

# KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

*"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."*

## FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

### Part 18

## COMPANIONS IN TRIBULATION

(continued)

"I John, who also am your brother, and *companion in tribulation*...was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:9).

Most people have the idea that tribulation means wrath, judgment, torment and vengeance. The Greek word is *thlipsis*, meaning "pressure." It is derived from the word *thilbo* that means "to crowd, to be pressed upon in a narrow place." Ray Prinzing wrote, "Pressures are used to PRESS US INTO THE KINGDOM! Trying to pray ourselves out of these distresses only defeats their very purpose. But when, in the midst of our pressures, we pray that God would bring us *deeper into Himself*, then these very straits have served their purpose — for they have channeled us *into Him*."

Another brother has written, "For many years scientists have been aware that the gem of gems, the diamond, was fashioned in deposits of carbon by extreme pressure of the earth's inward forces. This was demonstrated some years ago when General Electric announced the development of a 'successful synthesis of diamonds' which took pressure of more than 1,500,000 pounds per square inch at temperatures of 5,000 degrees Fahrenheit for hours at a time. The principle of pressure is found in every aspect of natural life, for it holds the secret power. Coal, produced by pressure upon an accumulation of dead leaves and vegetation, operates huge factories and supplies energy to millions of homes. Raging torrents wear crevasses and form beautiful waterfalls. Stored reservoirs of water generate mighty dynamos.

"Life itself depends on pressure! A butterfly can only gain strength to fly when it is allowed to push itself through the walls of its cocoon. Even the minutest seed must burst to bring forth new life. Pressure applied at the right spot can stop the flow of blood from an arterial cut and save a life. Strength is developed through pressure. You would not receive any water from the faucet or sufficient gas to warm your home or cook a meal if it were not for pressure. Underground pressure can cause a mighty artesian stream of life-giving water to gush forth! The thought of pressure applies also in the spiritual realm. If extreme pressures are needed to form a diamond, can we wonder that God allows the heat to be turned on when He desires to develop jewel-like qualities in us?" — Don Bruce, Springs in the Desert.

There are gems of varying quality, depending upon the amount of pressure applied and the length of time subjected to that pressure. What intense pressure and heat are required to make a

diamond! In the kingdom of God there are spiritual gems, the Lord's "jewels," of varying worth in the kingdom depending upon the measure of the processing. Some brethren today don't believe in processing — just the finished work. Jesus did indeed offer up Himself once for all for our redemption, but one has to be extremely naïve to believe that that *finishes the work in us*! Thank God, though we are forced to say with Paul, "We are pressed out of measure," we need not despair as we keep our eyes upon Jesus, the Captain of our salvation. He is our forerunner who went into the wilderness to be tempted, tried, tested, pressed by the devil — and He returned from His wilderness experience **IN THE FULLNESS OF THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF HIS SONSHIP**! He has left us the example that we should follow Him, suffer with Him, and then reign with Him!

## JOHN'S TRIBULATION ON PATMOS

When on Patmos John said that he was our *companion in tribulation*. Let us look for a moment at the historical background of John's tribulation. According to the church father, Irenaeus, who had fellowship with those who had personally known the apostles, the book of Revelation was written during the great persecution which had taken place "not long ago, but almost in our generation, toward the end of Domitian's reign," between the years A.D. 93 and 96. This is the view which was overwhelmingly held by the early church, and I believe it is the correct one. This is the almost unanimous testimony of all the great church leaders, from the second century onward.

The Preterist theory, which attempts to assign the date of the book of Revelation to the persecution under Nero, who died in the summer of the year A.D. 68, breaks down on every point. Nero's persecution was restricted to Rome, and there is nothing to show that it ever extended to Asia Minor. Furthermore, the persecution under Nero was not on the grounds of religious belief. He wished to avert from himself suspicion of the crime of having burned the city of Rome, and therefore attempted to implicate the new sect called "Christians." He certainly would not have reached into far-away Asia Minor to imprison Christians there for burning Rome! This was A.D. 64, and there is no proof that his fiendish cruelties to the infant church continued to his death four years later. On the contrary, the martyrdoms under Domitian between the years A.D. 93 and 96 were due to a refusal on the part of Christians to worship the emperor as divine. The ground of persecution, therefore, indicates the reign of Domitian, and not that of Nero. In addition, there is no evidence that Nero *banished* Christians — he put them to death! But banishment is distinctively known as a form of punishment inflicted by Domitian and his persecutions did indeed reach into Asia Minor.

