his beloved Son, be any different? Has God's standard of justice been changed?
5. The return of Jesus for his own at the Rapture is at a time known only to God, but we are to be ready. All Christians are to live their lives as if the Lord's return for them is imminent. However, if Christians are to go through the Tribulation those left will know exactly when He will return because they will know that the Tribulation lasts for seven years. But that knowledge contradicts the clear instruction that we are not to know the timing of this event and the whole point of immanency is lost.
6. 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 deals with the revelation of the ultimate human personification of evil, the antichrist (see also Revelation chapter 13). Paul shows how the spirit of antichrist has been present right through the Church age (v 7a, see also 1 John 4 v 3), but the final display of this spirit in one man cannot occur until a restraining influence is removed (v 6 and 7b). The only possible restraint with the necessary degree of power and authority is the Holy Spirit, whose presence in the life of every true Christian has been the defining characteristic of the Church age since the day of Pentecost. In other words, the Church must be removed first, and then the dominant personality during the seven-year Tribulation can emerge in the graphic way described in v 9 – 12.
7. In 1 Thessalonians 5 v 1 – 3 Paul makes it quite clear that the Rapture, just described in chapter 4 v 13 – 18, will happen while people are saying "Peace and safety". This fits in so well with the Lord's own words in Matthew 14 v 36 – 42 that this mass disappearance will happen in a time of apparent normality. It is also in such a time that the antichrist will conclude a peace treaty with many leading to the longed-for peace in the Middle East. There will be very little peace at the end of the Great Tribulation, or people left to appreciate it!
8. Daniel 9 v 27 shows that the last seven-year period during which Israel is God's main witness on earth starts with the covenant, or peace treaty, referred to above. Since the Day of Pentecost, the Church has been God's prime witness on earth and for His spotlight to revert to Israel the Church would have had to be removed. The great multitude of Jews and Gentiles described in Revelation chapter 7 is not the Church, for these people have specifically come out of the Great Tribulation, which is certainly not a description of the whole of the church age. Taking the account of the Tribulation throughout Revelation into consideration it seems these are the "Tribulation Saints" – those who refuse to accept the mark of the beast and therefore are martyred for their faith. I tend to accept the view of many that these are the "Friends of the Bride" - the bridesmaids described in Matthew 25 v 1-13 and who are waiting for the return of the Lord with His bride at the end of their wedding feast, to inaugurate His kingdom reign on David's throne.
9. The pattern of Jewish weddings fits in so well with a pre-tribulation Rapture. In a traditional Jewish wedding the bridegroom first went to the bride's [parents'] home and immediately returned to his [parents'] home with her. She would have already started to prepare herself and would be wearing a veil until she reached his home. There she concluded her preparations, was formally introduced to his parents and the wedding took place with invited guests. The marriage was consummated and then possibly as long as seven days after they arrived at his home, the couple returned to her home, the bride now unveiled. There many of her friends were waiting for them and immediately there were further festivities. Before the marriage, perhaps many years before, the groom's parents would have paid a betrothal price to the bride's parents. During the weeks and months before the actual ceremony the bridegroom would have prepared their new home, usually adjoining his parent's home (John 14 v 2 – 3).
10. The details of the Lord's coming at the Rapture are very different from His return in glory. In 1 Thessalonians 4 v 13 – 18 we read of the Lord's return in the clouds with one loud command, one archangel and one trumpet. When His feet touch the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14 v 4) it will be like lightning and all the nations will mourn (Matthew 24 v 30 – 31). We are told every eye will see Him and every knee will bow (Philippians 2 v 10 – 11).