

**The Tribulation
Matthew 14:22—33**

We've been discussing how the Tribulation plays heavily in the events in Matthew. This is because according to prophecy the Tribulation was to quickly follow Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. Jesus was preparing the Disciples to help the Little Flock of believers to survive the satanic onslaught that will pervade this period of time.

The Tribulation time frame was laid out in Daniel 9:24—27 when God told Daniel exactly what events were to transpire from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity until the end of the Tribulation. Daniel was given Israel's complete history, in chronological order, before it even happened. There are a total of 490 years from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem until the end of the Tribulation. Week 69 ends with the cutting off of Christ and week 70 being the Tribulation. This means the Tribulation would begin shortly after Christ's death, burial and resurrection or after Israel rejected her Messiah by stoning Stephen, depending upon how Christ's cutting off is interpreted. Most (almost all) understand this cutting off to be His death at the hands of Israel. I am leaning toward this cutting off being when Israel cut off Christ's plea for her to come into the Kingdom. The Tribulation would then have begun shortly after Stephen's death as evidenced by Christ standing as Stephen is being stoned (Acts 7:54—60; Psalms 7:5; 12:5; 82:8; 110:1; Zephaniah 3:8).

However, we know the Tribulation has not happened and there is a 2,000-year gap between weeks 69 and 70 of Daniel's prophecy. Was Daniel wrong about the timing of future events? Obviously not since it was the Holy Spirit who directed Daniel what to write, and God is never wrong. There are some who say week 70 has already occurred and the next event is the Second Coming of Christ. Dispensationalists understand that Israel's prophetic clock stopped when God set them aside to deal individually with the Gentiles, although they disagree about when that actually happened. As a mid-Acts dispensationalist I believe the prophetic clock stopped with the stoning of Stephen and will start up again after the rapture of the Church, the Body of Christ. I believe the best way to understand Scripture is to keep God's prophetic plan for Israel completely separate from God's Mystery plan for the Church. This Mystery was revealed only through the Apostle Paul. Any mixing of the two programs will yield confusion.

The Day of the Lord

The seven-year Tribulation goes by many names in Scripture including the Time of Jacob's Trouble (Jeremiah 30:7), the Time of Trouble (Daniel 12:1), Daniel's Seventieth Week (Daniel 9:24—27), the Day of the Lord's Wrath (Zephaniah 1:18), the Lord's Indignation (Isaiah 34:2) and the Day of the Lord (Joel 1:15). This last entry is probably the most well known and most frequently used title for the Tribulation period. The use of the term day is significant because it helps paint a picture of what will happen in the end times of Israel's prophetic future. The Day of the Lord does not refer to a single 24-hour period but instead to a period of time, in this case to the time it takes to bring in the Kingdom beginning with events that begin sometime after the rapture. It is valuable to understand that the Jewish day begins at sundown. The Day of the Lord also begins as the world is overtaken in darkness. This is why darkness is often a metaphor for the Tribulation or why the Tribulation is often described as a time of darkness (Joel 2:2; Amos 5:18; Zephaniah 1:15). In contrast to night, the Kingdom is described as light (Psalm 30:5; Isaiah 30:26; 58:8; 60:1—3). Light always follows a time of darkness in a Jewish day just as the Kingdom follows the darkness of the Tribulation.

Another picture used in Scripture of the Tribulation is a storm (Proverbs 1:27; Isaiah 29:6; Jeremiah 23:19). David is also a picture of the Little Flock going through the perils of the Tribulation and dealing with strong enemies he is unable to defeat in his own power.

Alva J. McClain in his book *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (pages 178—205) explains that there are four phases wrapped up in the Day of the Lord. Below is a summary of his teaching:

1. Evening	Preparatory Events	Joel 2:31; Daniel 7:10
2. Night	Judgment/Wrath	Zephaniah 1:14—15
	Upon Israel	Jeremiah 30:11
	Upon Gentiles	Isaiah 26:21
3. Dawn	Transitional Events	
	The King arrives	Isaiah 25:9
	Satan and his armies destroyed	Zechariah 12:9
4. Day	Millennial Kingdom	Isaiah 60:1, 20
	Israel repents	Zechariah 13:9
	Resurrection of O.T. saints	Isaiah 26:19
	Regathering of scattered Israel	Jeremiah 29:14
	Setting up government	Isaiah 32:1

This Day of the Lord is in contrast to the day of man or the times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24; Isaiah 2:17). Man will be humbled and the Lord will be exalted.

Pictures in Matthew

A reoccurring picture of the Tribulation is found in four of the Gospels. There are two instances of the Disciples in a boat in the midst of stormy conditions both times at night. The first instance shows Jesus fast asleep in the back of the boat while the Disciples struggle to keep it afloat (Matthew 8:23—27; Mark 4:36—41; Luke 8:22—25). The second time happened with Jesus on a mountain praying but watching the Disciples straining all night against a strong wind. Jesus walks out to them and when He gets into the boat they are immediately brought to their destination (Matthew 14:22—33; Mark 6:45—51; John 6:15—21).

Notice that in each story Jesus is seemingly not aware of their need. He is fast asleep, looking like He doesn't care or far away out of sight. During the Tribulation He will seem to be gone. He will be hiding His face from Israel (Deuteronomy 31:17—18; 32:19—22; Psalm 44:20—26; Hosea 5:14—15; 6:1—3). Notice how perfectly the Psalm 44 passage fits in with the picture of Jesus sleeping on the back of the boat.

Just as the Disciples cry out for Jesus' help, the Little Flock will cry out in desperation to a God that will finally hear them (Psalm 88:1—8; 13—18). Notice David's prayer is answered in the morning—this is the end of the Tribulation. Connect this with the Disciples rowing early in the morning and finally when Jesus comes the storm stops and they are now at their destination. The Little Flock will be in a hopeless condition until Christ comes in power and glory. Immediately the storm of the Tribulation will cease and they will be ushered into the Millennial Kingdom.

Peter walking on water

Most preachers praise Peter for having such a grand faith and for being willing to stretch himself. We are told to follow his great example and be instantly willing to get outside of our comfort zone and serve Jesus when He calls for us.

Unfortunately, those who preach this nonsense haven't carefully read the account. First, Jesus told Peter to get IN the boat and go to the other side. He didn't obey. Second, Peter did not recognize that it was Jesus who told him to come. This "ghost" said he was Jesus but Peter couldn't tell and said, "Lord, if it is you..." Peter was really taking an unnecessary chance going contrary to Jesus' command to get in the boat and then trusting that this spirit on the water was telling him the truth claiming to be Jesus. The last thing we see is Jesus putting Peter back into the boat because this is where Jesus wanted the Disciple to be in the first place. Faith was required whether in the boat or out of the boat. Matthew 14:31 shows Jesus chiding Peter for not having faith but the Disciples who stayed in the boat were not rebuked for lacking faith.

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