

What's so Great about the Great Tribulation? (The Omen)

Revelation 7

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#14 in our series "The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation"

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Prayer

Lord, would you cause us to preach? And I pray that you would help me not to lie about you. That's a terrifying thought to me. I thank you Lord that you send your Spirit, and I pray that your Spirit would impart your Word to our hearts and that we would see you truly—not falsely. Lord God, we pray that we would join in with those heavenly creatures, the twenty-four elders, and the people around your throne singing the new song. In Jesus' name, we ask it. Amen.

Message

Clip from *Damien: Omen II*:

A man cuts a boy's hair while he sleeps. Scary music plays in the background. The man continues to cut until he sees the numbers 666 on the boy's scalp. The music intensifies as the camera zooms in on a man's concerned face.

Well, that's kinda freaky. (I showed that clip a couple years ago)

That was Gregory Peck in the 1976 film *The Omen*. He's shaving his son's head because they've been having some discipline problems, and he needs to check for the mark of the beast. It turns out that Damien is the Antichrist; that would explain the discipline problems.

After the movie, I almost shaved my head for fear that I was the Antichrist . . . or at least marked by the beast. It was the 70's. Our youth pastor had shown the movie, *A Thief In the Night* at youth group. Hal Lindsay had published his best seller *The Late Great Planet Earth*.

Hal Lindsay believed in the pre-tribulation rapture and implied that it would happen in 1988 because that was one forty-year generation after the founding of the modern nation-state of Israel. That was important because folks, like Lindsay, believed there was a "prophetic gap" in the prophecies of Daniel chapter 9.

In Daniel 9, Gabriel says to Daniel,

“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place”

—Daniel 9:24

It’s a remarkable prophecy, for seventy weeks of years, 490 years¹ brings us to just about the time that Jesus is crucified for our transgressions, putting an end to sin and anointing us as the new holy place—the Sanctuary.

Well, dispensationalists like Lindsay postulate a prophetic gap of at least 2000 years between Daniel’s sixty-ninth week and the seventieth week.ⁱ

- They argue that the seventieth week hasn’t happened yet...
- And that when Jesus said, “This generation will not pass away until you see the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven,” He didn’t mean that generation but rather a generation at least 2000 years in the future...
- So the temple will need to be rebuilt, and re-destroyed, by some sort of reconstituted Roman Empire before Jesus returns to do what He didn’t finish the first time around. It is “not finished,” it would seem.

And that’s why the fans of the *Left Behind* books are also supportive of the nation of Israel, talk about the European Union, and get so worked up about news from the Temple Mount. They think it’s all necessary for the second coming of Christ.

Many will argue outright, or implicitly, that when Jesus comes again He’ll do things differently the second time around; He won’t look the same: His Mercy will have come to an end and He won’t get Himself crucified like a slaughtered lamb.

Well, like I said, in the 1970’s I saw the movies, read the books, watched the *Omen*, and I was stressed, for at least three reasons:

Firstly, I began to secretly dislike Jesus, even though I publicly professed Jesus.²

Secondly, I wanted to save myself *from* Jesus . . . and His Great Tribulation.

¹ [a jubilee of decades]

² I was distressed with Jesus and scared of Jesus for it seemed that He’d changed. I’d fallen in love with the Jesus I met in my dad. But I was appalled at the Jesus I learned about in the movies. He wasn’t Jesus, but almost anti-Jesus.

And thirdly, I thought, “What if I’m the Antichrist?”

I knew the Anitchrist was predestined to be, but what a bummer to be him. Just the thought turned me into a Grinch. And a Grinch is an antichrist; He doesn’t think God is salvation, he believes *he* is his own salvation. He even hates Christmas.

Well, that’s why I almost shaved my head; I was worried that I was the Antichrist. I was looking for the omen.

Well, last week, we looked at Revelation chapter six, in which the Lamb opens the first six seals of the seven-sealed scroll.

