

Why God Sends the Great Tribulation

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To date, more than two million people have received a book or a booklet from us, and now with internet connectivity, the number is swelling faster than ever. Naturally, the volume of mail we receive is large and occasionally, we receive letters from people who vigorously disagree with my end-time views.

One controversial topic that always generates comments from both sides of the issue is the doctrine of a pre-trib / mid-trib (tribulation) rapture of the saints.

A large number of Christians honestly believe in a pre-trib / mid trib rapture and much to their dismay, I maintain that this doctrine cannot be supported by the Bible. (See *Day Star*, [February 1999 issue](#) to review my views on the pre-trib / mid-trib rapture issue).

Since Christians are divided on many subjects in the Bible, I thought it would be good to address a subject that many agree upon! Christians generally believe that God has revealed that there will be a Great Tribulation at the end of the world, but their views vary regarding its purpose.

This study will be based on issues surrounding three questions. After making some general statements about God's ways and His universal laws, I will outline and attempt to answer the questions.

God Can be Trusted

The Bible teaches that a Great Tribulation is coming on Earth before Jesus physically appears. (Matt 24:21-29; Dan 11:36; 12:1; Rev 3:10; 8:2-9:21; 19:11-21) Many people have never considered that the Great Tribulation is an act of God rather than a man-made set of problems like Y2K or World War II. (Col 3:5,6; Rev 14:9,10; 15:1)

The Bible teaches that God is righteous, perfect, upright and faithful in everything. (Deut 32:4) Even more, the Father loves man as much as He loves Jesus. (John 3:16) Further, God is not willing that any person miss out on the offer of eternal life. (2 Pet 3:9)

Knowing this information, we can safely conclude that God has a righteous purpose for the Great Tribulation since He uses the highest intelligence in His planning. Now, let's consider a few facts about the ways of mankind.

Man Made Religion Cannot be Trusted

Have you ever noticed how most religions of the world differ widely, but share certain characteristics? Although the world consists of many languages, religions, governments and cultures, the ways of humanity are strikingly similar. It should be no surprise that a number of

"natural" laws govern religions of the world. I have found five "natural" laws that affect human beings:

Law #1: Religion usually limits a person to one view or perspective of God and His will. For this reason, 95% of the world's population remain in the same religious system from birth and most will defend their religion to their death. Moslems tend to stay Moslems, Jews tend to stay Jews, Catholics tend to stay Catholic, Mormons tend to stay Mormon, etc.

Why does this phenomenon exist among all mankind? Usually, ideas about God are developed and become part of a person's conscience at an early age. When an original view of God is challenged, people often feel threatened and become hostile.

Law #2: Religion does not change fast. Christians were expelled from Judaism because Jewish leaders would not change. Protestants were expelled from the Roman Catholic church because Roman leaders would not change. Recently, the Worldwide Church of God (Armstrong) literally disintegrated when leaders changed key doctrines.

From a historical perspective, when a religious body does make changes, it usually changes in favor of fewer constraints on behavior. The exception to this is when a religion tries to establish more control over its members, which results in greater constraints upon behavior. This separates its devoted members from those who are indifferent or non-supportive.

Law #3: Each religion embraces a body of knowledge that is far larger than laymen care to understand. For this reason, few laymen thoroughly investigate the origin or teachings of their beliefs. They usually submit (more or less) to the views of their religious authorities unless or until there is a controversy.

The confidence and allegiance laymen place in their religious authorities is so great that usually, the laymen will not consider a contradicting point of view, no matter how logical or well presented it may be. Religious controversies are often more about social behavior than theology.

One way of maintaining conformity of prevailing religious views is through church ownership of publishing companies that print "approved" material. Of course, this type of indoctrination keeps the views of the laity limited to the confines of that particular religion.

Law #4: Every religion is self-exalting. Each religion concludes it has *the* truth about God and all other religions have less truth or no truth. No religious system on Earth will concede that another church has greater truth about God than itself.

Law #5: Everyone born on Earth inherits three elements of religion. Just as we inherit a carnal nature from our parents, we also inherit a basic need for religion. Jesus created man this way, so we should not be surprised that religion flourishes on every continent and in every culture. The basic elements of religion are:

1. admiration of someone or something greater than self

2. submission to someone or something greater than self
3. association with others who share similar adoration

Synthesis

Synthesizing all the information presented so far, we can conclude four things about why God sends a tribulation:

1. - God understands the religious grid-lock on Earth and why truth cannot move forward. Simply put, one man cannot prove that his religion is superior over another. (Why do you think there are so many religions on Earth?) Religious diversity prevents six billion people from considering God's truth because no one religion will concede that another religion has greater truth about God. So, God will send a Great Tribulation to show the human race that no religious system can be trusted and that none of them accurately or perfectly represent Him. God is going to level the playing field by asking each of us not to trust a religious system, but rather to put our faith in Him. As the confidence in each religious system collapses, it will be painful. People will reel with bewilderment, but this painful process is necessary! It will enable every person to consider and intelligently make a decision for or against the everlasting gospel that God's servants, the 144,000 proclaim. (Matt 24:14; Rev 14:6)

