“Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen” - The Tribulation

**Introduction:** Trials and tribulation. Life seems to be full of them. Much of the trouble we get into is due to our own actions. Either we didn’t listen, or we weren’t willing to submit to someone else’s authority.

One web site asked its readers to tell about the worst trouble they ever got into as a kid. Here are some of the responses:

I was maybe 8.  My dad worked at a bank in San Mateo, [California], and he was making some photocopies for me in his office.  He came home and forgot them.  We went back after dinner to retrieve my homework.  I just *had* to go play in the vault!  But there was a slight problem ... the bank was closed, and the vault locked. I KNOW!!  I will turn this dial ... say the magic words ..."OPEN SESAME!", and just like magic, the door will open!  Nope ...  all that happened was the alarm went off.  My dad was really mad!  I had to explain my actions to the SMPD that night and to my dad's boss the next day. I was grounded for a month ... no bike riding, TV, or anything! – Michael M.

Umm, I convinced my brother to eat crayons.  It was this total experiment to see if he would poo in different colors.  He was...two, I think. I got in trouble a lot for treating my brother like a biology experiment. I left him in a snowdrift too.  Got in trouble and had to go find him - it was a good thing he had a blue snowsuit on.  HE thought it was funny. – Suzanne B.

When I was six, I accidentally burned down the chicken coup in our backyard, which dad had converted into an auto parts cleaning station. [Somehow] I thought it made sense to walk into the coop with a lit match to see where I was going. – Hector M.[[1]](#endnote-1)

Another website asked its readers for the most ridiculous reason they got in trouble at school.

In the third grade, I was asked what I was doing on the weekend. I told my teacher I was “going to the Effing family reunion on the Effing farm to see my Effing cousins.” I was sent to the principal's office and had to have my parents explain it. “Effing” is my grandmother's maiden name and now I know why my parents always laughed and said their name so much when we spoke of them. – submitted by d49449b9c3[[2]](#endnote-2)

We laugh now about the trouble we got into as kids. It seems so tame compared to the trouble we get ourselves into with our spouses, our kids, and the bank. That trouble will seem infinitesimal compared to the trouble that will come on the whole world during the Tribulation.

The seven-year period known as the Tribulation is the subject of our examination today. Tribulation is not a creative title, but it is an appropriate one. The word means “trouble.” Jesus said there will be more trouble during this time than there has ever been on earth (Matt. 24:21). It is a mixture of the trouble humanity has brought on itself – simply the natural consequences of its actions – and the trouble God brings on earth and its inhabitants because of their rebellion.

The main source of information about the Tribulation is the last book in the Bible – the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Much of what Revelation presents can be confusing and frightening. My purpose here is not to scare you but to educate you about the trouble Jesus says is coming.

If you’re a Christian, you don’t need to be scared of this trouble. Jesus is greater than any trouble you may face (John 16:33), and He will be taking you home before this trouble (Tribulation) begins (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Those who are not Christians don’t have either of these promises.

Here’s the plan. We’re going to quickly discuss what the book of Revelation takes fifteen chapters to cover (Rev. 4-19). Then we will examine the reasons why God sends this tribulation.

Some of you aren’t Christians. You need to know what is in your future so that you can make a more intelligent decision. If you still choose to reject Christ, that’s your choice. But you will not be able to claim ignorance as your excuse.

Others of you know and love some people who aren’t Christians. Once you hear what the Tribulation will be like, my prayer is you will come to this altar in thankfulness for God’s rescue and in repentance asking God to forgive you for not working to rescue others. My prayer then is you will get up from the altar and get on your phone or in your car and tell them about the love of Jesus.

Let’s get started.

1. **“We’re in trouble now!” – The timing of the Tribulation**

The Tribulation begins after the Rapture but not necessarily immediately after. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 4, the Antichrist will be revealed before the Rapture happens. The world may not recognize him as the Antichrist, but he will be a known leader. It will take him some time to bring order out of the chaos left by the Rapture and establish himself as *the* leader.