The epistle of Paul to the Ephesians (one of the seven churches of Asia), written in A.D. 61 or 62, abounds with tributes to the *love* then existing among the Ephesian saints. It is an epistle of high spiritual vision, with no hint of departure from the love and life of the Spirit. Timothy was still ministering in the Ephesian church in A.D. 68. Yet, when the Ephesian church is addressed by the Lord in the book of Revelation, He says, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy *first love*" (Rev. 2:4). This rebuke by the Lord obviously belongs to a time later than Paul's epistle and Timothy's ministry! The condition of all the seven churches in Asia, as described in the book of Revelation, implies that they had been in existence for some considerable time. They had a history behind them that had developed with time into distinctive and entrenched

characteristics. Errors had become deeply rooted and widespread. Also, they were experiencing martyrdom on a scale that would not have been happening in the days of Nero.

Patmos is a lonely, barren, rocky, volcanic, sun-scorched island in the Aegean Sea, some seventy miles southwest of Ephesus, the city in which John had been living and ministering for some years. The island is about ten miles long and six miles wide, with hills rising to about a thousand feet. On account of its dreary character, the emperor Domitian used it as a place of banishment for prisoners. The distinguished archaeologist, Sir William Ramsay, tells us that John's banishment was characterized by inadequate food, shelter, and clothing — he slept on the bare ground. He also suffered the stinging lash and perpetual physical restraints placed upon him by a military overseer.

To this day only a handful of people eke out an existence on Patmos, where there is a dingy grotto with a cave where tradition says John lived and wrote the book of Revelation. Today most of the people who live on the island of Patmos are fisherfolk. The island is also a secluded paradise for tourists. But when John was banished there for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ, it was no paradise! There were no restaurants and no plush beach resorts. There were no air-conditioned hotels with carpeted conference rooms where Spirit-filled business men could give their testimonies of how God had blessed them and made them millionaires. It was a place of long, lonely nights and cold ground, where rats scrounged for food and nibbled at the toes of the sleepers. There it was that John was exiled and the heavens opened unto him!

John was in the isle of Patmos “for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” That is how the King James Bible reads, but that is not quite correct. The Greek word is *dia* which means *through*, not *for*. The true meaning is that John was “in the isle that is called Patmos, *through* the word of God.” In other words, God *sent* him there! The Roman emperor Domitian didn't send him there. The devil didn't send him there. GOD sent him there! John was on Patmos through the word of God! Does that not speak to us that we, also, are where we are today by divine appointment? All our steps are ordered by the Lord! The infinite wisdom of God's mind cannot be ascertained by these carnal little heads of ours. We must banish our childish theology and bring our minds into harmony with the mind of Christ. We must peer through the mighty telescope of God's wisdom as it looks through the vast universe of good and evil until heavenly light bursts with blazing brilliance upon our inquiring spirits and we see with crystal-clear vision that God is in all things, and is responsible for all things, the simple and mundane as well as the great and the heavenly, the so-called evil things as well as the good. Oh yes, beloved, if you are in the upper room with its rushing mighty wind, its flaming tongues of fire, and its irresistible Holy Ghost power, God arranged for you to be there! And if you are breaking stones under the blistering heat of your far-away Patmos, God has put you there! It was God who chose your parents and the date and place of your birth. God selected the area where you would be raised, your associates, your friends, and your enemies. God arranged everything that has come into your life, the good and the evil. All the happenings of our lives are ordained by our Father to further our growth and development in Him. He knows exactly what is needed to make us what He purposes, and it is He who issues the orders that determine our destiny.

