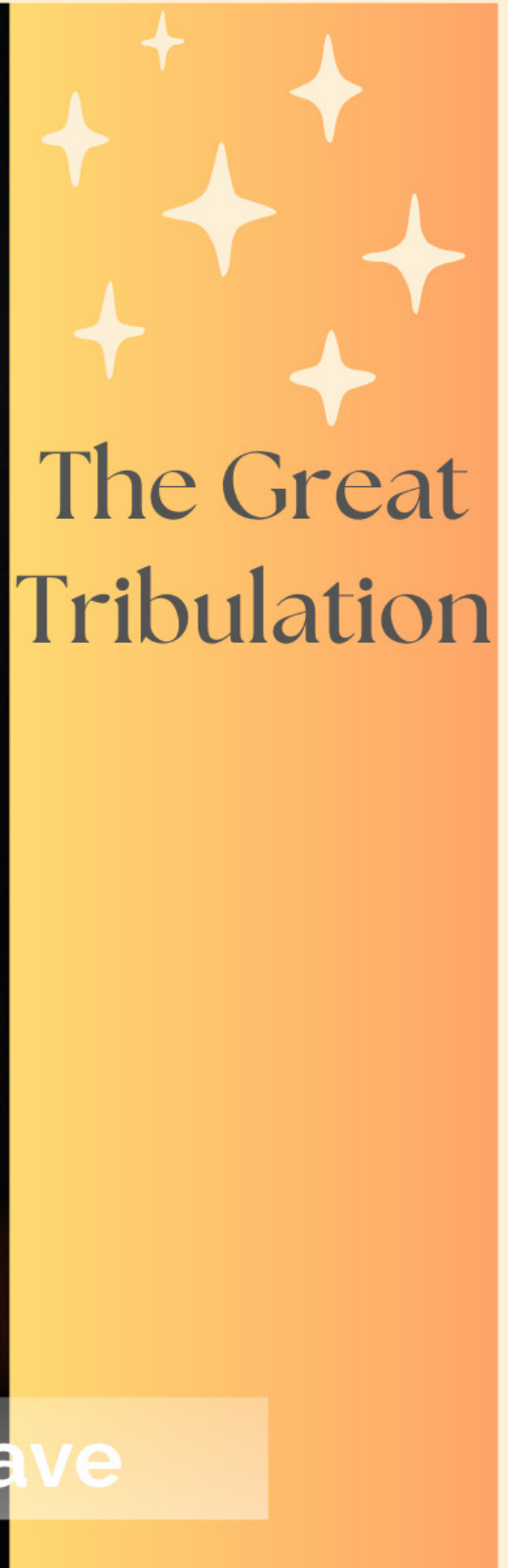