Part of that process will involve the signing of a peace treaty in which the Antichrist promises to protect Israel from all outside aggression (Dan. 9:27). Israel will disarm and leave their protection in the Antichrist’s hands (Ezek. 38:11). The trust Israel gives to the Antichrist will prove misplaced and disastrous for them. The signing ceremony will be day one of the Tribulation. The Tribulation will last for seven years beyond that day.

The Book of Daniel also provides some material necessary for our understanding of the Tribulation and its timing. You are probably familiar with some of the great stories from this book – Daniel in the lion’s den, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace. You can find the stories of Daniel’s life in the first six chapters of his book. The last six chapters are the record of visions and messages God gave Daniel about the future.

One of these visions is the message of the “70 weeks.” The word “week” which would normally refer to a 7-day period is used here to refer to a 7-year period. There were “69 weeks” – or 483 years (69 x 7) – between the command for the re-building of the temple Nebuchadnezzar destroyed and the arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The last week – the “70th week” is the 7-year Tribulation. The amount of time in between the end of the 69th week and the beginning of the 70th week is known as the Church age.

The seven-year time-frame for the Tribulation will fulfill Daniel’s prophecy. It will also insure that life will still exist at the Tribulation’s end. Jesus said if the Tribulation lasted any longer than seven years, all human life on earth would die (Matt. 24:22).

The Tribulation has two parts, each of which is 3½ years long. When you examine Revelation, you will read about “42 months” (Rev. 11:2; 13:5) and “1260 days” (Rev. 11:3). If you pull out a calculator and divide 42 by 12 – the number of months in a year, you will discover that 42 months equal 3 ½ years. The same is true for 1260 days once you realize that Daniel was using a Jewish calendar in which every month had 30 days. The reason the Tribulation is divided in two is that the second half of the tribulation will be dramatically worse than the first half. The first half is known as “the beginning of sorrows,” and the second half is known as “the Great Tribulation.” Life will be difficult throughout the Tribulation, but the second half will experience the full wrath of Almighty God poured out on evil and on the troublemakers who bring it.

1. **“Here comes trouble!” – The bad guys in the Tribulation**

Every neighborhood, every school, and every office has them – troublemakers. You know when you see them coming that trouble is not far behind. Sometimes they are easy to identify. They have the look. Other times, they are more subtle. You don’t know you’re in trouble until after you have given them your trust.

The world has never known the level of trouble the Tribulation’s troublemakers will bring. Just as there are three personalities who make one good God, so there will be three personalities during the Tribulation who are trouble personified. There is a Holy Trinity and an unholy trinity. Satan’s biggest weapon has always been to counterfeit and pervert what God does and who He is, and then use that perversion to deceive God’s people into accepting the counterfeit. Let me introduce you to the trouble-makers.

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| **The real thing**  **(*Holy Trinity*)** | **The counterfeit**  ***(unholy trinity)*** |
| God the Father | Satan (the “Dragon”) |
| God the Son | Antichrist (first “Beast”) – does whatever his father tells him to |
| God the Holy Spirit | False Prophet (“Second Beast”) – focuses attention on the 1st Beast |

1. Bad guy #1 – the Dragon

The first person in the unholy trinity is Satan. John sees him as a “dragon” (Rev. 12:3). Satan does not actually look like a dragon, but the image of dragon communicates the nature of Satan – dangerous, destructive, malicious – and an appropriate response – RUN! He will be directing the show from behind the scenes. Since the Church will be gone (taken out at the Rapture), Satan will have fewer obstacles to accomplishing his objectives than at any other time in history. He is the power source for all the Antichrist will do (Rev. 13:2). Ever since God cast him out of heaven, Satan has been working to create trouble for God and His people. He started with Adam and Eve, he attempted his deception with Jesus, and he will continue his work through the Tribulation.

1. Bad guy #2 – the Beast

The Bible uses multiple titles to describe the second person of the unholy trinity. The most popular one today is “Antichrist” (1 John 2:18). Though the term is used only four times in the Bible, all of which are in John’s epistles, it accurately describes his purpose. The prefix “anti” has two possible meanings. It is used to mean “against.” The Anti-Christ will definitely be against Jesus and everything that Jesus stands for. He won’t be fighting Jesus though just to defeat Jesus but to gain what Jesus wants – people, and what He deserves – worship. That’s where the other meaning of “anti” comes in.