I have heard again and again that the name Patmos means “the place of my killing.” That may be so, but after extensive research I have not found any etymological (the study of the origin

and history of words) evidence for it. The only hint I have found concerning a meaning for Patmos is from Cruden — he says Patmos comes from a root which means “to be crushed or squeezed.” That certainly corresponds with the word *tribulation* — PRESSURE! John on Patmos said, “I am your brother, and *companion in tribulation*.” It should be evident to all that John was not, in type, *killed* on Patmos, but he most certainly was *crushed*, *squeezed*, and *pressured*! And such has been the history of God’s called and chosen elect!

For the elect of God, called to sonship and the kingdom of God, the pressures are increasing, not diminishing. Travail is upon us, as upon a woman with child. To the woman in pain, ready to be delivered, the doctor commands, “Press! Press! Press!” And to you who read these these lines I exhort, “*Press on*, dear ones, for a *son* is about to be birthed!” Through great travail and pressure the manchild shall come forth and we shall enter into the kingdom of God as kings and priests to reign with Christ. Then all the earth, all men, and all nations shall behold the glory of the Lord on a level it has never been seen before! The many-membered son, the complete Christ, the many sons brought to glory shall bring forth mighty deliverance in the earth! Only those who are brothers and partakers with the exile of Patmos in the tribulation and patience of Jesus shall win the kingdom of heaven. To him that overcomes, and to none but him, will the King give to sit down with Him in His throne. The watchword is — **PRESS!**

The idea that the “Great Tribulation” is going to be poured out upon the *world* is a stupidity that contradicts *every scripture passage* on tribulation in the whole New Testament! Perhaps we have been casual in reading the very words of the Lord Jesus to His own, “In the world ye shall have *tribulation*: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33). Mark the connection of thought! He clearly did not say, “On this earth the world is going to get the tribulation. I will surely rain out upon the unbelieving, misguided, sinful and rebellious masses of earth the fierceness of my wrath and the fury of my judgment. But be of good cheer, precious little ones, for *you* will not be partakers of this tribulation — I will come and evacuate you to heaven before that great and terrible day of the Lord comes.” No such optimistic tantalization as this! The testimony of the Lord standeth sure, “In the world YE shall have tribulation.” YE!

Tribulation simply means “pressure,” and great tribulation mean “great pressure.” Everybody, on some level, experiences pressure in this world. Pressure, in modern medical terms, is called *external stress factors*. Physicians now recognize the great importance of *internal stress*, caused by reaction to external stress factors, in causing and aggravating a host of diseases. In *this world* all of us are subjected to a host of stresses — just as Jesus said! Examination of the blood of a person experiencing internal stress will reveal the presence of abnormal toxic chemical compounds that are formed as a result of his emotions of frustration, resentment, anger, hate, anxiety, worry and fear — which result in a number of diseases. The cares of *this world* have turned many peoples lives into a pressure cooker. Not to speak of war, persecution, or martyrdom — just the strain of everyday living in our modern society is steadily growing worse because of financial problems, higher taxes, inflation, recession, joblessness, terrorism, the disturbing world situation, responsibilities, sickness, hospital bills, rebellion in the home, drugs, street gangs and a host of other conditions.

The distractions and pressures of “this life” are too numerous to mention, we are all faced with them every day, but when they so **overwhelm** us, so mar our lives with anxiety, stress, fatigue

and distraction that we find ourselves so distressed and depressed that we are not able to gather ourselves together and walk in the joy, peace, and victory of the kingdom of God — then we have not discovered that **HE THAT IS WITHIN US IS MIGHTY AND HAS OVERCOME THE WORLD!** When we live in the consciousness of the *outer man* we are burdened with cares, pressured, tense, irritable, discouraged, hopeless, enticed by the flesh, in no spiritual frame of mind. But when we truly find the reality of the Christ within, learning to wait in the presence of the Lord, thinking with a spiritual mind, and begin to live out of the *inner man*, I testify to you that the Spirit of His Life flows out of our innermost being and then, with no special ado, even without seeking or asking, just exposing ourselves to the transforming power of His life, and the transcendent excellence of His mind, the spirit of our sonship graciously sweeps through our being, quickening the mind, cleansing the emotions, washing away the tension and frustration, breaking in the sweetness of His presence the relentless demands of the flesh, rolling back the brassy heavens, bringing glorious victory!

