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What is the Great Tribulation?

Revelation 7:13-14 reads: Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

One of the grossest and most popular misinterpretations of Scripture deals with this idea of "tribulation." So many people treat the book of Revelation like some sort of mystery-action-thriller that you have to read with a secret decoder ring to figure out when the bad stuff will start to happen. And thus we turn Revelation into a giant book of fear - we read it and just wait for the other shoe to drop.

That's not what the great tribulation is, though. It's not some future far off thing - it's how John in Revelation describes typical, standard life in this world. Consider how John introduces himself in 1:9 - "I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus...." Do you see the present tense reality?

Jesus knows and understands that in your life there will be difficulties and hardships. He knows that being a Christian will not make things easier for you in the world, that it will often bring trial and struggle. In some places, it has and does bring outright persecution. He has John write Revelation and send it to seven churches that are in the middle of lousy times.

And what does John see in chapter 7? Does the world win? Does the pain and suffering and disdain that the world throws at Christians defeat Jesus and His salvation? Nope - there *we* are... because that's you in that crowd. This is where you show up in the Bible - you are part of that great multitude from every nation and language and people.

Christ Jesus has baptized you and you are washed clean and pure by His Blood. He has died for you - and no hardship you see in this life will undo or defeat that.