Preterists believe that chapter six describes the Great Tribulation leading up to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, and it makes sense.

Futurists (like Hal Lindsay) believe that it refers to a seven-year Great Tribulation sometime in the distant future.

But last week, we noted that it seems to describe what we see every night on the evening news: deception, warfare, greed, famine, death, and Hades. We also noted that those things are not *the Judgment*, but necessary steps in the revelation of *the Judgment*.

And yet, at the opening of the sixth seal, everyone does begin to see the Judgment, even though most folks don’t know what it means.³

They see the thing that comes from the judgment seat of God.

They see Jesus, and all run in terror, and now listen very closely:

They run in terror but not because they see that Jesus has changed.
They run in terror because they see that Jesus is eternally *unchanged*.
(Hebrews 13:8 “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*”)

They run in terror, not because Jesus has changed . . .

They run in terror because *they* must change, for The Truth will *never* change.

They see that ultimate reality is not the survival of the fittest—like the reality of a

³ At the opening of the 6th seal, everyone sees the face of him seated on the throne, which is the judgment seat, and they see—the slaughtered Lamb—that’s Jesus Christ and Him crucified, we see the glory of God shining in the face of Christ.

beast; ultimate reality is Sacrificial Love.

They see a slaughtered lamb standing on the throne of God—the Judgment Seat.

And so:

- The first are last and the last first; the humble are exalted and the exalted humbled.
- The human ego is an illusion, and everything that's anything is Grace.
- They see the light, and it obliterates the shadow, that they think they are.
- They see the Judgment of God:

This is the judgment, the light has come into the world and people loved darkness rather than the light... everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light... but whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been done by God. —John 3:19-21

Revelation 6:15-7:1-10

Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"⁴

Who can stand? We're about to find out. Next Verse:

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed,

12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,

⁴ When the glory of God filled the temple in the Old Testament, none could stand.

"The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple... and who can stand?" asks the Prophet Malachi in the 5th century BC

*12,000 from the tribe of Gad,
12,000 from the tribe of Asher,
12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali,
12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,
12,000 from the tribe of Simeon,
12,000 from the tribe of Levi,
12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,
12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,
12,000 from the tribe of Joseph,
12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.*

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Who are these guys?

The 144,000, and then, *the multitude that no one can number?*

The answer matters...⁵

⁵ At the end of WWII most people in the world were utterly horrified at the Nazi atrocities committed against people of Jewish descent. But two countries were particularly supportive of the idea of creating a renewed Jewish state in a place that hadn't been a Jewish state since 70 AD.

Those two countries were Great Britain and the United States, and it was in those two countries that this New End Times theology of John Darby, CI Schofield, and now Hal Lindsey, and Tim LaHaye had taken root.

Now I know this is very controversial territory and you may have all sorts of legitimate reasons for supporting, or not supporting, the modern nation-state of Israel, but if your view of the Revelation matches that of, Scofield, Hal Lindsay and the *Left Behind Series*, you probably want to support the modern State of Israel with finances and military aid because they need to rebuild the temple, so the Antichrist can destroy it, so Jesus can come back, set everyone straight, and inaugurate the Millennium.

In Genesis 12:2 God says to Abraham, “*I will make of you a great nation... I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*”

Some say that this means, you’ll be cursed if you criticize the State of Israel. And blessing the State of Israel will get you blessed. So, the nation-state of Israel is your judgment.

In Galatians, Saint Paul argues that the blessing and cursing refer to Abraham’s Seed, who is Jesus—The King of the Jews; Jesus is your Judgment.

No matter what, Israel is blessed to be a blessing, to *all* the nations, *all* the peoples, *all* the families of the earth.

I know there are a million questions and concerns. But for now, I just hope that you’d see: theology matters. It matters to foreign policy, but more importantly it matters to your heart.

“How does the King of the Jews conquer?”

And... “Who are these guys: the 144,00 & the multitude that can’t be counted?”