“Anti” means “in the place of” or “instead of.” He will be a counterfeit or false Messiah. An impostor. The goal of an impostor is to get people to treat him as they would the real thing. He will come, promising peace and everything else people were expecting from the real Messiah. He will work to hurt Jesus Christ by convincing people to give him the adoration and worship they refused to give Jesus, the true Messiah (John 1:11).

Other terms add to our understanding of this leader. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, he is referred to as the “man of lawlessness” and the “son of destruction.” The first term speaks of his habitual sin and his complete, consistent disregard for the laws of God. The second term tells us he brings destruction, and his end is destruction. Any who are part of his team will share in his fate. Incidentally, the only other person to share this description is Judas Iscariot (John 17:12). The prophet Daniel calls him the “Prince who is to come” (Dan. 9:27) meaning he will be a ruler under someone else’s ultimate power.

By far, the most popular term (36 times), and the only one that John the Apostle uses for him in Revelation is “beast” (Rev. 11:7; 13:1-2). He’s an animal. That doesn’t mean he is unintelligent. I’ve known some intelligent animals. It means his instincts and his senses will rule him. It means that if you benefit him, he will tolerate you. But as soon as you lose your value, you become his prey. He quickly turns on those who trust him. He will reveal his true nature halfway through the Tribulation when he declares war on Israel and any who would stand in his way.

He will become the supreme world leader. The most effective way to gain control over people and the governments that rule them is through the control of finances. He accomplishes this control through the requirement that all people on the planet receive an identifying mark on their forehead or right hand. This mark could be a world-wide identification number or a computer chip embedded underneath the skin.

The mark allows people to buy, sell, and perform other types of business. Without the mark, people will be labeled a traitor and treated accordingly. Former friends will shun you, employers will not hire you, and businesses will refuse your method of payment. You won’t be able to pay rent, buy gas, provide groceries for your family, or get needed medicine at the hospital. You might have a large amount of money in your bank account, but you won’t have access to it.

The mark signifies two things – the Beast owns you, and you worship the Beast (Rev. 13:16-18). Taking the mark will give you access to resources, but it will shut you off from salvation (Rev. 14:9-11).

It’s not hard to imagine a father who can’t provide what his sick or hungry child needs because he has refused the mark. He wrestles internally torturing himself over his decision. His wife begs him to take the mark. She just can’t bear to see her child suffer. It is in this context that the words of Rev. 14:12 become applicable:

*“Let this encourage God’s holy people to endure persecution patiently and remain firm to the end, obeying His commands and trusting in Jesus”* (NLT).

As the Antichrist works to gain power, there will be others who fight that shift in power. People do that whenever the control of money is involved. They might not be fighting him for religious reasons, but they will for political or financial reasons. This struggle for power leads to either an assassination attempt on the Beast or the attempted destruction of one of his support structures. Though the attempt appears at first to be successful (“as if it had been slain”), the Antichrist suddenly reappears before a hastily called news conference. It may even be that he fakes his death to gain a greater following. He’s like the Phoenix rising from the ashes, or, more accurately, the savior rising from the grave. By so doing, he counterfeits the resurrection of the true Messiah.

The Antichrist’s successful defeat of an enemy’s attack has two results. One, people begin to worship him freely (Rev. 13:4, 12, 15). Why wouldn’t they? He is a political success. By this point, he will have rescued the earth from the Rapture crisis and brought unity to the planet in the process. This is something that no other individual or organization has been able to do. He is also a spiritual success, having beaten death itself. At first, the worship will resemble the hero adulation we give today. But then something will begin to happen inside of him.

The Antichrist will begin to “believe his own press” and receive – even require worship as a god from his followers. Halfway through the Tribulation, he will commit the “Abomination of Desolation” (Matt. 24:15). This means he will set up an image of himself (an idol) in the temple at Jerusalem and demand that all people – including the Jews – worship him by worshipping the image (2 Thess. 2:4). The Jews and others will refuse the requirement of worship. So the Antichrist will break his treaty of protection with Israel and become their attacker (Rev. 13:7). War against Israel is the second result of the Antichrist’s victory over his would-be assassins.

