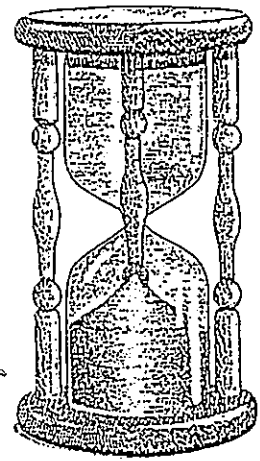


PROPHECY COUNTDOWN

P.O. BOX 941612, MAITLAND, FL 32794 **

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COUNTED WORTHY TO ESCAPE

Church tradition and popular teaching tells us that all Born-again believers will be going in the Rapture.

But what if this teaching is wrong? What if the Bible teaches something else? Remember that the Bible admonishes us:

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, RIGHTLY dividing the Word of Truth." (II Tim. 2:15)

God also warns His people in Hosea 4:6:

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee..."

First, lets look into the Old Testament for some clues about escaping the period known as the Day of the Lord.

The Prophet Zephaniah saw the Day of the Lord and how terrible it was going to be. In the fourth verse of the first chapter he starts a list of those God will "cut off".

Included in this list are those described in verse 6:

"those who turn back from following the Lord & neither seek the Lord nor inquire of him."

In modern day terms he was referring to what we call "backsliders". Backsliders are those who once walked with the Lord, but turned back to follow their flesh and the evils of this dying world.

Through the Prophet Zephaniah, God warns them that they will be "cut-off."

In God's great mercy, He has Zephaniah give one final word of warning and encouragement:

"Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the DAY OF THE LORD'S anger come upon you."(v2)

"Seek ye the Lord, ALL YE MEEK OF THE EARTH which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it MAY BE (PERHAPS) ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." (v3)

Here God reveals that it may be possible for some to escape the period known as the DAY OF THE LORD. Notice that He says, "it MAY BE" or "PERHAPS" you will be hid from that period. This indicates that escape is possible, but not something that is assured or guaranteed.

We are not talking about Salvation here. We are talking about escaping the time of God's wrath of anger in the Tribulation period.

PRAY TO ESCAPE

Jesus spoke of this same period of time, and He gave His followers some very important instructions in Luke 21:34-36:

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and CARES OF THIS LIFE, and so THAT DAY come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. "WATCH ye therefore, & PRAY that ye MAY BE ACCOUNTED WORTHY TO ESCAPE ALL these things that shall come to pass.."

Jesus was telling us the same thing Zephaniah recorded for us over 2,500 years ago. The

DAY OF THE LORD is coming on the whole earth, but it is POSSIBLE TO ESCAPE.

How does a person escape the terrible time of Tribulation that is coming? Jesus says, "WATCH" and "PRAY". Pray what? "PRAY that ye MAY BE ACCOUNTED WORTHY TO ESCAPE..."

This confirms that it is possible to escape the horrible time ahead. Only those who are ACCOUNTED WORTHY are going to escape, however. If this interpretation is correct, then the Bible should give further evidence.

7 CHURCHES - REVELATION

Jesus gave us the seven churches in the book of Revelation to teach us many great truths. Do these churches shed any light on escaping the Tribulation period or speak of being worthy?

The wonderful promise to the Philadelphian Church is found in Revelation 3:10:

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also WILL KEEP THEE FROM THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION (Tribulation period) which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

Also, a FEW in the Church of Sardis have a wonderful hope:

"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are WORTHY." (Rev. 3:4)

It must be remembered that the seven churches represent Christians. They are all believers in Christ, but only a FEW have the promise of escaping the Tribulation period. Only those who have "KEPT THE WORD" and who have "NOT DEFILED THEIR GARMENTS" are given the blessed assurance of ESCAPING the Tribulation and being found WORTHY.

EFFORT REQUIRED

The above references indicate that escaping the Tribulation period requires effort on the part of the believer - it is not automatic for any Christian.

In speaking about the Day of the Lord, Peter reminds us:

"...I have written...as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?"

You ought to LIVE HOLY and GODLY LIVES as you look forward to the day of God & speed its coming...So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, MAKE EVERY EFFORT to be found SPOTLESS, BLAMELESS and AT PEACE with HIM."(II Peter 1,11,14)

Peter tells us we need to MAKE EVERY EFFORT to be found BLAMELESS and to live HOLY AND GODLY lives.

The Apostle Paul also taught us how we should be living when he was instructing the Church of the Thessalonians about the return of the Lord:

"...urging you to LIVE LIVES WORTHY OF GOD, who calls you into His kingdom and glory." (I Thessalonians 2:12)

"May he strengthen your hearts so that you will BE BLAMELESS and HOLY...when our Lord Jesus comes..." (I Thessalonians 3:13)

"All this is evidence that God's judgement is right, and as a result you will be COUNTED WORTHY of the kingdom of God..." (II Thessalonians 1:5)

"With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God MAY COUNT YOU WORTHY of His calling..." (II Thessalonians 1:11)

Paul's remarks indicate that being counted WORTHY was not something that was obtained automatically. For these reasons, Paul told us in Philippians 3:13:

"BROTHERS, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and STRAINING TOWARD what is ahead, I PRESS ON toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me...:"

Dear God in Heaven, please help each of us to live our lives in such a way that we may be found blameless and holy and worthy to escape the time that is coming to test this world.

* Dear friends in Christ, as we look*
* for the soon return of our wonder-
* ful Saviour, be encouraged that *
* your faith & hope is good & pleas-
* ing to our Lord. It is true that *
* Luke 24:32

there are those among us that seek to rattle
*our faith & shake us loose of the Hope that *
*burns within our hearts. Yet we know if we *
*remain faithful to Him, we shall be counted *
*as precious jewels in His sight when He *
comes as a Thief to those asleep in darkness