Let’s pause a moment and review:

“Peter’s Principles for Interpreting the Revelation”

1. The interpretation should be relevant to the people to whom it was sent.

So, it probably isn’t simply about stuff in the *distant future*.

2. The interpretation should be relevant to whomever reads the words of the prophecy, for John said, “Blessed is the one who reads...”

So, it probably isn’t just about stuff in the *distant past*.

We are currently in two foreign wars as a result of 9-11, and our enemies say that it has something to do with the way we back the nation-state of Israel.

No matter what, you must love every Jew, the way you love Jesus.
But how that love manifests may change based on your theology.

3. The Revelation is a *kairology*, not a *chronology*.

(Rev. 1:3 “*Blessed are you who read... for the kairos is at hand*”)

Chronos is calendar time. *Kairos* is Meaning-full time.

- In chapter 10:6 an angel will say, “Chronos will be no more”.

- In chapter 13:18 John writes that the number of the beast can be calculated, for it’s a human number. It can be calculated, and we’ll do that, but it implies that the other numbers are not to be calculated and placed upon a calendar. Jesus said, “*No one knows the day or hour,*” AND we’re talking about the boundary of temporality and eternity—the numbers are not to be placed on a human calendar... but they *do have* profound meaning:

- ✓ So, when you read 7, don’t just count to seven, think of the days of creation, think of the Sabbath, think of the Jubilee—49, and a perfect Jubilee of decades—490 years; think of the fact that “it is finished.”
- ✓ When you hear 6, think the creation of Adam and of the second Adam, and a tree on a hill, the earth shaking and the sky growing black when the sun is covered in sackcloth and the moon rises blood red.
- ✓ When you see 12, think of 12 disciples, 12 tribes, and the 24 elders. Remember: $12 \times 12 = 144$, and remember that 1000 is the largest denomination in the Hebrew language; think big, and think in pictures.

4. All of Scripture is the context of the Revelation.

Basically, everything in the Revelation has already appeared in Scripture . . . often times, over, and over, and over again.

So, if you just go read The Revelation, without knowing your Scripture, you’ll likely become a nut job . . . a very dangerous nut job.

5. John and Paul give us our theological paradigm.

I believe that John the Revelator is also John the disciple (for several reasons), but it means the things John says plainly in his gospel and his epistles inform what John reveals in pictures in the Revelation.

And this is also true of Paul.

- In Acts 19 we read that Paul taught for two years in the Hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus, and “*all the residents of Asia*” came to hear him.
 - Asia is the Roman Province in which the seven churches are located and John arrived in Asia after Paul.
 - So, when John refers to people that get “sealed,” for instance, he would know that his listeners would think of Paul’s reference to people that get “sealed” in his letter to the Ephesians...

So back to our question:

- ✓ Who are these guys?
 1. Who are the 144,000?
 2. Who is the multitude that no one can number? And . . .
 3. What is this crazy seal—"the seal of the living God"?

Most Preterists say that it refers to Christian Jews who took the advice of Jesus in Matthew 24 and fled Jerusalem, taking refuge in the city of Pella.

In the *Left Behind Series*, they postulate that the seal is this cool cross tattoo that appears on the foreheads of the "Tribulation Saints." It actually has some precedent in Ezekiel chapter 9.⁶

But in Ephesians 1:13-14 Paul writes:

In [Jesus] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

- I think "the seal of the living God" is the Spirit of the living God, which fell on the disciples at Pentecost⁷ and people⁸ from every nation heard the disciples singing praises to God in their own language.

- The Seal is the Holy Spirit.

I pray in tongues, and I believe all the gifts of the Spirit are active today. But I *don't* believe that's how you are to know that you've been sealed or know that you have the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote: "*When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*" (*Abba* means "daddy.")

The seal is faith that God is your daddy, and you are His beloved child. It's knowing that He loves you and nothing can change that.

⁶ In Ezekiel 9, an angel marked Jewish believers on the forehead before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC.