Ah, “In the world ye shall have *pressure*! But — be of good cheer — take courage, be confident, certain, undaunted, enheartened, inspired, invigorated — for I **HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD!**” The mighty Christ is raising up within the life of every son of God in this new kingdom day of the Lord the victory that **overcomes the world with all its pressures!** HE overcame the world in the body of Jesus of Nazareth, and now He is doing the same within us! Praise His name!

There is a poem by Louise S. Pridgeon that expresses this so beautifully:

Pressed out of measure and pressed to all length,  
Pressed so intensely it seems, beyond strength;  
Pressed in the body and pressed in the soul,  
Pressed in the mind till the dark surges roll.  
Pressed by foes, and a pressure from friends,  
Pressure on pressure, till life nearly ends.  
Pressed into knowing no helper but God;  
Pressed into loving the staff and the rod.  
Pressed into liberty where nothing clings;  
Pressed into faith for impossible things.  
Pressed into living a life in the Lord,  
Pressed into living a Christ-life outpoured!

All across the land today we hear the radio and television preachers convincing vast multitudes of naïve and gullible babes in Christ that the saints of God should have the best of everything. They should have instant healing, the most lucrative businesses, the finest homes, the most prestigious positions, the most expensive cars, the finest clothes, and freedom from want or pressure of any kind. Why, they will even bless our billfolds for ten dollars and assure us that, if we will give them one hundred dollars, we will get one thousand in return! Then, wonder of wonders, when these highly favored saints have lived their lives in ease and luxury, they will fly away to heaven at last with nothing to do and all eternity to do it in. And if the great and terrible tribulation should come while they are still on earth, they will be immediately evacuated by way of rapture to spend seven years sitting on a cloud with Jesus eating pork chops, or some other such foolishness. Let all who teach these fairy tales hear the voice of eternal truth ringing clear above all other voices, “In the world *ye shall have tribulation*: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world!” I hear Christ warn His beloved saints in these awesome words, “Yea, and A-L-L that live godly in Christ Jesus *shall suffer persecution*.” To all who would reign with Him upon His throne He says, “*If we suffer*, we shall also reign with Him.” To those who seek the glory, power, and honor of the kingdom of God He declares, “Ye must through *much tribulation* enter into the kingdom of God.” And Paul adds his voice of admonition, “And not only so, but we *glory in tribulations* also: *knowing that tribulation worketh patience*...”

One well-known television preacher was bombarding the air waves with the tearful complaint that he was being “persecuted” by the press. And what was the cause of his persecution? Why bless your heart, the press had discovered that while pleading a financial emergency and making impassioned appeals on his show for millions of dollars to keep his work from collapsing, he was, at the same time, secretly purchasing an elaborate beach house in California, and Rolls Royce and Mercedes automobiles for his personal use at a cost of almost a half million dollars, not to mention the expensive furs and diamonds accumulated by his wife. Persecution indeed! I am making no mistake when I tell you that this man was not being persecuted for righteousness’ sake, nor for the faith of Jesus, nor for the word of God, nor yet for the kingdom of God — rather, he was being persecuted for foolishness’ sake, and that is stating it kindly. Over the last forty years there has been a bumper crop of these worldly-minded deceivers, and I tell you the truth when I say that such know nothing at all about the path of sonship and conformation to the image of Christ that comes only by the correcting and transforming ministry of suffering, persecution, tribulation, trial and testing.

The shallow Christians and the hireling ministry of the church systems know absolutely nothing about the divine principle of the refining, purifying fires of suffering, or the oil and wine of revelation and life that flow out only through the tremendous pressing and crushing of tribulation and trouble. As long as men’s eyes are blinded to the great and glorious purposes of God for His sons in the ages to come, they will be looking for a spiritual life of ease and a short-cut to glory, remaining blissfully ignorant of the supernal blessings of suffering with Christ. When believers are deluded by the popular but erroneous notion that they have been saved to escape this sin-cursed world and spend eternity shouting and dancing up and down Hallelujah Boulevard to the rapturous music of harps and the fluttering of angel’s wings, then indeed there would be little purpose in suffering during this present time at all, for even if saints were no worse off for their suffering, they would be no better either!

