

Hot Button Questions

Part 5

4/10/19

Q: I heard you say on the radio that the Great Tribulation is the wrath of God poured out on the world. I do not believe that the Great Tribulation is the wrath of God. It is the wrath of the prince of this world as he knows his time is short (Revelation 12:12-14).

Let's read the verses they mention. "For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has *only* a short time."

A: In order to better understand this passage, we need to back up to verse 9 where we read: "And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him."

Now, we know from Scripture that Satan was first cast out of heaven sometime before the creation of the world when he rebelled against God, according to Isaiah 14:12,

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!"

After this first casting out, we know that he still had access to heaven. Scripture shows him before God's throne challenging God about

Job (Job 1:6). And Jesus said that the devil also approached God about Simon Peter, asking permission to “sift him like wheat” (Lk. 22:31).

However, Satan will be cast out *again* during the Tribulation period where he will lose all access to heaven. This will infuriate him for he will then realize his time is short.

So back to the question about the wrath experienced during the Tribulation being Satan’s wrath, he book of Revelation is very clear that the Tribulation, which includes 21 judgments—the 7 seals, 7 trumpets, and 7 bowl judgments—is indeed the wrath of God:

“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” (Rev. 15:1).

So the Tribulation Period of 7 years is the wrath of God poured out on a Christ rejecting world.

Q: I believe we (the church) will be here for the Tribulation period, but from studying scripture I believe that Jordan, Israel and the USA will escape the clutches of the Antichrist, the world government and his control. Therefore we will not be subject to taking the mark.

A: Okay, as for Israel, Jordan, and the USA being exempt from Antichrist’s world government, again, I must turn to Scripture. John writes,

And “It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation” (Rev. 13:7).

“He causes ALL, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or forehead” (Rev. 13:16).

***All, Every, and All* make it quite clear that no one will escape the short-lived rule of antichrist.**

Q: What are your thoughts on predestination, and why it seems to have become a popular idea throughout the Christian community? I had never heard of Calvinism until the last couple of years.

A: Ok, first, Calvinism is the theological belief system that brought predestination into major focus. It originated with John Calvin, who was born on July 10, 1509 and died May 27, 1564 at the age of 55.

He was a French theologian, pastor and reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation, and was a principal figure in the development of the system of Christian theology that later bore his name.

Calvinism includes the doctrines of *predestination* and of the *absolute sovereignty* of God in salvation of the human soul from death and eternal damnation.

The recent popularity of Calvinism is due in part to the spread of *reformed* churches. When you hear today of a "reformed" church, it generally means they look to Calvin as the chief expositor of their beliefs.

Now, Calvinistic predestination includes the belief that God appointed the eternal destiny of some to salvation by grace, while leaving all others to receive eternal damnation for all their sins. This is also called "unconditional election." If God elects to save me, I will be saved. If He doesn't, I won't.

I don't believe that this view of predestination lines up with Scripture. The Bible teaches predestination, but not Calvinistic Predestination:

Bible predestination is where God has pre-determined, not *who* is saved, but the *character* of the saved.

Listen carefully to Romans 8:28-29:

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.
29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,"

Notice, God's predestination has to do with our character once we're saved. We have been predestined to grow into the character, the likeness, the image of His Son!

We have also been predestined to heaven. Once a person is saved, it is part of God's eternal, predestined plan that they should go to heaven.

ILLUS: Look at it like this. Let's say the entire human race is offered a free ticket to board a train whose destination is a beautiful ocean village. Anyone who doesn't take a ticket will suffer a massive fire that will one day engulf them.

Many men and women are sent out into the crowd of humanity with the good news that these free tickets are available. All the recipients must do is confess that they have muddy shoes, and must receive new, clean shoes in order to board the train. Once done, they are saved from what is coming.

Now, Calvinism would say that there is no choice, but those that receive tickets are *chosen* to receive them to the exclusion of everyone else. All others have no hope of a ticket. Only those chosen will board the train to safety, headed for the beautiful ocean town.

Does this sound like God to you? Does this sound like love? Does this square with the God Jesus introduced to us? No!

There are all kinds of Bible verses that refute Calvinistic predestination. Here are a few:

"Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34).

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11).

“For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:3-4).

“The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9).

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Bottom line, our eternal destiny (heaven or hell) is based entirely upon personal choices we make based upon our own freewill. If we end up in hell, we can only blame ourselves!

Q: I know some would say we should never question God’s actions but why did the spirit of the Lord leave Saul and why would a harmful spirit enter Saul?

A: 1 Samuel 16:14 says, “The Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.” This is also mentioned in 1 Samuel 16:15–16, 23; 18:10; and 19:9.

First, the evil spirit was “from” the Lord in that it was allowed by God to harass Saul. Ultimately, all created things are under God’s control. It is likely that this evil spirit was part of God’s judgment upon Saul for his disobedience.

Saul had directly disobeyed God on two occasions—when he offered an offering only the priest was ordained to do, and when he spared wicked King Agag when Samuel had commanded him to kill him.

Therefore, God removed His Spirit from Saul and allowed an evil spirit to torment him. Likely, Satan and the demons had always wanted to attack Saul; God was now simply giving them permission to do so.

Second, the evil spirit was used to bring David into Saul’s life. This account is recorded immediately following David’s anointing as the future king of Israel. 1 Samuel 16:15-16 reveals that when the king’s servants saw the torment Saul was enduring, they suggested, “See, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the lyre. He will play when the evil spirit from God comes on you, and you will feel better.”

So the sovereignty of God was at work in all of this. Saul disobeyed God and opened the door to Satanic harassment. Yet God, Who never causes evil but uses man’s evil designs to weave together His plan, used Saul’s torment to bring David into his presence.

Even though the Spirit of God had fallen upon Saul when anointed king, he made choices that forfeited his anointing.

As to whether or not he was saved, the Bible says yes. When Samuel appeared to him the night before his death, he said, "The LORD will deliver both Israel and you into the hands of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The LORD will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines" (1 Samuel 28:19).

Q: Dear pastor, if only one of the spouse pays tithe at church, How does the promises of God (Malachi 3:10-12) get fulfilled in the household?

A: Ok, this person is asking whether God will still bless a household with two incomes if only one of the two spouses tithes. First, God looks on the heart. The Bible teaches that God deals with us as individuals. We will each individually answer to God for how we walked out our Christianity. The Bible says, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" (Phil 2:12)

It is each man's own work; no human friend, no pastor, not even an apostle (like Paul), can work it for him. We will answer at the Judgment Seat of Christ, not for our sins which are forgiven, but for our works—how we obeyed Christ in this life. What our lives produced for His glory.

So I believe the Lord will bless the giving spouse with things the non-giver will not enjoy.

That said, Malachi 3:10-12 is not one of those OT verses that is carried over into the NT. The person that doesn't give will not be "cursed" by God. Those verses were given to Israel when they had forsaken the building of the Temple and were focused only on their own homes.

I just don't find God *cursing* people for not giving in the NT. NT giving is GRACE-DRIVEN out of a thankful heart, not MANDATED by law. Christians are under the law of grace and the guidance of the Spirit, not the letter of the law.

For me the question comes down to Jesus's words, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21).

Christians who give nothing to the Lord's work, for me, are missing a huge blessing. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" said Jesus. If Jesus Himself placed such a premium on giving, where are the hearts of those who don't?

And who would not want to give to the Lord's work if it helps reach people with the gospel? It has been my choice for most of my Christian life to tithe ten percent. Not because I'm mandated to do so, but because it's the least I can do to reach others in light of all He has done for me.

