



# God's Loving Last Chance

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The Tribulation period after the Rapture will be a time of horrible suffering and judgment. But, when viewed properly, it is also a loving last chance for salvation. In this message we examine one of God's primary but overlooked objectives for the Tribulation.

## **Introduction**

Even the most casual reading of the book of Revelation reveals that the Tribulation will be the most traumatic time humanity has ever experienced. Single, short-lived events will result in unheard of death counts. One-fourth of humanity dies after the fourth seal judgment (Revelation 6:8). "Many" die after the third trumpet judgment (Revelation 8:11). One-third of mankind dies after the sixth trumpet judgment (Revelation 9:18). Many judgments contain direct or symbolic references to famines, plagues, death, inflation, and so forth. The hardships and trauma will be significant and persistent.

Make no mistake that from a strictly human perspective this is not a time of love, joy, and peace. And, since many of the judgments will clearly be directly from God, it is hard to grasp initially that the Tribulation itself is an act of love and that certain judgments are ultimately loving actions that are specifically designed to reach some of His lost children.

What I would like for you to see today is how God will be desperately trying to get through to His lost children during this time. God is extremely persistent. He will ultimately lay bare deceptions and human arguments against Christ. Out of love He will make the choice for everyone very clear and simple: Christ or hell.

## **Overtime**

The Tribulation will in no sense of the word be anything like a game. But, for the sake of comparison, view our time of human history as a timed sporting event. The Rapture will be the final buzzer. The "game" will be over and God and the Christians will have won with a score of several billion to zero. At this point God has every right to end time, bring the Christians to Heaven, and send everyone else to hell.

But, because He loves each one of us immensely, He won't do this.

God is ultimately very patient. He gives second chances, third chances, and many more chances. The Tribulation is God offering another chance to those who have rejected Him. The Rapture could have been the end of the "game" of human history with no further chances for salvation. Out of His love for His still lost children, God provides an "overtime" period as one last chance for salvation. During this time God will be taking extraordinary steps to communicate His plan of salvation to everyone and convince them to accept His loving and free gift.

If you are reading this and living during the Tribulation, be certain that this extended time of human history was granted to you as an act of love from your Father. You could have been in hell this very moment with all hope lost forever. Take the opportunity this moment to accept His love in the sacrifice of Christ as payment for your sins and reconciliation to God. Those you knew before the Rapture that are now gone had made this exact choice. I guarantee you that not a single one of them regrets the decision.

## Nonlethal Judgment Against Unbelievers

God's judgments during the tribulation are a mixture of direct judgments from God and God permitting other evil actions to take place (by the Antichrist and Satan) that He would normally not allow. But, they are also a mixture of judgment for sin and attempts to reach unbelievers. In fact, some judgments directly target unbelievers and no one else.

### *Revelation 9:1-11*

- <sup>1</sup>And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.
- <sup>2</sup>And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.
- <sup>3</sup>And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.
- <sup>4</sup>And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.
- <sup>5</sup>And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.
- <sup>6</sup>And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.
- <sup>7</sup>And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.
- <sup>8</sup>And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.
- <sup>9</sup>And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.
- <sup>10</sup>And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.
- <sup>11</sup>And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.

In this, the fifth trumpet judgment, verse 4 indicates that only those without the seal of God on their foreheads (see Revelation 7:3) are stung by horrific demonic creatures loosed directly from hell and suffer for months without dying. Whether the mark of God on the foreheads of Christians is visible or not, it will be obvious that the only people stung were unbelievers. The message from God to unbelievers: the Christians have found the truth and are on the right side. Join them.

By this point, God will have tried to get through to unbelievers in a myriad of ways. Since the first advent of Christ, physical suffering is one of His methods of last resort. This is the lens that we should view this judgment through. God loves every one of us. He will try everything possible for us to understand the sacrifice and provision He has made for us in Christ. The contrast of this judgment, where ONLY unbelievers are afflicted, is intended to be a crystal clear message that unbelievers need to believe in Christ and choose differently.

God hates physical suffering. Remember that God is love (I John 4:8) and inflicting physical suffering is not an act of love. But, God knows that soon everyone will be required to take the mark of the beast in order to buy or sell. It will appear to the lost that they either take the mark in order to eat or die. But once a person takes the mark, they can no longer be saved. What God wants them to realize is that there is a third option: be saved. They will soon die physically for their choice, but they will live eternally in Heaven.

The end of the trumpet judgments are effectively the last chances for people to realize their error and decide to become a Christian. Therefore, God is doing everything possible to get through to them. As distasteful as physical suffering is to God and us, it is better for some to be reached through this uncomfortable judgment than all to be lost. It is truly an almost last resort option for God.

## Lethal Judgment Against Unbelievers

If the painful but nonlethal judgment of unbelievers in the fifth trumpet judgment was not enough to convince, God resorts to a lethal approach in the sixth judgment. The Bible is less clear that this judgment affects only unbelievers, but I think the following verses are convincing.

### *Revelation 9:20-21*

<sup>20</sup>And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

<sup>21</sup>Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

The survivors of these plagues are described as continuing their evil ways and not repenting. Therefore, the sixth trumpet judgment was also only for unbelievers.

As harsh as this judgment sounds, remember that this is the last judgment before the Antichrist forces everyone to take the mark of the beast or die (Revelation 13:15-17). There is no chance for salvation after taking the mark (Revelation 14:9-11). In a desperate last attempt, God resorts to killing many unbelievers but NO Christians so that by some hope and chance other unbelievers will finally understand because of the contrast in who is afflicted by the judgment.

But, unfortunately the heart of many unbelievers will only be hardened beyond hope. Isaiah chapter six will be fulfilled yet again, this time by these people at the end of time.

### *Isaiah 6:9-10*

<sup>9</sup>And he said, Go, and tell this people,  
Hear ye indeed, but understand not;  
and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

<sup>10</sup>Make the heart of this people fat,  
and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes;  
lest they see with their eyes,  
and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

These verses say that God repeatedly tries to get through to His lost children. They hear but do not understand. They see but do not perceive. But, God tries over and over so that it is clearly their responsibility and they are only lost because they have closed themselves off to Him. The end of these verses makes it clear that God would rather they see, hear, and understand in their heart that He wants them to be saved and healed in every way.

## Conclusion

*Ezekiel 33:11*

Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

God's ultimate goal for each and every human is salvation through Christ. The death of an unsaved person no matter how wicked they were saddens God. He wants each of us to turn to Christ and live eternally in Heaven with Him, for if we were created to provide Him companionship then what pleasure does He experience if they suffer eternally in Hell?

*Romans 2:4*

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

God's wrath and punishment are not what will lead a person to salvation. Salvation generally occurs through love not fear. Therefore, it is imperative that we illustrate the goodness of God in even offering a time like the Tribulation as an extended time of human history in which the lost can still receive salvation. Without it billions of people would have been instantly lost for eternity at the Rapture. Instead, many millions more will finally realize their mistake and understand God's free offer of salvation through belief in the death and resurrection of Christ through which we have forgiveness of our sins.

*Matthew 26:28*

For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

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