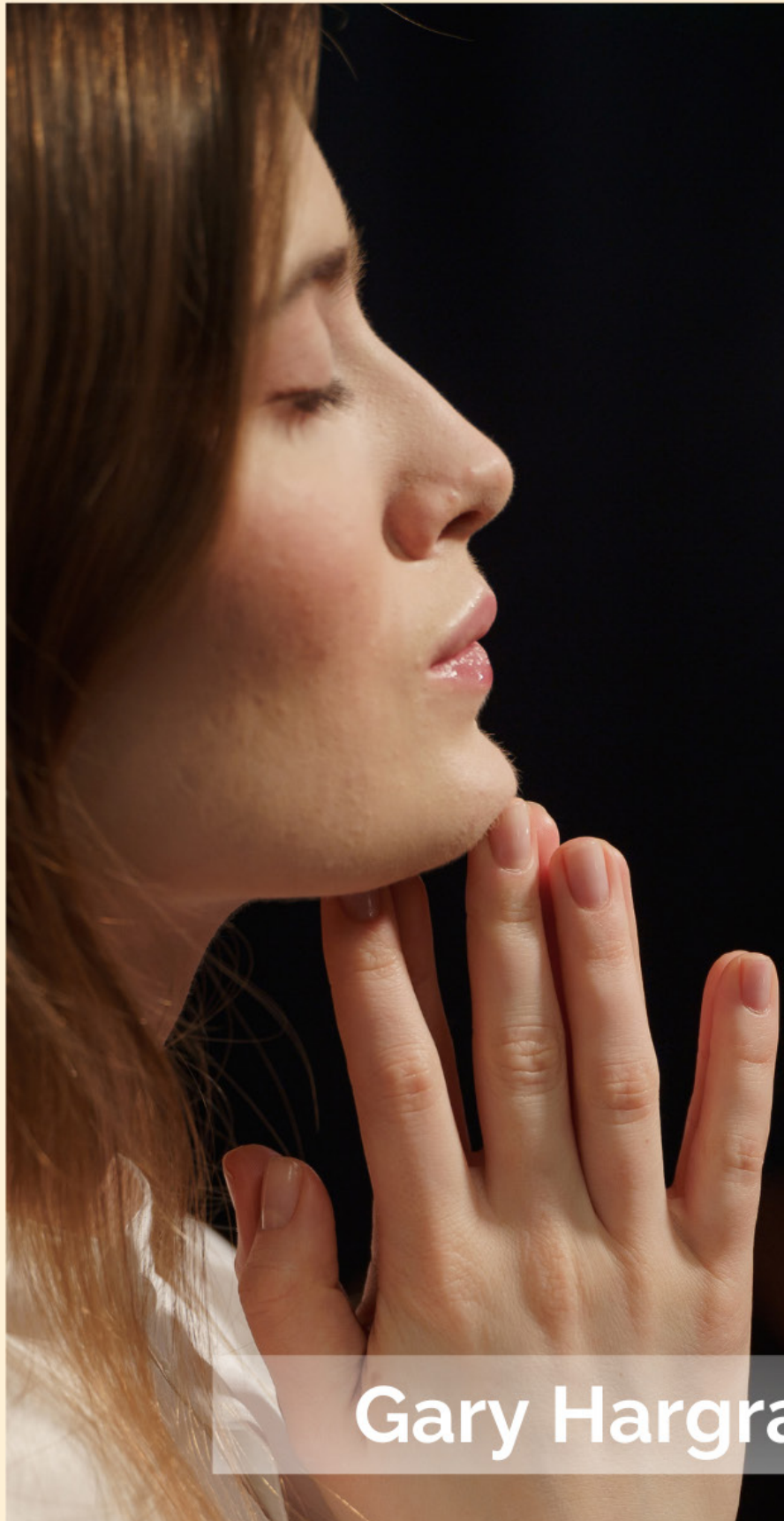


