

End Times: The Pre-Wrath Question

Some scholars have wrongly defined the great tribulation period as a period of God's wrath upon the antichrist world and his armies. By so doing, they have made the wrong conclusion that the church will not be on earth during that period. This definition needs to be examined as to whether it fits the narrative of scripture.

A close look at scriptures shows that the great tribulation period is not a period of God's wrath but can instead be loosely called a period of Satan's wrath (by loosely, we mean that Satan did not create this period and neither does he have sovereign power over it. But rather, Satan's major actions against the church, because of his wrath (after being thrown out of heaven) will be or have already been permitted by God in advance). So it is a period of the permitted wrath of the Satan. On one hand God believes that his people in that time will endure persecution and be faithful. Similar to the scenarios of Job and Apostle Peter (*Job Luke 22:31-34; Revelation 2:13*), and on the other hand, Satan believes that those who are Christ's will deny Him in the face of such tribulation. So God will allow this kind of contest to be revealed on a global level in the very last days of the present age.

Satan's Wrath: In the middle of the 7 year rule of the antichrist, Satan will be cast out of heaven onto the earth and because of this, he will be filled with wrath. His wrath will first be directed at the nation of Israel. He will seek to destroy Israel through the antichrist and his armies during the commission of the abomination of desolation. When they begin to escape towards the place safety prepared for them by God, in the wilderness of the mountains, he will vomit a flood in their path. But the earth will help Israel by opening her mouth and swallowing away this flood, such that they successfully escape to their safety and food haven place of abode, for three and a half years (the great tribulation period). Having lost the second battle in a row, he will now turn his wrath towards the church. The ensuing persecution, war and legal restrictions against the church by the man of sin will be policies emanating out of Satan's wrath and knowledge that his time is short (*Revelation 12-13*).

Revelation 12:12, NIV.

Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

God will allow Satan to appear to be winning when he is actually unwittingly helping to fulfil the end time purposes of God for the church, namely, *...to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end... (Daniel 11:35).*

God's Wrath: The wrath of God is not slated to be unleashed during the great tribulation but long after. God's wrath is reserved for the day of the lord. The day of the lord begins with His coming until after the millennial kingdom when He hands over all rule and authority to the father after making all His enemies His footstool. It is not a day as such but a long period of time. This makes sense when we understand that *with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day (2 Peter 3:8)*. So the day of the lord includes destruction of the wicked (*Isaiah 13:4-6; 9-11; Jeremiah 46:10; Ezekiel 30:3-4; Joel 3:12-14*), as well as salvation to those who belong to Christ, that is among other things, salvation to Israel and the rapture (*1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2; Revelation 7;*). It is also a day of judgment for both the living and the dead. The day of the lord comes as a thief in the night to unbelievers, on the one hand and as salvation to believers, on the other (*1 Thessalonians 5:1-10*).

The wrath of God is to be unleashed after the great tribulation, on the living who are rebellious to the truth of the gospel, at His coming:

Revelation 6:15-17, NIV.

15 Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. 16 They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?"

This wrath of God on the living rebellious people will begin with the sounding of trumpets by seven angels up until the rapture occurs at the seventh (last trumpet). Each of the trumpets will invite destruction of wicked men while the church and Israel will be preserved by the seal of God (the Holy Spirit) awaiting salvation at the last trumpet (*Eph. 1:13; Rev. 7:1-4;*).

Revelation 9:1-6, NIV.

The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. 2 When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. 3 And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. 4 They were told not to harm the grass

of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 They were not allowed to kill them but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes. 6 During those days people will seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

The wrath of God upon the living unbelievers who are rebellious will even increase after the rapture by way of the seven last plagues from the seven bowls of God's wrath.

Revelation 15:1, NIV.

I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God's wrath is completed.

The wrath of God will continue to be revealed, upon the unbelieving who are dead, after the millennial kingdom, at the white throne judgment:

Revelation 14:9-10, NIV.

"If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, 10 they, too, will drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.

God's fury is poured on them after the rapture as seen before and not during the great tribulation. The antichrist and the false prophet are thrown in the lake of fire when Christ comes to the earth together with resurrected and raptured saints.

Revelation 20:11-15, NIV.

11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Right now, the odds are against the church – whereas the next event in Bible end time prophecy is the great tribulation, many are expecting the rapture. The earlier the

entire church realizes that very soon, as many as will remain alive, will go through the great tribulation, the better prepared we will try to be, not only spiritually but practically.