⁷ [Pentecost is The Feast of Weeks, 7x7 days, and the Feast of First Fruits. Rev. 14:4—the 144,000 are "first fruits"]

⁸ [Jews and proselytes—newly, newly converted Jews]

In that day, a seal was often a signet ring pressed into wax bearing the family name. To be sealed is to know “*Salvation belongs to our God,*” and so no one can take it away from you; you belong to Him.

When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him⁹ in order that we may also be glorified with him.

-Romans 8:15-17

You see, the seal doesn’t protect you from tribulation; it guards your *heart in the midst* of tribulation.

- The seal guards a heart against the lies of the devil, delivered by demons in Rev. 9:4,
- And yet the saints are conquered by the beast in Rev. 13:7.
- But even if killed by the beast in 13:7, these saints rise with the Lamb in Rev. 14:2 . . . where the saints discover that they have learned the new song.

So who are the 144,000?

The Preterists say that they’re Christian Jews that escaped from Jerusalem before 70 AD.

Futurists say that they are ethnic Jews in the nation-state of Israel that convert to Christ after they realize that they’ve been left behind by Jesus the King of the Jews.

And yet, the 144,000 aren’t really Jews. *Technically*, they are only 1/12th Jews.

Jews are primarily descendants of Judah, which is only one of the 12 tribes.

And now John sees 12,000 from *each* tribe.

At one point, it became common to refer to all Israelites as Jews, but that was only after most of the tribes had been dispersed through the nations. At the time of the Revelation, most of the tribes had been lost for 750 years—except for those that had been left behind and had intermarried with foreigners, and were now called “Samaritans.”

Jesus—King of the Jews—treated them like brothers.

⁹ (*psympascho*, experience the passion with him, get tribulated with him)

In Ezekiel 37, God says, “*Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel... therefore prophecy to them saying, ‘I will raise you from your graves, put my spirit within you and bring you into the land.’*”

Even so, Israel is not just ethnic Israel. According to Rabbi Paul, in Romans 11, Gentile believers have been grafted into the family tree.

Susan and I are waiting to get our results back from DNA testing. I sincerely hope they show some Jewish ancestry, but whether they do or not, I am of the house of Israel and, even better, I’m a Jew.

- The blood of the King of the Jews flows in my veins.
- His Father is my Father—not metaphorically, but *actually*.
- And on top of all that, I’m married to the King of the Jews by covenant.

To be anti-Semitic is to be anti-me, anti-Jesus, and anti-Christian.

In Galatians, Paul refers to the Church as the “*Israel of God*.”

Some people in the US and Britain call that “replacement theology.” But think about it: isn’t replacing “the whole house of Israel” with Judah replacement theology? More than that, it’s exclusion theology.

I’m preaching full inclusion theology (ala Romans 11:11-36).

- I’m saying that Jesus is the King of the Jews.
- And Jesus is the Promised Seed of Abraham.
- And all who curse Him will be cursed, for they will have excluded themselves.
- And all who bless Him will be blessed, for they are sons of the Living God.
- And through Him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, for He Himself became a curse for those who cursed Him; He includes even those that exclude Him by being excluded and included on their behalf.

It’s astounding, but just as John says, “*He is the atoning sacrifice, not only for our sins, but the sins of the whole world*” (1 John 2:2). He really is the Savior of the *whole world*!

At the end of the Revelation, we’ll watch the kings of the earth who have been cursed and judged—cut by the Judgment of God—bring their glory into the New Jerusalem, through 12 gates that are always open.

They are 12 gates bearing the names of the 12 tribes of Israel . . . built on 12 foundations bearing the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb...

All of them are Christians who would be appalled if you suggested that they were *not* Jews; they didn't replace anybody, they fulfilled everybody.

So who are the 144,000 (144,000 is like 1,000x12x12, the perfect number) that are so carefully numbered—just as the tribes of Israel were carefully numbered before they conquered the Promised Land?