1. Bad guy #3 – another Beast

The third person in the unholy trinity is referred to simply as “another beast” (Rev. 13:11). “In this corner, we have the *BEAST!*” [Wild applause and pandemonium] “And in this corner, we have…another beast.” [weak applause, mild boredom] Admittedly, “another beast” is not a very creative or intimidating title. It’s anti-climatic. It gets worse.

The image John the Apostle sees is a two-horned lamb. How would you respond if a two-horned lamb was threatening to attack you? Not exactly alarming. Remember that he is the counter-point to the Holy Spirit in the true Trinity. Neither of them receives much attention or much respect, but they both have great power. The reason why the Bible pictures him as a lamb is because people won’t fear him. You’ve heard of a wolf in sheep’s clothing (Matt. 7:15). He is a dragon in lamb’s clothing.

Eventually, he will show his true nature through his words first and then his actions (Matt. 7:16). He looks meek, but he speaks with the voice of the dragon. It is his voice that causes the most concern. Later in the book of Revelation, he is identified as the False Prophet (Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10).

Jesus warned that false prophets would come in the last days. The false prophet of Revelation will be the last of a long line. He is the spokesman – the front man, the PR guy – for the Antichrist, and his job is to direct people to listen to and eventually worship the Antichrist.

He will be quite the showman doing miracles and even calling down fire from the skies (Rev. 13:13-14), something the prophets of Baal were not able to do in their encounter with Elijah (1 Kings 18). Eventually, he will direct men to worship the Antichrist and set up an image of him (Rev. 13:12, 14). He brings the Antichrist’s image to life possibly through robotics or demon-possession (Rev. 13:15). With the aid of his miraculous powers and the crazed Antichrist groupies, he causes the death of those who refuse to follow the beast (Rev. 13:15). Many Jews will flee to escape the penalty of death (Matt. 24:15-26). With the threat of horrific trouble, he will require people to get the mark of the beast (Rev. 13:16-17). After the Battle of Armageddon, Jesus casts him and the Antichrist into the Lake of Fire where these troublemakers will experience unparalleled trouble forever (Rev. 19:20).

1. **“Looking for trouble” – The good guys during the Tribulation**

Whenever you are going through trouble, it is natural to respond by looking for the cause of your trouble and by throwing blame on anyone but you. The cause/source of trouble all depends on your perspective. Both the teacher and the student throw blame on one another for the trouble the student is experiencing. Spouses do the same. Ahab, the idolatrous king of Israel, accused Elijah, the prophet of God, of being the source of Israel’s trouble. Elijah correctly blamed Ahab because of Ahab’s sin (1 Kings 18:16-18).

As the unholy trinity works to create their version of the perfect world – a world without God, three different groups create trouble in paradise. They continue to point people to the *real* Christ. You can imagine how the unholy trinity will feel about the members of these groups. They will blame all the trouble the world is experiencing on God’s messengers, calling them “evil,” instead of taking the blame for themselves.

Isaiah prophesied of a time when people will call evil good and good evil (Isaiah 5:20). Your perception of evil and good, then and now depend on whether or not you receive personal benefit. God doesn’t think the way we think. Good and evil are fixed points for Him. They are not relative to the time, the person, or the situation. It doesn’t matter how the unholy trinity feels about the following groups. God identifies them as good.

1. The prophets – two witnesses (Rev. 11:2-14)

Two unnamed individuals will prophesy during the first half of the Tribulation. They will warn of what’s coming in an attempt to thwart the deception of the Antichrist and false prophet. They work to turn people to God. They will have virtually unlimited destructive power. Fire comes from their mouths and devours those who try to silence them. They can stop the rain and bring plagues whenever and however they want to. These plagues will be in addition to the four sets of judgments revealed in Revelation.

Because of the nature of their ministry and the powers they possess, some have identified these two witnesses as reanimated Moses, Enoch and/or Elijah. That could be, but it is more likely that they are individuals who got saved soon after the Rapture. The similarities their powers and mission have with past personalities is simply because God empowers them just as He did their predecessors.

