

Tribulation

Tribulation is a term used in the New Testament, but distorted by false teaching in the past two centuries. The term generally refers to the suffering and anguish of the people of God. According to the NT, tribulations are an expected reality among the followers of Christ. In the Hebrew text, the word commonly rendered tribulation is "tsara," which means "narrow" in Num. 22:26 or "close-KJV and tight-NKJV" in Job 41:15. The Greek word "*thlipsis*" translates to either tribulation or affliction in our New Testament versions. False teachers try to force seven years of tribulation into the scriptures. They falsely teach it as part of their unscriptural rapture and the millennial kingdom. These false teachers cannot agree on the facts of this period of tribulation because the Bible has nothing to say on the subject. (Refer to the [three-part Bible Class on Matthew 24](#) by Shawn Jeffries).

Jesus taught the disciples many things in the last hours before His arrest. John chapters 13 to 16 are a final discourse in the Upper Room after the Last Supper. He told them He had to go away to prepare a place for them in heaven and that He would send the comforter, the Holy Spirit. He concludes that teaching session with these words. "*Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. **In the world you have tribulation**, but take courage; I have overcome the world"* (John 16:32-33). His prayer in John 17 also acknowledges that as long as His followers are in the world, they will suffer tribulations.

There are tribulations addressed in Matthew 24 that are specific to the destruction of the Temple and the total end to the sacrificial practices of the Jews. Jesus promised a time when the siege of Jerusalem would lift temporarily, and those who believed in the Word of God could escape the Roman army. That occurred when Vespasian was called to Rome to become Emperor and before he sent word to destroy Jerusalem in 70 AD.

In comparison, the tribulations promised by Jesus in John 16 are general and refer to daily life in this temporal world. How many things cause anxiety, affliction, distress, grief, tribulation, and discouragement? We could add to the list the physical discomfort of disease and bodily pain from an injury. Everyone who lives on this earth is subject to the physical troubles of this earth. The "natural disasters" of severe weather, earthquakes, and famine, cause much pain and suffering. But as children of God, we have this reminder from Paul. "*Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"* (Romans 8:35). The answer is as Jesus said, "*Take courage; I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33).

One question many have is, Why does a loving God allow tribulations to afflict His children? One answer is that tribulations help make us like Christ. Christ suffered many things, even death on the cross. The people stoned Paul at Lystra, but he returned there anyway, "*strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God'*" (Acts 14:22). The things Jesus suffered taught Him obedience. "*Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered*" (Hebrews 5:8). Tribulations also teach us patient obedience and endurance.

As we grow more and more like Christ, the tribulations may increase as they did for Him. In our growth, becoming more like our Lord, we will care more and more for those around us. Not only will love and care of the brethren increase but caring for all people will increase. Jesus did not die for a few but all people everywhere. The statement, "*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men*" (Titus 2:11) explains why Christ came. Paul gives the reason to pray and care for all people in writing to Timothy. "*This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

Peter reminds us that tribulation is to be expected, but protection is also present. *"Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. and do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled ... For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong"* (1 Peter 3:13-17).

The vision of the saved shown to John describes those who have passed the sojourn on this earth. John is told, *"These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"* (Revelation 7:14).

Are you washed in the Blood of the Lamb and prepared for eternity?