I suspect that they are what theologians have always called, *the church militant*, but not militant like folks in the *Left Behind* movies or the US Armed Forces.

- They are militant like those in Ephesians chapter six, who *battle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, the world rulers of this present darkness.*

- They are soldiers who take *the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, gird their loins with truth, shod their feet with the Gospel of Peace, take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and the shield of faith to quench the flaming darts of the evil one.*

- They are people sealed with the Spirit and clothed in Jesus. (Eph. 6:10-20)

- They are people called to declare the Good News that God in Christ Jesus has *broken down the dividing wall of hostility* (Eph. 2:14).

- For *this is the plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Him* (Eph. 1:10).

You may say, "Nice idea, but people like that get themselves crucified in places like that in the Middle East." Exactly... Rev. 14:4: The 144,000 follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They are "first fruits," and they have learned and do sing, "the new song."

Do you remember the chief sin of Israel, and then Judah, and then Judas?

Wasn't it the rejection of their calling, that in them, through their seed, all the nations of the earth would be blessed?

Israel didn't trust God for Salvation and then refused to extend Salvation to all nations.

It's true that Israel was commanded to slaughter people in towns like Jericho,

- But it's also true that these people were to be offered to God (as *cherem*),

- And it's also true, that God promised to bring all people to His holy mountain and make them all new—He's saving each one of us from ourselves, for each one of us is our own prison—walled city in which we suffer. ¹⁰
- Over and over the prophets criticize Israel and mourn the fact that Israel, Judah and Jerusalem trust political alliances, idols, and themselves . . . for salvation, but not God.
- They think they save themselves and so are offended at the thought that God would save any body else.
- So, when *God is Salvation, Ye-ho-shua, Yeshua—Jesus—King of the Jews*, rides into town, they shout "*hosanna*" for His miraculous gifts, and then, crucify Him for his love of Samaritans, Romans, and sinners.
- They trusted in their own strength, and then, hid behind immense stone walls.
- But the walls of Jerusalem did not save them; they imprisoned them in a Hell of their own making until they saw the King of glory coming on the clouds with power and great glory . . . the Lamb on the throne.
-

The sin of Jerusalem was to believe that salvation belonged to her.

The sin of the Jews, was to exclude the last and least of these, their brothers, which was to exclude Jesus, their King.

The sin of Israel was to think "we are salvation," and so, they rejected "God is Salvation," *yehoshua, yeshua, Jesus*.

Don't you suppose, Israel of God, that we are still tempted with the very same sin?

Maybe, even in the very same place with the very same walls?

Or even bigger walls, for we don't simply exclude the last and least of these, some of us even say that God will torture the last and least of these forever without end...

We say, "*God is salvation*, but He belongs to us, not them..."

We say, "Salvation belongs to us..."

¹⁰ It's also true that Israel was commanded to treat foreigners dwelling in their land as their own.

It's true that all the prophets prophesied a day, when, in the words of Isaiah, "All flesh" would come worship God in a New Jerusalem... and this would happen through the seed, the root and son of David, the slaughtered lamb, the messiah. But Israel rejected her calling to bring salvation, for she forgot that she had been saved.

To believe that you possess Salvation, and therefore dispense Salvation, is to be an imitation Christ—the antichrist.

The beast is the one that believes *“Salvation belongs to me,”* and will compete with others in order to possess it.

There’s so much to say, but I think we, the Church, are the 144,000.
We are the “New Jerusalem” coming down.

So, who is the multitude that no one can number?

They come from every nation, tribe, and people...

They are standing before the Lamb on the throne, singing and shouting,
“Salvation belongs to our God.”

Do you suppose they learned this song from the 144,000, who were blessed in order to be a blessing, to all the nations of the earth?

In Revelation 7:10-17 they sing,

“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

*“Therefore they are before the throne of God,
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.
They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;
the sun shall not strike them,
nor any scorching heat.
For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”*

This great multitude, that no one can number, sounds just like the folks in the New Jerusalem coming down, for God says of them, in Revelation 21:

“I will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death will be no more... behold I make all things new” (Rev. 21:4-5).