UNDERSTANDING



The Great
Tribulation

Gary Hargrave

We as believers need to be strengthened in our faith regarding the things of the end and especially regarding this idea of the Great Tribulation. So many people live in fear of the end-time. They live in fear of just the term the *Great Tribulation*. What I am wanting believers to recognize is that during these days of tribulation and persecution, the Father will be keeping us, Christ will be with us, the Holy Spirit will be filling us, and we will be here with faith, with a purpose to walk through these days.



Do Not Be Divided Over End-Time Doctrines

I know this contradicts the doctrine of the pre-Tribulation Rapture, which holds that believers will be taken out before the Great Tribulation. You can disagree with me, but that is not something that should divide us. The foundations of our faith are not based on doctrines of the end-time. We all believe that Christ lived on the earth, suffered on the cross, was resurrected, and will return. These things are foundational to our faith and our salvation, and differences over pre- or post-Tribulation do not impact our eternity. I am not saying they should not be points of Bible study or discussion, but that is different than turning them into divisive issues between believers. We are divided enough as it is and what we should believe for now, in the oneness of the Body of Christ, is that God would bring us into a oneness of faith (Ephesians 4:13).

When the Lord returns, we will all know how He got here. So whatever questions we have leading up to that point will be resolved by His return. When we see the Lord appearing in the sky, we will know that He is returning to take up His throne and rule the nations (Revelation 1:7, 11:17). That is what we all look forward to in our faith as believers. So we should not have trouble with anything we do not understand right now. We must not let anything become a point of stumbling or a point of division. Let us keep walking with the Lord, knowing that as we walk with Him, we will continue to grow and mature in the things of God; the Holy Spirit will bring things to light for us, and He will teach us all things (John 14:26). That is part of our maturity process in the Lord.



The Gospel Is Preached During Days of Tribulation

The disciples asked Yeshua (Jesus), “What is the sign that You are returning, and of the end of the age?” (see Matthew 24:3). Read Yeshua’s answer:

Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many. You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and

will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:4-14)

In describing the days before the end, Yeshua specifically talked about what will happen to believers and said that the one who endures to the end will be saved. If believers will be enduring to the end, then they will not be gone during this timeframe. Yeshua also said that the preaching of the Kingdom will happen during these days of tribulation before the end. That means the Church will be here preaching the Kingdom of God. Believers will be going through tribulation, enduring to the end, but there will be a power of the Holy Spirit to speak the Word of God, to bring the gospel of the Kingdom to all the nations (Matthew 28:19).



We Must Love the World as Christ Loved It

We know, as we read in the Scriptures, that these days will become more evil, and the wicked will become more wicked (Daniel 12:10). The reason is that spirits will be turned loose in the earth that will drive people into wickedness. That is why the book of Ephesians reminds us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12). We are not against people. We have to love the world as Christ did and believe to be the vessels who speak the gospel of salvation to the world during this time. And as we have seen in the past, during difficult times people are much more open to hear the gospel. So I anticipate that we will see tremendous times of miracles, healings, and the Holy Spirit moving as the Word of God is

being spoken. God's people will be tested in their faith but come through these times to receive a great reward for their sufferings (1 Peter 1:7).

The idea of God's people going through times of tribulation, persecution, and suffering is not new. It is something that has been with the Jewish people for a long time and with Gentile believers since the beginning of the Church Age. The Church Age was born in persecution and tribulation. Christ lived through persecution and suffering, and all through the Church Age people have suffered. Today many are suffering greatly for their Christian faith and the testimony of Christ. I believe that if we suffer with Him, we will reign with Him (Romans 8:17). One of the greatest things we can do as believers is to be the light of the world and His mouthpiece to spread the gospel of the Kingdom to the ends of the earth (Matthew 5:14–16).



The Great Tribulation Is Great Because It Is Global

Therefore, we should not think of tribulation as something new that suddenly explodes on the scene. “What about the Great Tribulation?” you might ask. “Won’t that be something new and far worse than any tribulation we have ever seen?” I know it is called the Great Tribulation and that even Christ used that term and said those days will be different than any days before or after.

“For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.” (Matthew 24:21–22)

However, the term *Great Tribulation* does not necessarily mean worse than anything that has ever happened before; it can mean broader in scope. It is great because it is more complete, covering the whole earth. It does not mean that the events themselves have never been seen or done before. How many horrible ways to die are there that wicked men have not already come up with? Whether it has been war, persecution, or the Holocaust, suffering has already been perfected by the wicked. But the Great Tribulation will be global in its scope, whereas most persecutions and tribulations have been more geographically isolated. So the word *great* can mean “overarching or all-encompassing.” When we are in the Great Tribulation, we are experiencing things that are part of the overarching conclusion of the last days, as Yeshua explained.



The Great Tribulation Is Great Because It Is the Last

“But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.” (Matthew 24:29–31)

Immediately following the global events of the Great Tribulation is another global event. The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and everyone on earth will see this event simultaneously. Remember that Yeshua is still answering the question, “What is the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?” The sign of His coming is the sign of the Son of Man appearing in the sky when every eye sees Him. There is no mistaking when He returns. This heralds the end of the age when Christ returns to the earth and the Kingdom of God is established. Therefore, the Great Tribulation is defined as great because it is the last tribulation. This is the last tribulation because immediately following this tribulation comes the Kingdom. That is a reason to call it great! What makes it great is that there will not be any more tribulation. This is the last time that we see believers suffering, that we see innocent people suffering under the hand of the wicked. That to me is a great thing, and we should rejoice in it.