They will be a nuisance for the Antichrist and the rebellious people of the time much like a whistleblower, or ethics officer can be a nuisance for a corporation. The Antichrist’s office will be in Jerusalem, and that is where the witnesses will prophesy. A corporation can deal with nuisances by ignoring or dismissing them. During the first half of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will repeatedly try to “dismiss” – read “kill” – the witnesses. He will be unable to do so because they enjoy God’s protection.

The witnesses are finally killed by the Beast in Jerusalem when their mission is complete. The Beast will rejoice over his victory and refuse burial to their bodies so that he can gloat over their death. People will send gifts to one another in celebration of their death. We’ve already seen a counterfeit Easter with the “resurrection” of the Antichrist. Now we have a counterfeit Christmas. Three and a half days later, as news cameras from every station in the world are recording, God raises them back to life and calls them directly up to Heaven. A devastating earthquake killing 7000 people and destroying one-tenth of Jerusalem happens immediately afterward.

1. The missionaries – 144,000 Jews (Rev. 7:1-8; 14:1-5)

The second group of good guys will compose one of the largest missionary forces there has ever been. Amazingly, this group will be made up of 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. These Jews will finally recognize Jesus as the Messiah and spread His message all over the world. We’ll talk more about this in a minute, but one of the purposes of the Tribulation is to win the Jewish people to Jesus. These missionaries are the first portion of the Jewish harvest. And something special happens with them.

To increase the overall harvest, God “seals” them. What does sealing do for something? It protects it. God seals these Jews to protect them during the Tribulation. From what? The attacks of the Antichrist, general danger and disease, and the harm caused by the judgments of God. It’s possible that they can’t even die. Why? Because they’ve got a mission, and God doesn’t want anything to get in the way of them being able to fulfill that mission.

1. The overcomers – Christians (Rev. 6:9-11; Rev. 7:9-17)

The mission of the 144,000 Jews is successful – hugely successful. There will be a vast host of people that come to faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. I tend to think that these Christians will be different from your average western Christian. They will be more like the Christians in China or Muslim countries today. They have no illusions about what their relationship will cost them. They’re not looking for comfort. People who realize they are in a battle know better.

They’re warriors, fighting for the King, willing to die to rescue others from the fate for which they are destined. They don’t fight with guns. They fight with two weapons – the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony (Rev. 12:11). These are weapons that the enemy cannot understand or defend against. And they are *powerful*! With them, the Christians *cannot* be defeated. They can be killed, but *not* defeated. The enemy will be busy – struggling against these three sets of defenders and also dealing with the trouble that God brings in the form of four sets of judgments.

1. **“More trouble than it’s worth” – The judgments of the Tribulation**

The Tribulation will not be the first time God has sent catastrophic trouble to planet earth to judge it. Not far from earth’s beginning, God looked at the world He made and the inhabitants He placed there and felt an overwhelming sense of regret (Gen. 6:7). He decided that humanity was not worth the trouble. Sometimes it’s more efficient to demolish the current environment and begin fresh. The judgment was not painless, but it was quick.

Why does God take seven years to pour out His judgment this time? We’ll deal with that in a minute. But first, let’s take a quick look at the judgments.

There are four sets of them with seven in each set. In order, they are the seal judgments (Rev. 6:1ff), the trumpet judgments (Rev. 8:6ff), the thunder judgments (Rev. 10:3-4), and the vial or bowl judgments (Rev. 16:1ff). With the bowl judgments, the wrath of God is satisfied. The seventh in each group of judgments leads to the next group. Each set of judgments gets progressively worse. We’re not going to examine each judgment, but we will instead look at their similarities and consequences. As we examine them, see if you notice any correlation with the plagues on Egypt.

The first consequence of the plagues is a series of terrible shortages. The availability of resources such as trees, grass, ships, and light will diminish. Some of those don’t seem so bad until you start to consider their full significance. What do we get from trees? Shade, building supplies, food, and oxygen. Since the trees get burned up by something falling out of the sky, the air will already be thick with smoke. Add to that a lessening of the air cleaning effect of trees, and the problem grows. Less grass means less feed for animals. Fewer ships mean goods can’t be transported to areas especially devastated by these plagues. Less light equals a shorter growing season.

