

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, TRIBULATION?

Tribulation...very few words conjure up more fear, anxiety and dread of what the future holds. This issue of the Digest will boldly dig into God's thoughts regarding tribulation. Set aside preconceived notions as we study God's thoughts on this subject. Let God explain from His word, the Bible, what the tribulation is and what He expects of us as we go through it.

The word "tribulation" is used 26 times in the Bible: four times in the Old Testament and 22 times in the New Testament. In the Old Testament "tribulation" comes from the Hebrew word tsar or tsarah. Tsar means a narrow, tight place, usually figuratively; also a pebble or stone as pressed hard by an opponent as if crowding. In the New Testament the word for "tribulation" is thlipsis which comes from the word thlibo which means pressure, literally or figuratively to crowd. These two words come from the word tribos which means to rub as if along a rut or worn track. We will refer back to these definitions as we study, but the first thing to notice is that they do not mean utter death and destruction. Many associate tribulation with the almost total annihilation of mankind in an end-time cataclysm. We will see about that idea as we go along.

WHAT IS THE TRIBULATION?

Since tribulation by definition is not synonymous with death and destruction, we must find out what it is. The first thing we will notice in God's word is that the tribulation had already started 2,000 years ago. The Apostle John records in Revelation 1:9, "I, John, both your brother and companion in the **tribulation** and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Therefore John and his brethren and companions were feeling the pressure of the **tribulation** 2,000 years ago! As a matter of fact, in verses 1-3 John records that the Book of Revelation was being given to him by Christ to help him and his brethren and companions to understand the things they were about to experience in their day. "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants – things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near." So the **tribulation** had started in John's day and continues till this very day! That is why ever since the Book of Revelation has been written, it has been a blessing to those who read, heard and heeded its words. That is what God says in His word. We must believe and accept it. Let us gather some more scriptural evidence to back up John's claim that he was experiencing the **tribulation** in his time.

Christ directly warned His disciples of the **tribulation** in John 16:33. “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have **tribulation**; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” As he wrote Revelation, John knew he was in the tribulation because his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, told him he would experience it. The word Christ used for “world” here is *kosmos* which means the orderly arrangement, literally, figuratively or morally of the world. The base or root of this word is *komizo* which means the way the world is tended or cared for. Satan and his current world order are the source of tribulation.

Past Digests have looked at how Satan, the god of this world, holds it captive under the influences of his evil spiritual government. Christ told His disciples that He had overcome this evil arrangement. He also warned them that as Satan had come after Him and caused Him **tribulation**, Satan would also pressure them with **tribulation** as well.

HOW CHRIST OVERCAME

Christ did not beat Satan by physical force of arms. He overcame Satan and his evil principalities by resisting temptation and leading a perfect life. Hebrews 2:17-18 makes this clear. “Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” This is huge! Christ was tempted and suffered yet never sinned. This is how He overcame Satan. Satan threw everything he could at Christ to try to cause Him to sin, and failed.

Think of it. Christ lived life as a physical flesh and blood human being, yet never sinned. As a carpenter and a stone mason, how many times did He get hurt on the job and never take God’s name in vain? We know He was slandered. He was lied about, ridiculed and scoffed at and never responded in kind. In business He must have been cheated. In life He was falsely accused. People tried to trick Him and trap Him. Eventually people under Satan’s influence tortured and killed Him. Through all of this, He gave, healed and forgave.

Isaiah 53:3-6 prophesied what Christ would go through for us. “He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes [that is, His scourging] we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Christ did all of this for us as He overcame Satan, including the ultimate battle with Satan recorded in Matthew 4:1-11. “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones

become bread.’ But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”’ Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: “He shall give His angels charge over you,” and, “In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.”’ Jesus said to him, ‘It is written again, “You shall not tempt the Lord your God.”’ Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.”’ Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.”

This was the greatest spiritual battle ever fought, under the most trying of circumstances. Christ knew the prophecies of how He would suffer. He knew He would be maligned, ridiculed and rejected by humanity. Yet knowing all of this beforehand and how mankind would sin and sin and sin, He did not take the easy way out. He resisted Satan’s temptations, and He lived a perfect life. He died for us. Christ lived through the pressures of His **tribulation**. Satan had brought incredible pressures to bear on Christ, yet He stayed on that straight and narrow path. Ever since, we can all be of good cheer, for He has overcome the world! He lived a perfect life of unselfish love.