And that’s a quote right out of Isaiah 25, *“On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast... He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.”*

This is what we see coming down at the end of the Revelation,
And what John saw in chapters five and six, in the beginning. Remember?

He saw *“Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is within them worshipping the Lamb on the throne.”*

This is like, the Seventh Day when everything is good for “it is finished.”¹¹

This is the End; this is the Eternal Judgment of God . . .

but coming down in space and time.

Notice that they *are* before the throne of God serving Him . . . in His Sanctuary

-But they *will* hunger and thirst no more,
Which implies that they may hunger and thirst right now.

-And the Lamb *will* wipe away every tear from their eyes,
Which implies that they may be crying those tears right now.

Crying tears right now and yet they’re singing, *“Salvation belongs to our God.”*

. . . Who are these people?

Where have you ever seen something like this? . . .

¹¹ This is the end of the sixth seal and the edge of the seventh.

Just as Jesus cried, “it is finished at the end of the sixth day” and the beginning of the seventh—the Sabbath.

The Elder says, *“These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. **Therefore...**”*

“Therefore”—so we must ask what is the ‘therefore’ there for, ‘cause it must be there for something.

In other words, *The Great Tribulation*, whatever it is... has a purpose.

It is not an end in itself:

Death and Hades are not an end in themselves.

They are not the End. Jesus is the End.

Death and Hades serve the End, who is also the Life.

Jesus referred to a time of great tribulation—which *did* happen in that generation—but this is The Great Tribulation.

Jesus promised us, *“In this world you will have tribulation.”*

Acts 14:22, *“We must enter the Kingdom through many tribulations.”*

2nd Cor. 4, *“These tribulations”* (torture and imprisonment) Paul calls “slight.” *“These slight momentary tribulations, prepare us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all compare.”*

- If we avoid tribulation, maybe, we also avoid glory.
- Maybe it’s unwise to work so hard at avoiding tribulation.
- Maybe if we got raptured before the Great Tribulation . . . we would actually be, the ones left behind, or the ones that never started.

The elder says, *“These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation...,”* which means they were *in* the Great Tribulation.

And he doesn’t say, “these are those that *have come out* of the great tribulation”

Or “these are those that *will come out* of the great tribulation”

But “these are those that *are coming out* of the great tribulation.”

Maybe our journey through this wilderness world *is* The Great Tribulation. Life is hard.

And . . .

You may not have noticed that we will all die.

And we will each see Jesus coming on the clouds with glory.

And you will run in terror . . . unless you’ve learned a new song.

Instead of *“Salvation belongs to me,”*
“Salvation belongs to our God”

So, what’s so great about the Great Tribulation?

What’s so great about getting kicked out of the Garden of Eden?

What’s so great about a creation subjected to futility?

What’s so great about the Great Tribulation?

Well, it’s in great tribulation that we learn the new song:

“It goes like this the fourth, the fifth, the minor fall, the major lift.”

- It’s through the fall on the sixth day of creation, that we learn the glory of the 7th day when everything is good because of the Logos sung into the chaos.

- It’s in tribulation that we come to believe, *“Salvation belongs to our God.”*

And now, I don’t mean salvation (which means deliverance or help) in a small way because it’s not a small world. I mean it in a very big way. You know this:

- There are no good stories, that don’t include tribulation.
- And there are no good people, gracious people, grateful people, humble and beautiful people . . . that have not been through great tribulation.
- All the best sermons . . . were preached out of great pain.
- All the best paintings . . . were born out of great grief.
- All the best songs . . . were written by slaves and servants who experienced tremendous suffering.

Faith, Hope, and Love grow in doubt, despair, and loneliness.

Life is born out of great tribulation—Jesus called the tribulation “birth pains.”