As I said, the judgments get more severe with time. In one of the earlier judgments, a *portion* of the fresh water becomes undrinkable. By the time the bowl judgments happen, *all* the clean water is undrinkable. Whatever resources are available will be tightly rationed by the Antichrist’s government. Life on earth will get increasingly difficult.

Life will also get more painful. Humanity will experience terrible suffering inflicted both by God *and* by Satan. Fires rage all over the planet as great fireballs come raining down from the sky. Painful sores erupt on all who have taken the mark of the beast (Rev. 16:2). Then the pain from those sores is inflamed by the sun, whose light has diminished, but whose rays still burn (Rev. 16:9-10).

Perhaps the most illogical part of the judgments is that Satan cooperates with God to inflict pain on the people who are citizens of his kingdom. An angel opens up the bottomless pit, and a gruesome, fearsome army blankets the sky like a swarm of locusts. For the next five months, these “locusts” inflict scorpion like stings on humans. The pain from these stings is so severe that people will want to die but will be unable to during the tenure of the “locusts” (Rev. 9:6).

Death will come. By the end of the Tribulation, so many will have died due to humans, animals, disease, famine, earthquakes, and supernatural judgments, that somewhere between three-quarters and five-sixths of the world’s population will be gone. Death is the terrible sentence that the great Judge dispenses to those who refuse to submit to His eternal plans.

1. **“What d’ya do that for?” – The purpose of the tribulation**

God always has a plan, even for the discipline and judgment He brings into the lives of His creation. God is a good parent. He does not pass out pain to someone who doesn’t deserve it, nor does He do so without a redemptive purpose. Like many fathers, He recognizes the adage: No pain, no gain. There are both gain and purpose to the pain God inflicts on His creation.

1. To judge a Christ-rejecting world (Rev. 15:1; 16:1; 19:15)

Because God is patient and merciful, it is easy to get the idea you can sin and get away with it. Because God is just, He must judge sin. Judgment will come.

*“Be sure your sins will find you out.”* (Num 32:23)

Judgment is the most obvious reason for the events of the Tribulation, but it is not the only one. It may not even be the primary one.

If judgment is the primary motivation for the Tribulation, why does God spread the judgment out over seven years? God is not vindictive – “I want to watch them squirm!” Why not just go ahead and wipe the world clean as He did with the flood? You could argue that the reason there was such a long time in between the announcement of judgment then and the culmination of judgment was to give Noah time to build the boat. There is no boat this time. These judgments are over an extended period just like they were in Egypt. Yes, humanity deserves judgment. But like all the other times God has poured out judgment, His heart is to pour out mercy.

1. To reveal Satan’s true character (Rev. 12:7-12)

One person will receive no mercy. His name is Satan. During the Tribulation, Satan reveals his true nature. He presents himself as an angel of light, but his destructive, vengeful actions prove he is a dragon. When given the opportunity, he uses his forces not to help humanity but to harm them. It’s almost as if he can’t help himself. His nature requires him to deceive and to destroy. It prevents him though from seeing he is the cause of his own problems. Not wanting to go down alone, Satan continually accuses those whom Jesus claims as His own and willingly claims those who unwittingly pledge allegiance to him. He should be distressed when one of his loyal soldiers dies. Instead, he is filled with glee because one more dead means one more refused the rescue Jesus offered.

1. To demonstrate the sinfulness of man (Rev. 9:20-21; 16:8-11, 21)

I want you to understand something. When all these catastrophes are happening on earth, the people of earth know who is causing them. They don’t blame their pain on global warming, political enemies, or corporate greed. They correctly identify it as the judgment of God. Instead of responding with repentance, they choose to stubbornly continue in their sin and their rejection of God. They are so resistant to God that they ask the rocks to fall on them. They call to the Creation to rescue them from the Creator. They are truly “between a rock and a hard place” where the hard place is submission to God, and the rock is, well, a rock. Men would rather die than submit to the authority of God in their lives. (Rev. 6:16-17) By their actions, men demonstrate the justice of God’s judgment.