The **tribulation** is not physical death and destruction, but rather is a test. It is a test to see if a person will stay on the narrow path of truth and righteousness, or not. Once we embark on God’s path, we will be like sheep. Will we go astray and turn away to our own way, or will we follow our shepherd, Jesus Christ who laid out the path toward how to overcome?

Walking with Christ through a world under the sway and influence of Satan is our **tribulation**. The **tribulation** is a test of our character. It is the assaying of the qualities of the heart just as one assays precious metals for their purity. Just as sheep must follow the shepherd, stick to the trail and enter the verdant pasture by the narrow gate, so we must follow Christ. This is done in an orderly way beginning with the firstfruits, God’s first harvest.

John 10:9 says that we enter the pasture by Jesus Christ. The first to enter that pasture were the patriarchs of the Bible and the prophets of the Old Testament era, then the congregation of the New Testament beginning with the apostles. This is the orderly arrangement that God used to overcome Satan. It is the same Christ who has worked with these firstfruits who will work with the huge harvest of the latter days.

CHRIST: THE FIRSTFRUIT AND LEADER THROUGH THE TRIBULATION

We are beginning to see the awe-inspiring love Christ has for humanity. Christ does not want to destroy the earth and mankind. Satan does. Christ is going to deliver us from this oppressive tyrant. Any war must be won step by step, battle after battle. The same is true for spiritual warfare. In physical war we look for signs of progress on various fronts and battlefields. In this great spiritual war we look for signs and wonders of God's progress as His battle plan moves forward, culminating in the kingdom of God and Christ's government to come and replace Satan's.

In *Digest No. 5* we studied God's harvests. If you recall, man is formed of the dust of the ground to become a garden for God who is essentially a supreme spiritual farmer. The produce of our garden is our character. Here at this critical point in history we have over six billion living breathing piles of dust for God to work with. Until now God has been working with firstfruits.

Firstfruits are composed of a relative few called by God from His first congregation (ancient Israel) and His second congregation (His New Testament era Church). Christ is the first of these firstfruits because He was the first to be resurrected to eternal life. The rest of the firstfruits were drawn to Christ and called for a special purpose by the Father. They were to bring the early and latter rain to mankind in the form of the Bible. This rain is meant to land in our minds and hearts and sprout the seeds that God has sown. It is our job to prepare the ground, soften our hearts and pluck the thorns and the weeds out of our lives.

TWO TRIBULATIONS

The first to go through this process are the firstfruits, and it stands to reason that they are the first to experience the **tribulation**. The **tribulation** itself has two forces at work in it: the force of God's Spirit leading us on to and down the narrow path, and the forces of Satan trying to push us off the path of truth and righteousness by causing us to sin. It is really a matter of overcoming Satan's influence while he yet rules the earth.

Matthew 5:43-44 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you..." These are our instructions made clear by Christ to His disciples and to all who would follow along that well worn rut or trail that He established. It is important to follow these if we are to overcome. He clearly meant that we must follow His footsteps. Notice what He said in Matthew 16:24-27. "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone

desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.”

As if loving our enemies isn't hard enough, picking up our cross and following Christ entails other serious commitments. In John 14:21 Christ told His firstfruits, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” Christ started this discourse in John 14:15-18. “If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”

These verses help us see a sequential order to God's thinking and planning. In Digest No. 5 on the harvests we noticed that Christ often spoke in parables so the world at large would not comprehend the spiritual intent of His thoughts. He would then go on to share His thinking with His disciples who were the firstfruits of that time. By carefully examining the verses we just read in John 14, we can compile more information to help us comprehend His thinking. He said at least three important things here.

1. If we love Christ, we will keep His commandments (all ten). The first four show us how to love and revere God. The last six teach us how to love man. (More to come in future Digests.)
2. Those who diligently pursue a life of such love and obedience will be loved by the Father, and Christ will manifest Himself to them. In essence, they will truly get to know the Father and Jesus Christ and Their thoughts, plans and desires.
3. Christ said that He would pray that the Father would send the Spirit of truth to the firstfruits once Christ was gone from the earth. This Spirit would dwell in them, making sure they were not orphaned by His departure. He then concludes that, “I will come to you.” He came to the firstfruits with His mind power to dwell in them on the first Feast of Pentecost after Christ's resurrection. That is why in I Corinthians 2:16 it states, “For ‘who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.”