The Great Tribulation Has a Purpose

Another way to understand the Great Tribulation is to know God’s purpose in it. Isaiah chapter 26 illustrates this.

Come, my people, enter into your rooms
And close your doors behind you;
Hide for a little while
Until indignation runs its course.

For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place
To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity;
And the earth will reveal her bloodshed
And will no longer cover her slain. (Isaiah 26:20–21)

This passage describes God’s twofold purpose in the Great Tribulation. Two things happen simultaneously. First, God’s people hide themselves in Him and come into a greater relationship with Him. Second, God brings the indignation on the earth “to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.”



It Is the Time of God Perfecting His Saints

Isaiah wrote, “Come, my people, enter into your rooms and close your doors behind you.” That is also what Christ told His disciples when He taught them to pray: “Go into your inner room and close your door.” And while we are there during this time, we cry out to Him saying, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on this earth as it is in heaven” (see Matthew 6:6, 10). I guarantee you, if we find ourselves in the days of the Great Tribulation, we will be more driven to find a relationship with the Father than we are driven on a daily basis right now. We will be driven to be in His presence, driven to find Him, driven to know Him and seek Him with all our hearts. For in the day that we seek Him with all our hearts, we will find Him (Jeremiah 29:13).

It will be a time and opportunity like no other to grow in the things of God, to appropriate from Him what He has provided for us through faith, and to become His witnesses in the earth—His matured people, true sons standing in faith in His presence. The Great Tribulation then has a great deal to do with God’s people and the opportunity He gives us to grow in Him and be transformed in Him by the appropriation of His provisions of the new man and the new self; we are to put on the mind of Christ (Colossians 3:10; 1 Corinthians 2:16). These things are available to us. But I believe our appropriation of them will be greater because immediately after the tribulation of these days, the sign of the Son of Man appears in the sky, and we go into the time of His return. These days, therefore, will see the preparation of God’s people for becoming sons, being transformed into His image, and ruling and reigning with Christ in His Kingdom.



It Is the Final Test of the Wicked

When times get tough, people usually open up to the Lord. They begin crying out to God for salvation and that is what God is looking for from the wicked during times of great tribulation. The intensity of what humanity goes through is to drive us into God, not away from God. It is not to torment us or to scare us. As believers we are not to be fearful. We are to be filled with faith and speaking His Word as we go through many of the trials and testings that the whole world is going through. But just as it is a testing of our faith, it is also a testing of the wicked when God asks, “Are you committed to your wickedness and your evil ways? Or will you repent and open your heart to My salvation, which I am holding out to you in total grace and making absolutely available to you?” That is why the gospel of the Kingdom

will be preached to all the nations during these days. People will hear the gospel and have an opportunity to repent, to change, and to go another direction. It will be different, however, for those who refuse and continue in their wickedness at the end of the age, for then God will be justified in bringing the final judgments on this generation.

If you think that is too harsh, remember that God kept Israel in Egypt until the iniquity of the Amorites had come to the full (Genesis 15:16, ASV). The Israelites were not delivered by Moses out of Egypt until the people who possessed the land of Canaan had committed to being totally wicked and sinful and anti-God. At that point God was able to bring Israel into the land, not only as a source of possessing their inheritance and the promise He had given Abraham, but also to serve as God's vehicle of judging the wickedness of those who lived in the land. Because their iniquity had come to the full, the judgments He had prepared were justified and had been earned by those who refused Him during those years when He was calling them to repent. It came to the point where He said, "Enough is enough. You have committed yourselves to your sinful ways, and you are not going to change." Therefore, judgment was warranted, and so it will be when the iniquity of people comes to the full in this day.



