

Wrath, spared from

How do you, as a post-tribulation ministry, respond to the fact that we are spared from God's wrath? Does this not mean that we are spared from the horrors of the Tribulation period?

No one can deny the clear Biblical reference of 1 Thessalonians 5:9: "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Yeshua the Messiah" (NASU). Neither this, nor other passages such as Romans 5:9 are in dispute by us as post-tribulationists. However, it is important *that we determine what the wrath of God is*, something very few pre-tribulationists do. Pre-tribulationists errantly consider the entire Tribulation period to be God's wrath.

There are two primary Greek words used in the Apostolic Scriptures translated as "wrath" in our English Bibles: *orgē* (ὀργή) and *thumos* (θυμός), each indicative of a particular type of wrath or anger of God.

BDAG defines *orgē* as "**strong indignation directed at wrongdoing, w. focus on retribution, wrath.**"¹ This is necessary to understand because it indicates that *orgē* "wrath" is most often reserved for the Divine punishment of God on sinners in His eternal punishment upon them. *Thayer* adds to this, telling us that *orgē* is indicative of "*anger exhibited in punishing, hence used for the punishment itself.*"²

Thumos, on the other hand is described as "**a state of intense displeasure, anger, wrath, rage, indignation**" (*BDAG*).³ *Thayer* remarks that it means "*passion, angry heat...anger forthwith boiling up and soon subsiding again.*"⁴ This does not indicate a "wrath" that is constant, but one that is only momentary.

The comparison of these two words is that *orgē* "denotes *indignation which has arisen gradually and becomes more settled*" (*Thayer*).⁵ *Orgē* is the Divine wrath used to describe eternal punishment of unbelievers, whereas *thumos* is used to describe the anger of God poured out during the Tribulation period.

Interestingly enough, the only times the word *orgē* (Divine wrath) is used in the Book of Revelation are in a post-tribulation context (6:16, 17; 11:18; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15). It is used after the sixth seal (Revelation 6:16-17), the seventh (or the last) trumpet (Revelation 11:18), the seventh vial/bowl (Revelation 16:19), and is most importantly used to describe the eternal punishment of the condemned in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 14:10). Believers are indeed spared from the *orgē* wrath of God, as (1) the *orgē* or Divine wrath of God is poured out *after the Tribulation period*, and (2) the *orgē* of God is for those who reject the Messiah and suffer eternal punishment.

It should also be noted that numerous references exist throughout the Tanach or Hebrew Scriptures describe that the judgment of God is poured out on the Day of the LORD (Isaiah 13:6, 9; Ezekiel 30:3; 1:15; 2:1, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18; 20; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:14; Malachi 4:5). Although there are numerous interpretations that are given for the term "day," more often than naught this is in reference to the time when Yeshua returns and defeats His enemies at Armageddon, initiating His Millennial reign. As Nahum 1:2 proclaims, "A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; the LORD is avenging and wrathful. The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies." Presumably, before the Day of the LORD takes place, Believers have been removed from Planet Earth, because the wrath of God is reserved for the unrighteous.

The Apostolic Scriptures also speak of the Day of the LORD, which we should most certainly presume is the *same event spoken of by the Prophets in the Tanach* (cf. Acts 2:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). The Word of

¹ *BDAG*, 720.

² *Thayer*, 452.

³ *BDAG*, 461.

⁴ *Thayer*, 293.

⁵ *Ibid.*

God is clear that during this time period His wrath will be poured out. But what do we define as the wrath of God? The Apostle Paul offers us a fairly good explanation:

“For the wrath [*orgē*] of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath [*orgē*] for yourself in the day of wrath [*orgē*] and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS” (Romans 1:18; 2:5-6, NASU; cf. Psalm 62:12; Proverbs 24:12).

“But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Messiah and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath [*orgē*] of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them” (Ephesians 5:3-7, NASU).

The above Scripture quotations from Romans 1:18, 2:4-6, and Ephesians 5:3-7 speak of wrath or *orgē* of God in regard to eternal damnation. *Thumos*, on the other hand, is indicative more of the *anger* of God, not always related to eternal punishment. In some instances, it is notable that *thumos* is also used to describe the wrath, or indignation or anger, of Satan. The following are a selection of quotations from the Book of Revelation where *thumos* is used:

“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 [*thumos*], knowing that he has *only* a short time” (Revelation 12:12, NASU).

“So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered *the clusters from* the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath [*thumos*] of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles” (Revelation 14:19-20, NASU).

“Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, *which are* the last, because in them the wrath [*thumos*] of God is finished” (Revelation 15:1, NASU).

In determining what the wrath of God actually encompasses, we would suggest that you be sure of what Greek word is used in the source text, and then compare the context of the passage. Ultimately, the wrath of God is eternal damnation, which all Believers, Tribulation saints or otherwise, will be spared from. However, once defining what the “wrath of God” actually is, and distinguishing the Greek words *orgē* and *thumos*, we can then begin to address the more important question: **Will Believers experience hard times?** This is a question that many pre-tribulationists answer incorrectly.

Many popular pre-tribulationists say, “Why would anyone want to go through the Tribulation?” They would be correct as no one should want to go through the Tribulation. By no means is experiencing the Tribulation something one *should ever* wish for.

But, many of the same pre-tribulationists **prey on people's emotions** rather than dealing with the facts that Believers in the Messiah *have and will experience hard times*—something American Christianity has never really had to face. We would be keen to heed the Prophet Isaiah's words: “I seek You with all the spirit within me. For when Your judgments are wrought on earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. But when the scoundrel is spared, he learns not righteousness” (Isaiah 26:9b-10a, NJPS).

(This entry includes adapted quotations from the author's book *The Dangers of Pre-Tribulationism*.)