

“The Tribulation”

21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened. Matthew 24:21–22 (NKJV)

TRIBULATION [...Greek *thlipsis*—‘affliction,’ ‘pressure’ (Matthew 13:21; 24:9, 21, 29; etc.)]; ... “External circumstances that cause an individual a great deal of internal stress.

Hebrew *šar* and *šārâ* and Greek *thlipsis* derive from roots that graphically portray the process in which a person is first limited, then walled in, and gradually squeezed until something must give.” G. A. Van Alstine

In the Bible the word “tribulation” is used to describe the persecution, the distress, the pains, and trials believers / Christians endure as faithful followers of Christ –

- I. Trials, and difficulties are normal in this sin-filled world, both true Christians and non-believers, experience them, yet “tribulation” is often used in a way in Scripture that applies more or only to Christians -*

After Adam and Eve’s sin in the garden, the woman had pain in childbearing: the man had sweating and discomfort at work, there was and is trouble in relations ... – Genesis 3:16-19

7 Yet man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. Job 5:7 (NKJV)

Yet, tribulation is different for true Christians because we go against the grain of a sin-filled world and so experience persecution – John 15:18

An ungodly world hates us, and will come and press against us -

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. John 15:18 (NKJV)

This is tribulation, we experience it because we go against the flow in an ungodly world -

1. *Consider how the Apostle John describes himself and his readers as he introduces himself as the author of the Book of Revelation –*

⁹ I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Revelation 1:9 (NKJV)

2. *Jesus uses the Word “tribulation” in the parable of the sower, to describe why some potential disciples fail –*

¹⁸ “Therefore hear the parable of the sower: ...

²⁰ But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Matthew 13:18 & 20-21 (NKJV)

In this sense “tribulation” divides the true from the false, among professing disciples.

For instance:

- A. *Daniel, speaking of this temptation / tribulation process says –*

³² Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out *great exploits*. Daniel 11:32 (NKJV)

- B. *Tribulation is like Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace, Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego go in the FIRE, others avoid the FIRE altogether by bowing to, worshipping Nebuchadnezzar’s idol!*

3. *Jesus warned His disciples -*

³³ These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” John 16:33 (NKJV)

4. Acts 14:21-22 uses the word “tribulations” as part of a description of what Paul and Barnabas were teaching the disciples they MUST GO through -

²¹ And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” Acts 14:21–22 (NKJV)

5. *Note in describing the time of “great tribulation” Jesus speaks of those days being “shortened” Matthew 24:22, “for the elect’s sake”*

II. *Tribulation is described in Scripture as temporary thing, limited by time –*

“... those days were shortened...” Matthew 24:22

1. *This distinguishes “tribulation” from God’s judgment / wrath which is not limited in duration / is not shortened -*

¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” Revelation 14:10–11 (NKJV)

2. *Consider the TIME PERIOD(s) called the tribulation / great tribulation –*

A. *Since Paul, Barnabus, John, and Jesus Himself spoke of Christians enduring tribulation and trial –*

16 “These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. ² They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. ³ And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. ⁴ But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. “And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you. John 16:1–4 (NKJV)

B. Since the time of Christ persecutions / tribulations have happened in every age –

Jesus and other New Testament writers describe forms of persecution and oppression of Jesus’ followers, endured or will endure:

- verbal abuse (Matthew 5:11; 1 Peter 4:14-16)

¹¹ “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:11–12 (NKJV)

¹⁴ If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. ¹⁶ Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. 1 Peter 4:14–16 (NKJV)

- seizure of property (Hebrews 10:34)

³⁴ for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Hebrews 10:34 (NKJV)

- beatings (Acts 5:40; 16:37; 2 Cor 11:23–25)

⁴⁰ And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Acts 5:40 (NKJV)

³⁷ But Paul said to them, “They have beaten us openly, ..., and have thrown us into prison. ...” Acts 16:37 (NKJV)

²⁴ From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; ... 2 Corinthians 11:24–25 A (NKJV)

- murder plots (Acts 9:23; 20:3; compare Luke 22:2)
- stoning (Acts 7:58; 14:19; 2 Corinthians 11:25; compare John 8:59; 10:31)
- unjust arrests and imprisonments (Luke 21:12; Acts 5:18; 12:4; 16:26; 2 Cor 11:23; Eph 3:1; Philippians 1:12–14; Col 4:3, 18; 2 Timothy 1:8; Revelation 2:10; compare Matthew 26:47–57)
- exile (Revelation 1:9)
- execution (Luke 21:16; Acts 7:57–60; 12:2; Revelation 2:13; 6:9; compare Matthew 27:26)

¹⁶ You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷ And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. Luke 21:16–17 (NKJV)

All of these things happen to Christians, because of their relation to Christ, because of righteousness in a sin-filled world.

3. *The Bible tells us of these things because God would have us READY for them – **John 16:1-4***

Jesus would have us NOT FEARING these things, they are not God’s Wrath –

⁴ “And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. ⁵ But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! Luke 12:4–5 (NKJV)

All included in point II.2 is nothing compared to point 11.1 / **Revelation 14:10-11.**

¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” Revelation 14:10–11 (NKJV)

III. The Great Tribulation, end times –

1. The beast, an ungodly government –

**13 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.
Revelation 13:1 (NKJV)**

A. Beasts in Scripture are symbolic of ungodly governments and empires, this is an empire; seven heads and ten horns = complete POWER!

B. The beast has Satanic power –

**...The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.
Revelation 13:2 (NKJV)**

C. He has power to kill / overcome saints (true Christians) –

⁷ It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them... Revelation 13:7 (NKJV)

D. World-wide power (nowhere, except in Christ, to go to escape)

**And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.
Revelation 13:7 B (NKJV)**

E. All are expected to worship the image of the BEAST (or else) –

¹⁵ He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

Revelation 13:15 (NKJV)

2. The mark of the beast –

¹⁶ He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷ and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. ¹⁸ Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666. Revelation 13:16–18 (NKJV)

Many in order to AVOID “tribulation” “death” in order to “buy and sell” will worship the beast and take his mark! A. A literal mark, don’t take it. B. A symbolic mark – right hand= deeds / forehead= thoughts (Beliefs) Even scarier, trust in this world’s provisions ...

3. The beast rules 42 months, 3 1/2 years, a temporary time –

⁵ And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.

Revelation 13:5 (NKJV)

A. A literal number – 3 ½ years

B. Symbolic – a shortened time period, the beast does not rule forever –

¹² Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. ¹³ Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.” Revelation 14:12–13 (NKJV)

IV. Judgment / eternal wrath –

⁹ Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” Revelation 14:9–11 (NKJV)

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