In order to worship the Savior, you must believe that you have been saved through great tribulation.

What’s so great about the Great Tribulation?

It destroys the lie that, *“Salvation belongs to you.”*

And it reveals the Truth: *“Salvation belongs to God.”*

The lie is a prison in which you’re trapped—like the pirate who tried to capture the Moon; it’s your ego. The Truth destroys the prison—just as the Moon captured the pirate, set him free, and He began to dance. He captured the Light, and the Light captured him, and set him free.

To sing or to dance, you must surrender your judgment to a greater Judgment. You must lose control, and then find yourself controlled by the logic of the song—the Logos that fills the atmosphere all around you. You must lose your life, and then, find it—singing and dancing. You must lose your self—such that your deeds are done by the Logic of the Song.

What's so great about the Great Tribulation?

It allows you to see the Judgment of God, surrender to the Judgment of God, and then begin to sing and dance along...

The Judgment of God is the Logos of Love.

And now I must mention my 6th and 7th principles of Interpretation:

6. Any interpretation of the Revelation, which leads you to NOT do, something that Jesus has clearly commanded you to do, is the wrong interpretation.

So, if you think the Revelation is leading you to NOT love your enemies, your interpretation is wrong.

7. It's the Revelation of Jesus . . .

And you already know who He is.

He doesn't change. He is not Love and the opposite of Love. He is sacrificial Love.

And His name means, "*God is Salvation.*"

Well, John sees the True Church—the 144,000—and they begin to morph into a multitude that no man can number, all singing, "*Salvation belongs to our God.*"

And how does this happen? It appears to be miraculous.

It *doesn't happen* through legislation, armies, global politics or any of the weapons of the principalities and powers of this present age.

It *happens* through people singing a new song in the midst of great tribulation.

- You might remember that in several places, Israel was commanded to place the choir in front of the army...
- It was on the seventh time around, on the seventh day, at the blast of seven trumpets as Israel, led by Joshua, worshipped God before the throne . . . that the walls of Jericho came tumbling down.
- Jesus (Joshua) sang Psalm 22 in the midst of great tribulation, upon the cross at the edge of the Seventh Day, just outside Jerusalem . . . and the walls are still tumbling down.
- Paul and Silas sang in the Philippian jail, the earth shook, and the doors flew open, and they conquered Europe with the Good News—the Gospel of Salvation.
- It's like the Christmas truce in WWI when the German and English soldiers started singing Christmas carols in their trenches, but soon joined in no-man's land to celebrate the birth of the Messiah.
- It's like all those stories from the persecuted church, where believers worship though beaten and chained, they worship Jesus for who He is, though all the gifts have been

taken away they still sing, “Salvation belongs to our God.” That’s who He is. God is Salvation, and the Church in those types of places grows like wildfire.

- It’s like what I witnessed in Romania when Christians joined hands around the house of a persecuted pastor, Laszlo Tokes. They started singing Christmas carols and would not stop. Though Christmas was illegal and the bodies of thousands were piling up in the street, having been gunned down for singing Christmas carols, they didn’t stop, and on Christmas Day Romania was free.
- It’s like you . . . some of you are facing immense tribulation. I can’t even begin to imagine, and yet you come here and sing, “*Salvation belongs to our God.*”
 - You think your life is inconsequential, but I’m telling you that God is using you to change the world—*not* the Democrats, *not* the Republicans, *not* the Israeli government or the US military, BUT YOU—those that sing the song in the tribulation. Walls crumble, maybe not in your lifetime, maybe you won’t see it; I mean, the seven churches didn’t see it, and yet we’re reading about them today. Walls crumble and angels long to look into your salvation. They long to look at what you’re singing about.
- I’m a pastor, who wanted to do something else, but I watched my dad sing to Jesus in the midst of great tribulation, and I couldn’t help but sing along.

- Am I the Antichrist? Well, I think that maybe my ego is the antichrist.

- John writes that the spirit of the antichrist is already in the world.