When the eternal Father through His matchless grace reveals to the child of God that it is His Master Plan for the ages to come to effect a universal reconciliation, restitution, and restoration through the agency of a royal race of kings and priests who through trial, suffering, and fierce tribulation have experienced within themselves the sorrows and pressures of this dark world, thereby learning infinite compassion and unconditional love for every anguished, tormented, pain-wracked, enslaved soul of man, then all our tribulation is freighted with divine significance! When we clearly see the sublime and incontrovertible truth that it is through much tribulation that we are conformed into the image of Christ the King-Priest, to reign and work with Him in the plenitude of His wisdom, the perfection of His holiness, the fullness of His understanding, the intensity of His compassion, the infiniteness of His love, the beauty of His justice, and the omnipotence of His power, every son having the mind of God, discerning all things, knowing all things and having the perfect nature, character, and ability to carry out the intricate and infinite will of God, then all our tribulation will redound to the glory of God and the eternal blessing of all creation! Among that perfect, omnipotent race of king-priests there will be no carnal minds, no fleshly actions, no emotional responses, no selfish desires, no self-serving, no weakness, no limitation, no mistakes, no dissensions, no disobedience; but with justice, wisdom, understanding, compassion, righteousness, love and power shall they shepherd the nations, and ultimately the vastnesses of the unbounded heavens until all things everywhere are subdued unto Christ, and Christ shall present a perfect kingdom to the Father.

Now since such glories are in store for the sons of God, can any man longer question why our all-wise heavenly Father should take such pains to bring His sons to perfection? None knows better than He exactly what is needed to transform His sons from corrupt and carnal creatures of the dust to beings of divine understanding and heavenly glory. I have often said that I have strong confidence in the ability of my heavenly Father to bring me to perfection and maturity as a son of God. My Father is a great son-raiser! He was a colossal success with His firstborn! Anyone who can raise a Son like Jesus Christ knows exactly what He is doing and can surely handle you and me, my precious brother and sister! “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing *many sons* unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect *through sufferings*...wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him the name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth” (Heb. 2:9-10; Phil. 2:9-10).

Beholding the glory of Jesus Christ we can understand why the Father takes such infinite care to bring all His sons to perfection! Would you dare to imagine that any of the presidents, prime ministers, senators or members of the parliaments of this present world system would be found fit candidates to straighten out the mess this world is in, bringing an end to crime, poverty, ignorance, violence, fear, deceit, greed, war, broken homes and hearts, sickness, pain, and death, restoring all into God again? Ah, the ages to come will be given into the hands of God’s *choicest sons* — saints fully developed, perfected through suffering, matured through trial, proven through testing, beyond the reach of corruption, greed, selfishness, limitation, or any such thing. For twenty long centuries the Father has been meticulously qualifying and forming His government for the ages to come by the work of the Holy Spirit in His elect. The hour for the presentation of this government of His sons is nigh at hand!

This great work of perfection is done by the Holy Spirit leading us through the counsels, corrections, and disciplines of the Father. As the pressures and persecutions of this world system come against those who are moving on in the Spirit of God, the very test and fire is our purifying fire! It purges out the dross, making us smaller and smaller in our own eyes, and meek and humble in the mighty life of God being wrought in us. As we surrender more and more to Christ in us, it makes our natural man perish more and more until he is completely dead so that Christ alone can come forth in us.

There is a natural law in human experience that proclaims the means by which the sons of God shall be made manifest. When we want to temper a piece of steel, we place it in the fire and heat it until it is red hot. When it is almost at the melting point, we plunge it in the cold water. It almost instantly becomes hard for perfect use. So God, when He brings us forth as His sons, places us in the furnace of trials and testings, bringing us to the melting point. When we are tested to the breaking point, then He plunges us into the refreshing cold water of the River of Life. Then we become the manifest sons of God!