Do Not Be Fearful

I want to get rid of the fearmongering that surrounds the Great Tribulation. Honestly, so much fear has been ministered about it; no wonder people want to run to some other answer rather than be a part of this timeframe. Remember that Christ compared this timeframe to the process of giving birth (Matthew 24:8). Birth pains are difficult and giving birth is not only painful, but also dangerous. It is a time of life and death, both for the mother and for the child. But as soon

as the child is born, the pain is forgotten, and we enter into the joy that a new life has come into the world (John 16:21). If you were having a child, you would want to be there for the events, right? Of course, the mother has to be there through all of it! Even the father needs to be there helping the mother through the birth pains, helping her through the stages. To miss that, even the difficult part, is to miss something tremendous. Likewise, I think we should look forward to these days with anticipation. You may say, “Well, I’m fearful. I’m fearful of persecution. I’m fearful of pain. I’m fearful of suffering and dying.” Listen, there has never been a time in the Church when there has not been suffering, persecution, and dying. You may not have seen it in your lifetime or known anyone who has experienced it. But right now as you read this, there are Christian believers who are suffering for their faith. Whether you realize it or not, we are going through birth pains. And the end of that will be a time of the greatest joy because the Kingdom of God will be born into the earth, and we will experience it.

Whatever we go through, we are people of faith. We can find faith in Him and find the way to walk with Him during these times. Believers have done it for centuries. Christ Himself prayed, “Father, I am not asking You to take them out of the world. I am asking You to keep them from the wicked one” (see John 17:15). And there is a way in which the Lord will cover us and protect us. If the Lord will have us walk through times of tribulation, He will walk with us, just as He walked with the three Hebrews who were thrown into the fiery furnace in the days of Daniel (Daniel 3:24–26). Christ said, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). Have faith and realize He is with you every minute of every day through all these things that bring us into our participation with the end of the age.

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All Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible 1995 (NASB1995).

ABOUT GARY HARGRAVE



GARY HARGRAVE has a passion for leading people into spiritual maturity. Gary effectively ministers the life-changing truth of God's Word through Bible teaching and prophetic revelation that emphasizes the Lordship of Christ.

Gary embraces the teachings and insights of the Hebrew Scriptures as the essential foundation of God's Kingdom and the roots of Christian faith.

By cultivating spiritual maturity in Christians, Gary is deeply committed to teaching and inspiring unity in the Body of Christ and between Christians and the Jewish people.

Throughout decades of ministry, Gary has worked closely with leaders in the Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant communities to build relationships based on commonality and understanding. He frequently leads study tours to Israel in the land of the Bible.

Gary is the host of a weekly podcast entitled *Growing In God* and is the founder of Shiloh University, an accredited online Bible college and seminary.

Gary and his family reside in Hawaii.

For other insightful resources by Gary Hargrave, including podcasts, books, articles, videos, and other educational materials, please visit: www.HargraveMinistries.org.

ABOUT HARGRAVE MINISTRIES

The calling of the Lord upon this ministry is to lead people into spiritual maturity by revealing biblical truth. **Our passion is to see the Kingdom of God manifest on earth** as the Body of Christ grows in unity, power, and love.

Everything we do flows from the revelation of the Jewish foundations of our Christian faith. It is our desire and privilege to bless the land and people of Israel. Our Israel outreach includes our ability to:

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- **Support the orphans and widows of fallen Israeli soldiers**
- Provide physical and emotional care to **child victims of terrorism**
- **Build bridges between Christians and Jews with biblical study and research**
- Support archaeology and preservation of the **biblical City of David**
- Provide 24/7 **care for Holocaust survivors**
- **Help persecuted Jews around the world return to Israel and start new lives**
- Plant trees to **reforest Israel** and help create **"The Gospel Trail"** between Nazareth and Capernaum

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