1. To humble the nation of Israel (Jer. 30:7-9; Zech. 12:9-14:5)

One of the Tribulation titles is the “Time of *Jacob’s* Trouble.” The Tribulation is about Israel. Satan through the Antichrist wants to destroy Israel, and God through His emissaries works to save them. When Jesus, the true Messiah came the first time to rescue Israel from her sins, Israel rejected Him. Jesus called out in anguish to Jerusalem virtually begging her inhabitants to repent, but they refused. Even as the soldiers led Jesus to the cross, He warned of a time when life would be so troublesome in Israel that no one would want to bring a child into the world (Luke 23:28-31). But that difficulty will serve a purpose.

Though they at first will see the Antichrist as their messiah, the trouble he brings will cause them to refuse him. Israel will one day repent and receive Jesus as their true Messiah.

1. To eternally save multitudes of people (Rev. 7:9-10)

Though no saved people will be on earth when the Tribulation begins, many people will be saved during it. This is the heart of God. As God is pouring out judgment, He is using just as big a pitcher to dispense His mercy. The fact that He seals the 144,000 witnesses so that they can do their job of sharing the Gospel without distraction or obstacle proves God’s mercy. To make sure that all will have access to forgiveness, He sends an angel to write the Gospel message in the sky. God wants all men to come to repentance.

I know what some of you are thinking. You’ve heard the belief that if you don’t take Jesus as Savior before the Rapture, you’re doomed. It’s too late after that. Wrong! The first two “good guy” groups give undeniable evidence that people will get saved *after* the rapture. If they had gotten saved *before* the rapture, they would have gone up with Jesus. Others of you are thinking along different lines. Why should you get saved now? Why not just wait until the Rapture? That would prove the Bible is right and that Jesus is who He says He is.

I can think of at least three problems with waiting. One, when the Rapture happens, Satan will come up with a lie that is so good that even those who are Christians will have a hard time *not* believing it. There is already sufficient proof of Who Jesus is and adequate reason to believe His prophecies. You don’t need more.

The second problem with waiting is you will have to endure the troubles of the Tribulation. God will protect the 144,000 Jews along with the two witnesses. You don’t have that promise. Do you really want to go through the suffering and probable martyrdom?

Third, who’s to say that you will live into the Tribulation? What if you’re on one of those planes that go down when the pilot vanishes? The Rapture could be tomorrow, or it could be 100 years in the future. Jesus kept the day a secret so that we would be ready to go on whichever day it happens.

1. To prepare the world for Christ’s rule (Rev. 19:11-21)

For seven years, Satan has his shot at ruling the world. In truth, the earth has been his kingdom ever since Adam and Eve ate of the fruit. He has had ample time to prove his capability as a leader to provide for his subjects. He has failed. So Jesus says, “You’ve had your taste of a world ruled by Satan and his minions. Now it’s my turn.” And for 1000 years, Jesus shows the world what life is like when Satan is imprisoned, and Jesus is on the throne.

**Conclusion:** Trouble is coming. It will be bad…worse than any trouble the world has ever seen. The only advantage to having a really, really bad day is it makes a really, really good day feel *soooo* good! For all those who receive Jesus as Savior before the Rapture or after it, the best is yet to come. As bad as the Tribulation will be, that gives you just a taste of how good the reign of Jesus during the Millennial Kingdom will be. Sadly, those who reject Him will have barely even tasted the judgment of God. As bad as the Tribulation will be, it is tame compared to what people will experience in Hell.

Where will you be the day after Jesus returns? There are only two potential places – with Jesus or not with Jesus. With Jesus gives purpose, joy, and companionship. Without Jesus gives the trouble of the Tribulation and eventually the pain of Hell. For now, if you want to change your destination, it’s not too late. We’d love to show you how. It’s easy. In fact, it’s no trouble at all.

1. “What’s the worst trouble you got into as a kid? Or an adult?”; Yelp; retrieved Feb, 2018 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. “25 of the most ridiculous things people got in trouble for at school”; BuzzFeed; Sophie Gadd; July 29, 2015; retrieved Feb, 2018 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)