Not one son of God can escape the process! You can be a nice sweet Christian and go to heaven when you die without suffering or tribulation. But you cannot be a *son* apart from chastening and tribulation! You can be saved by grace and blessed with all the free gifts of God without testing and trial. But you cannot *reign* with Christ apart from being perfected by the things you suffer! And, matters not how much revelation we have, you and I still need to be purified; we need to be heated, beaten and pressed! Sometimes when the word of the Lord comes to us our understanding is unfruitful, it speaks nothing to us, there is simply no light. There is no light until one day God places His hand of dealing upon us and so orders our circumstances that we are brought under a certain kind of pressure. Under this pressure we turn to the Lord and suddenly His word to us gives light! Oh, we must have the dealing hand of God! Under pressure and bruising we turn to the Lord in a deeper, more intense way, and the Spirit moves mightily on our behalf to guide, comfort, encourage, rebuke, teach, correct, counsel, reveal, instruct, develop, strengthen, mature and perfect us. In all this the Spirit operates and we learn the ways of the Father! There comes the expression of His grace and glory and power in our walk. Then not only are we blessed, but the heart of the Father is satisfied, and through us creation will be touched by God!

## COMING OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION

Life on this earth is filled with affliction, reverses, calamities, heartbreak, disappointment, trouble, suffering and tribulation — everything that breaks and processes and molds the character of God into our lives. People often say, and sometimes even those called to sonship say, “I don’t know why God allowed all this to happen to me!” Ah, that’s an easy thing to solve! He lets it happen because we *need it*! When it happens we don’t think we need it, it seems that God is unjust or has turned against us or forsaken us. We are like little children. My father used to tell me, when he gave me a threshing with his razor strap for some act of disobedience, “Son, this hurts me more than it hurts you. I do this because I love you!” And under my breath I was muttering, “Oh, yeah! I’ll bet!” I couldn’t believe that! It took me many years to understand the heart of my father, but after growing up into a responsible and mature manhood, having children of my own, at last I understood. That which appears to be unneedful and unjust becomes our crown and our



glory when the process is finished and at last *we understand!* Since we are now His sons, we ought not be surprised at any of the processings which He brings our way, but rather see the hand of our Father in all these things, knowing that in His own mystical and divine way He is working it all for our good and for His glory!

The apostle Peter expressed the truth of it this way: “Beloved, do not be amazed and bewildered by the fiery ordeal which is taking place to test your quality, as though something strange — unusual and alien to you and your position — were befalling you” (I Pet. 4:12, Amplified). “**THINK IT NOT STRANGE,**” the King James Version says — do not be amazed and bewildered, do not be astonished, do not be alarmed or incredulous as though the experience is foreign, unwarranted, unexpected, abnormal, a surprise. It is not an accident — it was **PLANNED**. It is not a surprise — it was **PURPOSED**.

People enter into this path of sonship and I hear them saying, “I’ve never had trouble like I’ve had since I came into this walk!” Of course you haven’t. That’s the way it’s supposed to be! The higher the position, the more rigorous the training! “I had it better back in the church system,” they moan. I wouldn’t doubt that one little bit, because God is not at this time interested in either Babylon or the world. His purposes lie with those He has selected, drawing them out and beyond the course of this world’s religion, and placing within them a divine call, a sense of destiny which must be fulfilled. You wonder why things are so difficult, why all hell breaks loose, why as soon as one door opens another door closes, you wonder why you have all the troubles, trials, difficulties, problems, and tribulations, while the way of the religious is not so. Brother, you’re in the furnace — Jesus is being to you what He promised He would be — a **REFINER’S FIRE!** You are in the crucible of His purpose.

How long will this continue? I would like to promise you some respite, but I dare not. The Psalmist says, “The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, **PURIFIED SEVEN TIMES**” (Ps. 12:6). Seven is the number of perfection! It reveals the great truth that God’s own nature will be produced in the fire. He will heat up the furnace until you have been perfectly cleansed and purified, nothing remaining but **HIMSELF**. That which the Lord is receiving unto Himself cannot be of an inferior quality to Himself. The gold — ah, it is **HIM**. The silver — it is of **HIM**. How marvelous is the grace by which He has birthed us out of His own Spirit, making us “partakers of the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4). It is like the grades in school, the farther along you go the harder the lessons become!