Christ picked up His cross and unselfishly gave His life so our sins could be washed away. He did something that no other human could have hoped to accomplish. He overcame the world and Satan's arrangement of it, thus making the free gift of salvation available in a logical, preordained order. This order is spoken of in I Corinthians 15:20-24. “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then

comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.”

In God’s divine order of events, we are very near the harvest of the firstfruits, which we can see is the first resurrection of mankind after Christ’s resurrection. Immediately afterwards, God will open up His Spirit to all mankind in order to have a huge second harvest and a glorious Millennium of peace. This is great news for the entire world and eventually for all who have ever lived. God’s times and seasons march on unstoppable.

Soon the mind of God and His marvelous truths will be opened up to all humanity bringing about the collapse of Satan’s power and his government. Here is wonderful news that the whole world will get to know God and His wonderful ways at the same time that Satan’s power and influence will be diminishing. The human race will experience a truly magnificent learning curve in God’s knowledge and truth. By far, most people want a better world and will welcome their chance to partake of the tribulation just as the firstfruits did. They will have the opportunity to grow in character, and prove that they are willing to change and obey God and follow Him in the truth of His ways. This will usher in an era of peace such as the world has never seen. People will learn to make war no more, and learn the ways of peace, and learn the proper ways to worship God and to love their fellow man.

Christ did not accept the kingdoms of this world on Satan’s conditions, and neither should we. To pick up one’s cross in Greek literally means to extinguish all selfishness. Christ’s disciples who were definitely among the firstfruits except for Judas Iscariot, His betrayer, were given a new commandment in John 13:34-35. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

When Paul was converted, he picked up his cross and endured the pressures of **histribulation**, and then taught others to do the same as evidenced in these two scriptures from Romans. Romans 8:18-23 “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”

Paul understood that his **tribulation** was worth it and went on to teach others to pick up their cross and follow Christ. Romans 12:9-21 “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in **tribulation**, continuing steadfastly in

prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

This is the opposite from the way Satan runs things. The worldly arrangement currently operates by Satan's system pictured by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan's system and influence is in evidence the world over by the following character traits: intense competition not sparing your fellow man; seeking your own revenge with such concepts as: I don't get mad, I get even; never forget and never forgive; get rich quick whether by theft, power, prestige, embezzlement, insider trading or gambling; also crass materialism and selfishness; racism; hatred; lusts of all kinds. Satan knows our weaknesses and exerts a downward pull on every one of us.

Humanity has free will to pick of this tree. But if you recall from Digest No. 4, the tree of life has not been accessible to any but the firstfruits. This is why we see a world mixed between good and evil, with each person a mixture of both good and evil. Some are more evil depending upon how much they pick of Satan's tree. All of this is about to change in a truly remarkable way in an awesome display of God's spiritual power.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil will be cut off from mankind and instead be replaced by access to the tree of life. We are just witnessing the beginning of this. Hang on for a fantastic and wonderful display of God's power. Up until now mankind has been pretty much limited to fending off evil with physical tools. We have been picking a mixture of fruit from Satan's dead tree, and that is why we win "just wars" by killing more of the "enemy" who is in reality our brother or sister in the family of man. That is why we overthrow tyrants by killing them and their supporters. That is why we have wars, rumors of wars, famines and pestilences, none of which are signs of Christ's return, by the way. There is plenty of food to feed the world, but corrupt governments, greed and selfishness stop it from reaching the mouths of the hungry. Soon all of this will change. A better way is almost here! The defeat of our arch enemy, Satan, is at hand.

Only God knows who all the firstfruits are. Scripture tells us how many of them there will be total and what God will do next. It is wonderful beyond words to understand what God is accomplishing one step at a time. Revelation 14:1-5 speaks of these firstfruits and numbers them. "Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and

no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

The only way to be without fault is to be washed clean by the blood of Christ. There is no doubt that the 144,000 are the firstfruits, also called Christ’s bride, which is why He refers to them as virgins in a spiritual sense. They are the first crops of God having been tried and tested in their own **tribulation**. God has refined and purified them in their time of trial, helping them to build character of gold and silver and precious jewels which form a type of a spiritual temple for God’s use and mankind’s benefit. This temple will be the seat of Christ’s government, destined to replace Satan’s horrible system.