2. - With deepest compassion and tender regard for humankind, God has thoughtfully constructed an Earth shattering event that will yield the highest number of "saved" souls in the end. God intends to test our faith in Him by using the Great Tribulation to separate the sheep from the goats within every religious body. During the Great Tribulation, the 144,000 will proclaim God's truth. It will cut like a two-edged sword, separating people who love God from people who do not. As the world's religious systems are shown to be defective, those people who are honest in heart will gladly receive God's truth, although it will be contrary to what they thought was true all their lives! Consider the powerful significance of this transition! God will lead all "truth loving" people into greater truth and it will separate non-truth loving people from truth loving people. The primary purpose of the Great Tribulation is to save each person who will put their faith in God. Every infrastructure will collapse, including religion. People who do not love God with all their heart, mind and soul will be unable to withstand the persecution that will be inflicted upon those who love truth. Consequently, the just shall live by faith and the unjust will rebel.

3. - God has predetermined that the last generation on Earth will be tested in a way that is consistent with previous generations. Since salvation has always come through faith, why not have our faith tested before the seal of God is granted? Over and over, the Bible record reveals that there have been life and death tests for God's people. (See Rev 13:10; 14:12, Heb 11, Dan 3 and 6 for a few examples.) Why should the last generation of Christians escape a life and death test over faith, when previous generations have been tested in this extremity?

It is true that wholesale persecution of God's people has declined since the Dark Ages came to an end in 1798. (Dan 7:25) However, according to Bible prophecy this reprieve is about to end. (Rev 13:3) Revelation predicts that the saints are about to be persecuted again and a crisis

government (the beast of Revelation 13:1) will war against *the saints* for 42 months. (See Rev 13:1-10) Like it or not, persecution has a way of purifying our faith in God. Persecution separates people of faith from people of presumption – pure gold from the dross. (Rev 3:18)

4. - When the Great Tribulation begins, God knows He will be grossly misunderstood. However, a day is coming when everyone will understand why the Great Tribulation was a marvelous necessity. It will allow people from all walks of life and diverse religions to either submit to God's will or rebel. As a result, a numberless multitude of redeemed people will sing praises to God throughout eternity for His generous ways and incomprehensible love. (Rev 7:9-17) An even larger number (the wicked) will confess at the end of the 1,000 years that God was fair and righteous in all that He has done. (Isa 45:23,24) Please understand that obeying God's truth is not the same thing as defending your religion. History proves that many have defended their religion to their death and knew nothing about God or His truth. (John 16:1-4)

Three Questions Answered

The first question is: "Why should we [Christians] have to go through the Great Tribulation? Isn't the Great Tribulation for the conversion and salvation of non-Christians?" The answer is in the question. Christians are in the world for two purposes – to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and to demonstrate the love of God.

Christians will go through the Great Tribulation because the world needs to see what love and faith in Jesus Christ is all about! No sermon has the power of seeing faith and love in action! Millions of non-Christians will be touched by what they see and respond by accepting the gospel because of the testimony and faith of Christians. The blood of Christian martyrs has always proven to be fertilizer for the gospel.

The second question is: "Why me, Lord? Why should I have to endure the suffering that accompanies the Great Tribulation, when other generations have not had to face such a terrible ordeal?" The answer is simple: God's grace is sufficient for each situation and God's purpose for each generation is unique.

Each generation has faced its wars and natural calamities, but none like the persecution during the Dark Ages or the coming Great Tribulation. But remember, God's grace and His presence are commensurate with man's extremity. We should not grumble about our upcoming glorious assignment in Earth's history when God has chosen us to reveal His marvelous grace to a dying world.

Yes, our human nature is weak and shrinks from the task that is coming, but by faith, we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ. (Rom 8:37)

The last question is: "Why does God require a Great Tribulation in the first place? Why not end the world in one day?" God sends the Great Tribulation because He knows it is the best way to do the most good. In the end, God will be justified. He is not concerned about death because He knows the resurrection is coming!

If God allowed His very own Son to die for the salvation of many, why should we think He will not allow us to die for the salvation of another person? The most important thing on Earth is not a Christian's suffering, but rather the salvation of a soul. Do not forget! God will send judgments upon the wicked for their behavior. This is the purpose of the seven last plagues and I believe they will last for approximately 75 days. More importantly, however, is the larger purpose of the Great Tribulation which lasts 1,260 days.

During this time frame, the religions of the world will collapse and the offer of salvation (the gospel) will be powerfully preached throughout the world. Although this process takes time, the Bible says the harvest will be so great it will be numberless! (Rev 7:14) If it takes a Great Tribulation to produce that kind of harvest, then to God be the glory!