How long, think you, would it take a workman with a hammer and chisel to crush the ore and extract the gold from the rocks in which it lies so closely embedded? But if they are flung into the great furnace, and fires fanned to torrid heat and the draught roars through the burning mass, eventually a great glowing stream of pure fluid metal, from which all dross and rubbish are parted, flows into the waiting mold. This is a parable of what God will do for us! At first the surface of the melting metal may be dark and lurid — deep orange red, over which a flickering flame shall pass; but, as the process is pursued, the color will become lighter, the dark fumes will pass off, and the metal shall bear the appearance of a highly polished mirror, reflecting the beholder’s face. The process may be long and hot; **BUT THE RESULT IS SURE!**

Those who love the Lord and long to see His purpose fulfilled in their lives, are willing to accept Him as a refiner's fire, as a thresher of wheat, as a presser of olives, as a crusher of grapes, and as a scourging Father! We accepted Him as Saviour, Baptizer, Healer, and Blessor; now we are accepting Him as the Lord of the fires! Our Father has made us willing to embrace the means He uses to perfect us. He perfects us in the crucible of adversities. The tribulations He sends us are not punishments for past failures, but divine tools to conform us to His image. Paul's thorn in the flesh, Job's loss of all his possessions, family, and health, Joseph's betrayal by his brethren, his being sold as a slave, and later his being falsely accused and thrown into prison, were all for a divine purpose.

Taken to the isle of Patmos, John was made to see a "great multitude" of saints which no man could number, from every nation, kindred, people and tongue, standing before the throne of God and before the Lamb. Each was clothed in a white robe and held a palm branch in his hand. The white robe speaks of purity; the palm branch denotes victory. Being made pure by the inwrought righteousness of Christ also brings victory over self! Asked by one of the elders, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, with palms in their hands, and whence have they come?" John answered, "Sir, you know." And the elder said to him, "These are they which have come out of GREAT TRIBULATION; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Each of these white-robed saints had to experience *great tribulation*.

I may be wrong, but it seems to me that these are the very people who had been followers of Jezebel, the false prophetess, the false ministry of the church systems, who committed spiritual fornication and ate spiritual food that was defiled by idols — by false images and conceptions of God. Were we not all there at one time? To these the Lord Jesus said, "Behold, I will cast her into a bed (of trouble), and them that commit adultery with her into *great tribulation*, except they repent of their deeds" (Rev. 2:22). It is interesting to note that the term "great tribulation" appears only twice in the book of Revelation, and neither time does it apply to the *world*. In both cases it has to do with the Lord's own people! Jesus said he would cast the spiritual fornicators of the church age into *great tribulation*, unless they *repented*. What do you suppose would be the purpose of the great tribulation? Why, bless your heart, would it not be to influence and motivate them to *repent*! And then John sees a great multitude that has *come out of great tribulation*. A wonderful transformation has taken place in them through the process of the great tribulation. They have now "washed their robes" and have "made them white in the blood of the Lamb." They were already God's people, and were not now washed from the filth of the flesh they walked in before they were saved, rather, they were washed from the *defilement of religion and religious systems*! As a result of their going *through* that great tribulation, God's purpose was accomplished in their lives. Cleansed and purified by the Lamb, they were transformed and brought very near to His throne of love, grace, and power.

Let us understand clearly just who these white-robed saints of God are! They are the redeemed of God who have washed their robes from the defilement of the false doctrines, empty rituals, fleshly methods and carnal programs of the church systems of man. White robes in the book of Revelation denote "the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19:8). It is the righteousness of Christ with which they are clothed, resulting in righteous, truly *spiritual acts* manifested out of their lives upon this earth. All of them have endured the strippings, purgings, prunings, threshings, refinings, and purifying dealings of God and have been thoroughly chastened and corrected by the

Father. They are seen coming out of this great tribulation clothed in the white robes of Christ's righteousness and waving palm branches of victory and praise to God! They are a righteous people, and they are a joyful, praising people! The Lord has led them through the processings of His Spirit, which made them pure and righteous in God's sight while they walk this earth in the midst of worldly sin and religious corruption. These are the ones "coming out" of "the great tribulation" having their robes washed in the blood of the Lamb! Praise God! It is His own harvest! How many are there? "A *great multitude* that *no man could number*." It is the "great" tribulation because of the "great" multitude! No man can experience more than his own tribulation. This "great tribulation" has lasted throughout the two thousand years since Christ came and began to form His body in the earth. All through the age He has called out people after people, company after company, from the apostate church systems of their day, and now, praise His name, there is a great multitude that *no man can number*!