God’s beautiful thoughts come together to paint this picture for us in I Corinthians 3:5-16. “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one [part of the body of Christ] and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work [assay the quality of it] of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

The firstfruits have had their chance to use God’s Holy Spirit to build character of gold, silver and precious jewels and to be a part of this spiritual temple. We are very close to, if not past, the calling of God’s firstfruits. Most now wait for the resurrection. Now let us look at the exciting big harvest that we can all become part of if we allow God to work within us.

God accomplished great things during the **tribulation** of the firstfruits. We will be amazed at what He will accomplish next. We will start by reading Revelation 7:9-17, which makes the transition from numbering and setting aside of the firstfruits and goes on to a huge number which are converted during the great **tribulation**.

“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a

loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’ All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.’ Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?’ And I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’ So he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great **tribulation**, and 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 dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’”

This great **tribulation** results in the second harvest, the great harvest, the opening up of God’s Holy Spirit to all who dwell on the earth at the time of the end. This will change human existence like nothing ever has before. Billions will enter their **tribulation** and have their character assayed and tested. There will be no more amassing of armies to defeat tyrants, no more arms races, no more ethnic and religious hatred taught from infancy. In the following scriptures God speaks for Himself about the time and season we are now entering.

Isaiah 2:4 “He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” The statue that conveys the meaning of this scripture is now appropriately in front of the United Nations building in New York City.

Isaiah 11:9 “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain [God’s kingdom] for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” Mankind now dwells in the sea of Satan’s influence, but soon masses will be converted and dwell in God’s knowledge and influence.

Isaiah 60:1-3 and verse 5 “Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising... Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned [converted in the King James Version] to you...”

The earth is about to witness a series of spectacular events at the hand of God: the return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the firstfruits, the calling of the innumerable multitude, and the banishment of Satan and his demons who have been plaguing us for 6,000 years. All of these wonderful and astounding events must take place before we can dwell in peace under Christ and His government for a millennium. The only ones who need to fear

the tribulation are Satan, his demons and the few truly wicked people who thrive on his influence. The vast majority of mankind really want a better world.

PREPARE NOW FOR YOUR FUTURE

You are now armed with the proper perspective of the **tribulation**. Determine to use your tests and trials to grow in character and produce good fruit for God. Determine to obey God and become part of the solution. Learn to love your neighbor, forgiving trespasses against you. Be kind and compassionate. Do no man harm and resist every form of evil, being careful to guard your mind from the influences that are still out there. Do not support movies that portray violence and shameful behavior. Do not purchase or listen to degrading music. In other words, become a point of light and not an added measure of darkness. It has been night on this earth for 6,000 years, and the day is about to dawn! The most difficult thing to do before Christ's second coming will be to humble ourselves and admit to our sins and errors.

God made a promise to humanity in Genesis 8:21-22. "Then the Lord said in His heart, 'I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.'" These words are not only comforting but very real. We can now lay aside doomsday scenarios and with confidence prepare for a great future. Practical and prudent living based on the Ten Commandments should be the order of the day. Raise your children, care for your spouse, finish your education and build for the future. Throw off fear and anxiety, and seek to grow good character of gold and silver while we are yet being tried and tested.

This world is currently hopelessly divided by religion and doctrines. When this confusion ends and the curtain rises on a truly good world order, there will be only one religion and one faith. All mankind will then be able to get along in peace and joy. But we can get started now learning to love our neighbor as ourselves, learning to forgive and be kind to one another.

All mankind is made in the image and likeness of God. When Christ returns, not only will mankind be taught to get along and forgive, they will be compelled to do so. In the Millennium there will be no more tribulation, for Satan and his evil influence will be banished. That is why there is a special blessing and reward for all who determine to resist him now.

God wants all of us to be obedient sheep following Him down the narrow path. Through His open gate and into His overwhelming abundance in Matthew 7:13-14 Christ says, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." Few until now, for the **firstfruits** are small in number but have paved the way for a soon to be innumerable

number – in our time! This wonderful time is just ahead and is mentioned in Revelation 7:9-10. “After these things [God finished working with firstfruits] I looked and behold a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!’” Believe it if for no other reason than that the great God says it will happen.

Wisely use your time of testing, your **tribulation**, to seek God’s will, renounce violence and hatred. Learn to love and respect your fellow man, and you will be following the great shepherd’s footstep. You will be abundantly blessed with the peace and the joy which surpasses all understanding.

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