

## **ARE YOU TROUBLED BY THE TRIBULATION? (Acts 14:21, 22)**

### **Introduction:**

- 1. Premillennialists say there will be a time of great trouble for the church known as “The Great Tribulation.”**
  - a. It will take place on earth while the saints are “raptured” in Heaven.**
  - b. Those converted during “The Rapture” will suffer at the hand of “the Antichrist.”**
  - c. “More space is devoted to it in the Old Testament than to the coming of Christ. Every New Testament writer refers to it. The Revelation is largely a description of its leading events.... All nature is drawn upon to emphasize the terror of those years” (S.M. Coder, Great Doctrines of the Bible, 320).**
  
- 2. Does the Bible actually teach the doctrine of “The Great Tribulation.”**

### **Discussion:**

#### **I. WHAT IS THE TRIBULATION?**

- A. A definition of tribulation is “a great misery or distress, as from oppression; deep sorrow; affliction.”**
  
- B. The Bible teaches God’s people will suffer tribulation in all ages.**
  - 1. Jesus pronounced a blessing on those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake (Matt. 5:10-12).**
  - 2. Jesus warned His apostles: “If the world hates you, you know it hated Me before it hated you....A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you....” (John 15:18,20).**
  - 3. Paul and Barnabas taught: “We must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).**
  - 4. Paul wrote to Timothy: “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).**
  - 5. Peter wrote to persecuted saints: “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you” (1 Pet. 4:12).**
  
- C. “The Great Tribulation” involves several events according to premillennialists.**
  - 1. The saints will be “raptured” for seven years.**

2. "The Antichrist" will make a covenant with Israel for seven years.
3. After three and one half years, he will break this covenant and turn on the Jews in great fury.
4. 144,000 Jews will be converted and become preachers.
5. The focus of "The Great Tribulation" will be against the Jews and others converted during this time.
6. It will end when the Lord intervenes in "The Battle of Armageddon."

## II. PREMILLENNIALISTS MISAPPLY SEVERAL PASSAGES IN AN ATTEMPT TO PROVE THEIR THEORY.

### A. Matthew 24 is the chief text used to support their theory.

1. Jesus is answering two basic questions in Matthew 24.
  - a. What would be the sign of His coming in Judgment on Jerusalem?
  - b. What would be the sign of His coming at the end of the world?
2. In the first 34 verses, Jesus gave several signs by which they could know the approaching destruction of Jerusalem.
3. No signs were given for the end of the world.
4. Verse 36 marks the transition between the two questions.

### B. Premillennialists claim 8-13 and 21,22 predict "The Tribulation."

1. These verses describe the siege of Jerusalem.
2. Starvation was so severe mothers ate their own children.
3. More than one million died and 100,000 survivors were sold into slavery.
4. Josephus said: "Neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries...from the beginning of the world" (Wars of the Jews).
5. Jesus said: "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place" (Matt. 24:34).

### C. Premillennialists claim Revelation 4 and 5 describe "The Rapture" and chapters 6 through 18 "The Great Tribulation."

1. Revelation concerned "things which must shortly take place."
2. It was revealed in "signs" {symbolic language} (Rev. 1:1-3).
3. Premillennialists "read" their theory into the text.

### D. Premillennialists use Old Testament passages as proof texts also.

1. They say “the time of Jacob’s trouble” is “The Tribulation;” however, Jeremiah was speaking to the residents of Jerusalem during the siege by the Babylonians in 586 BC (Jer. 30:7).
2. They claim Ezekiel 36-39 describes “The Great Tribulation.”
  - a. Ezekiel was with the Jews in Babylon when Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylon in 586 BC.
  - b. He foretold the return from captivity and the rebuilding of the temple which was fulfilled beginning in 536 BC.
3. They claim Daniel 11 prophesies “The Great Tribulation.”
  - a. The prophet is speaking of the Greek Empire because of the impact it will have on God’s people.
  - b. The mighty king in verse 3 is Alexander the Great.
  - c. Verse 4 describes the division of his empire among his four generals following his death.
  - d. The “king of the north” is Seleucus who ruled the area north of Israel and the “king of the south” is Ptolemy who ruled Egypt.
  - e. Israel was caught between these two rival kingdoms.
4. Premillennialists also use Daniel 12 to support their theory.
  - a. This was fulfilled when Israel was invaded by Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
  - b. He defiled the temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar.
  - c. First Maccabees says: “They shed innocent blood around the sanctuary and defiled the holy place; the sanctuary thereof was made desolate; her fears were turned into mourning” (1:37-39).

### **Conclusion:**

1. The “Great Tribulation” theory is based upon Scriptures which are taken out of context and misapplied.
2. Every faithful Christian will suffer some tribulation (persecution).
3. We can overcome through Jesus Christ who has made us “more than conquerors” (Rom. 8:31-39).
4. The Bible teaches neither “The Rapture” nor “The Great Tribulation;” both are the result of vivid imaginations and wresting of the Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:15,16).