It should be obvious to every spiritual mind that the great multitude that no man can number is not the same company as the 144,000 that *can be numbered*. Not that 144,000 is a literal number, but it is the number of *divine government* ascribed to a select called and chosen company who reign with Christ upon His throne. As the spirit of revelation and understanding floods our minds, we are left without question as to the meaning of all this. Notice, now, the *position* of God's kings and priests. To him that *overcometh* to be a *son* of God is granted to sit with Christ **in His throne**, even as Jesus overcame and is set down with His Father in His throne (Rev. 3:21; 21:7). The *manchild* is caught up to God and **to His throne** and rules all nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 12:5). The *144,000* stand with the Lamb **on mount Zion** (Rev. 14:1).

To correctly unlock this term, "mount Zion," we need to go back and consider the shadow. Israel was the whole nation; Jerusalem, the capital city. And while Jerusalem comprised all the governmental class, yet in Jerusalem there was only one who, with his household, dwelt on mount Zion. He was the king! His was the highest pinnacle of glory attainable. But that Zion was only a shadow of the true and heavenly mount Zion to which we are come (Heb. 12:22). And of this mount Zion the Spirit testifies, "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Ps. 132:13-14). David was king over natural Israel. Christ is king over spiritual Israel. David dwelt on the natural mount Zion. Therefore Christ dwells on the spiritual Zion! And this spiritual Zion is composed of those who have reached the very highest pinnacle attainable in Jerusalem: those who, like king Saul of old, are head and shoulders above all others: those who have followed their Lord all the way from mount Calvary to mount Zion! By way of a modern example, the city of Washington, D.C. today is the seat of our government, yet the White House is the highest pinnacle one can attain in Washington. The man who dwells there, like David of old, has reached the very highest pinnacle of power and rulership attainable in the natural. In like manner, the spiritual mount Zion is the "little remnant," the *manchild*, the 144,000, the kings and priests, the ones who have attained the highest pinnacle of majesty in the spiritual realm and sit with Christ upon His throne! Though there is a *great multitude* on different levels of the governmental realm in the heavenly city of God, yet only the *kings* of the kingdom sit upon the throne and reign from the heavenly mount Zion!

You will notice especially that the *overcomer* **sits on Christ's throne**. The *manchild* rules the nations **from the throne of God**. The *144,000* **reign with the Lamb from the heavenly mount Zion**. The "great multitude," however, are not "on" the throne — they are "before" the

throne of God and of the Lamb! Neither do they “reign,” but they “serve” God day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth **on the throne** shall dwell among them. They are a blessed company indeed! They are the vast multitudes of the redeemed out of the age who have walked with God in a pure walk in the Spirit. And, while they are a redeemed and sanctified and spiritual people, they are *not* the sons of God who reign with Christ upon His throne. They have not taken the spiritual steps that cause them to fully grow, mature, and progress all the way in God to become kings and priests. They have not attained to the measure of the stature of the *fullness* of Christ. Yet, they are the Lord’s own people, precious in His eyes! He who sits on the throne of the Lord — Christ and His many brethren — dwells among them; they dwell in the wonderful, rewarding, sustaining presence of the King of kings and the Lord of lords!

“Therefore they are *before* the throne of God, and *serve* Him day and night in His temple: and He that *sitteth on the throne* shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more; neither shall the sun (the illumination of the outer court) light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is *in the midst of the throne* shall FEED THEM, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev. 7:15-17). *Blessings* are lavished upon this holy people who have “come out of great tribulation” and have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

No saint of God can *escape* the Great Tribulation! You will not be raptured out before it comes, for it is already here! It is not some horrible judgment of vindictive wrath and unrestrained vengeance poured out upon the nations, my friend; it is God’s own process of discipline and purification for ALL WHOM HE IS REDEEMING AND TRANSFORMING INTO HIS IMAGE AND LIKENESS!