- Actually, Revelation 13:8 says, “All who dwell on the earth get marked by the beast.”

- Antichrist means “imitation Christ,” and my ego believes that salvation belongs to me—that’s why I compete with others, behave like a beast, and have a hard time singing and dancing to any tune other than my own.

But I thank God for The Omen: it’s killing the antichrist and setting me free.

Phil. 1:27-28 “*...Stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear omen to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.*”

When you sing, “*Salvation belongs to our God,*” in the midst of great tribulation, you become an omen from God that destroys the antichrist and exhibits Jesus Christ to a watching world.

I know this has been a rather technical sermon, I may have lost you at points, and now you’re wondering what is Peter trying to say . . .

I’m saying,

This is the Omen that destroys the Antichrist and sets each one of us free:

Clip from *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*

[Image of the Whos holding hands and singing]

[The Whos are singing.]

This sound wasn't sad!

Why, this sound sounded glad!

Every Who down in Whoville, the tall and the small,
Was singing without any presents at all!

He hadn't stopped Christmas from coming! It came!
Somehow or other, it came just the same!

[Image of the Grinch with a huge grin on his face
And what happened then? Well, in Whoville they say
That the Grinch's small heart grew three sizes that day!

And then the true meaning of Christmas came through,
And the Grinch found the strength of ten Grinches, plus two!

Continued on the next page...

[Image of the Grinch on his sled ready to return all the gifts and decorations he'd stolen.]

With a smile to his soul, he descended Mount Crumpet

Cheerily blowing "Who! Who!" on his trumpet.

He roared into Whoville. He brought back their toys.

He brought back their floss to the Who girls and boys.

[Image of Grinch dispersing gifts to the Whos]

He brought back their snuff and their trinkets and fuzzles,

Brought back their pantookas, their dafflers and wuzzles.

He brought everything back, all the food for the feast!

And he, he himself, the Grinch carved the roast beast!

The Grinch sees people holding hands and singing around the Light that has come into the world . . . *even though* all the gifts have been taken away. It breaks down the walls of his heart (it blows it up from the inside), he joins the party, and he carves the roast Beast with a knife.

In chapter 12, we'll see Christmas. Then in chapter 17, we'll begin to watch the Lamb (and those with Him) conquer the Beast with the Judgment of God. It cuts like a knife. This is the Judgment of God.

Communion

On the night Jesus was betrayed he took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you; take and eat; and do this in remembrance of me.” And in the same manner, He took the cup saying, “This is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you. And do it in remembrance of me.”

This is the Judgment of God. This is the Light that has come into the world. This is the Judgment of God that has descended into great tribulation and is now enthroned in our midst.

Who are those that are washed in the blood of the Lamb and cry out, “Salvation belongs to our God”? They are the Omen.

In Jesus’ name, believe the Gospel and live. Amen.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank you that from the foundation of the world you paid it all. And you exhibited it on a tree two thousand years ago, for all to see that you paid it all. Through your Spirit, during worship, you whisper into our hearts, “I paid it all. I’ve got it. Believe me.” Lord God we sing a song in the midst of great tribulation. And we thank you that nothing is stronger than the song because the song is a manifestation of the Word. And the Word is a Word that comes from the throne: “God is Salvation”—Jesus. We worship you, Lord, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Benediction

Now, because we are an institution and I am a pastor, it’s tempting for me to say, “Do the stuff I told you. Go to the class; join us and you probably won’t have any tribulation. But that’s a lie. Jesus said, *“In this world you will have tribulation BUT be of good cheer, I have overcome (have conquered—nenikeka in Gree) the world.”* That’s why you can sing.

The evil one whispers in your ear: “He doesn’t love you. He hasn’t overcome the world.” But Jesus is calling you to sing. Even if you don’t believe Him, you will see He has conquered; He has overcome. In His name, believe the Gospel. Amen.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio or video version of the sermon on this website and don’t be shy about informing us of
