Images for the Journey

1. A picture of a very serious person hanging on the wall
2. A very large parlor that was full of dust
3. Passion and Patience
4. A fire burning against a wall
5. A beautiful, stately palace
6. The man in the cage
7. The man who dreamed about the final judgment
The Fifth Image

The fifth image is about a serious man who puts on his armor, overcomes the deadly force of the palace guards, and victoriously enters the palace to welcoming voices.
“I saw also that the Interpreter took him by the hand again, and led him to a pleasant place, where there was a beautiful, stately palace – beautiful to behold. When Christian saw it, he was delighted. He saw certain people walking on top of it who were clothed in gold.”

**Christian:** “May we go in?”
“Then the Interpreter took him and led him up toward the door of the palace. At the door stood a large crowd of people who wanted to go in, but they wouldn’t even try. A little distance from the door, a man sat at a table with a book and pen, taking the name of anyone who wanted to enter. In the doorway, he saw many men with armor on. They were guarding the doorway and were determined to inflict pain and harm on any
who tried to enter. Now Christian was somewhat puzzled by this. After a while, when all the people started leaving the door for fear of the guards, Christian saw a man with a stern face come up to the man at the table, saying, ‘Write my name down, sir.’ When he had done this, the man drew his sword, put a helmet on his head, and hurried to the door and the armed guards. The guards came at him with a deadly force. But
the man was not discouraged at all, and continued his fierce cutting and hacking. After he had received and given many wounds to the guards who tried to keep him out, he cut his way through them all, and pressed forward into the palace. When he was entering the palace, he heard friendly voices from within, even those of Enoch, Moses, and Elijah who were walking on top of the palace. They were saying, ‘Come in! Come in! Eternal glory you will win.’”
And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God’” (Acts 14:21-22).
Preparation for Tribulations

- This “Image for the Journey” is given to prepare Christian for the tribulations, pain, sorrow, and difficulties he will experience on his way to the Celestial City.

- “Unfortunately, most evangelical churches – whether traditional, liturgical, or emergent – have failed to teach people to think biblically about the realities of evil and suffering” (Randy Alcorn).
“I was never taught the Christian life was going to be difficult. I’ve discovered it is, and I wasn’t ready.”
What Is *Tribulation*?

- The **literal meaning** of the Greek word for *tribulation* is “pressing, pressure.”
- The predominant use of the noun form of this word is **figurative** and means “oppression, affliction, tribulation,” while the verbal form means “to oppress, afflict, distress, harass.”
- Some tribulations are brought about by outward circumstances while others are caused by mental and spiritual states of mind.
Two Samples of “Literal Pressure”
• “I am so stressed.”
• “I’m under the pile.”
• “I’m depressed” (pressed down).
• “I am burdened beyond belief.”
• “I feel like I have the weight of the world on my shoulders.”
• “I’m depleted; I don’t have any more to give.”
• “I’m in such pain.”
Case Studies in Tribulation

- **Childbirth:** “Whenever a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she remembers the **anguish** no more, for joy that a child has been born into the world” (John 16:21).

- **Paul:** “...the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and **afflictions** await me” (Acts 20:23).
Case Studies in Tribulation

• **Joseph**: “They said to one another, ‘Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that’s why this distress has come upon us’” (Genesis 42:21).
Case Studies in Tribulation

• **Israelites in Egypt:** “The Lord said, ‘I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey – the home of the Canaanites,”
Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt”” (Exodus 3:7-10).
• **Israelites Under Sisera**: “After Ehud died, the Israelites once again did evil in the eyes of the Lord. So the Lord sold them into the hands of Jabin, a king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth Haggoyim. Because he had nine hundred iron chariots and had cruelly *oppressed* the Israelites for twenty years, they cried to the Lord for help” (Judges 4:1-3).
How “Hard” May We Be Pressed?

“For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead…” (II Cor. 1:8-9).
“Excessively, Beyond Our Strength”

“This metaphor is taken from people who break down under the pressure of a heavy load, or from ships that sink because they are overloaded – not that Paul himself has actually collapsed but he felt that his strength would have failed if the Lord had not given him new strength” (John Calvin).
“...in assessing his resources, Paul is not taking God’s help into account but is telling us what he felt about his own capabilities, and there is no doubt that all human strength gives way before the fear of death. Moreover even saints need to be threatened by a complete collapse of human strength, in order that they may learn from their weakness to depend entirely upon God alone.”

- John Calvin
Immediate Causes of Tribulation

• **Reaction to God’s Word:** Affliction or persecution arises because of the word of God (Mt. 13:21).

• **Tyrannical Godless Leaders:** Just before Christ returns, national leaders “will deliver you up to tribulation, and will kill you...” (Mt. 24:9).

• **Just being in the world:** “In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).
Immediate Causes of Tribulation

- **Wrongs Inflicted by Others:** “And the patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. And yet God was with him, and rescued him from all his afflictions...” (Acts 7:9-10).

- **Natural Disaster:** “Now a famine came over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction with it...” (Acts 7:11).
Immediate Causes of Tribulation

• General Hatred of God’s People: “So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen…” (Acts 11:19).

• Carnal Leadership Competition: “The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment” (Phil. 1:17).
Immediate Causes of Tribulation

• The Hiddenness of God: “When I felt secure, I said, ‘I will never be shaken.’ O Lord, when you favored me, you made my mountain stand firm; but when you hid your face, I was dismayed” (Ps. 30:6-7).
God’s Response to Our Tribulation

• **He Comforts Us:** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (II Cor. 1:3-4).

• **He Exercises Justice:** “For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you” (II Thess. 1:6).
God’s Response to Our Tribulation

• **He Is Our Refuge:** “The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord have never forsaken those who seek you” (Ps. 9:9-10).

• **He Is With Us:** “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned and the flame shall not consume you” (Is. 43:2).
How God Wants Us To Respond

• **Exult:** “And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations; knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope...” (Rom. 5:3-4).

• **Persevere:** “rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer” (Rom. 12:12; II Thess. 1:4).

• **Joy:** “I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction” (II Cor. 7:4).
How God Wants Us To Respond

• **Do Not Lose Heart:** “Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory” (Eph. 3:13).

• **Realize A Sober Truth:** “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ’s afflictions” (Col. 1:24).
• **Acknowledge God’s Plan:** “…so that no man may be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this” (I Thess. 3:3).
Tribulation’s Contribution

• “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an **eternal weight of glory** far beyond all comparison” (II Cor. 4:17).

• “The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination, shall find approval, shall please
Tribulation’s Contribution

God. To please God…to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness…to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son – it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is” (C.S. Lewis).
How Will I Understand Sufferings?

“Sufferings are a test whether the Christian will champion the Gospel at the risk of his life or not, which means finally whether he will understand his own life in terms of its own possibilities or in terms of the divine promise and the possibilities opened up by it” (Heinrich Schlier, Kittel’s).
“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, ‘For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:35).
For Further Reading & Study

- *Deserted By God* by Sinclair Ferguson
- *When God Weeps* by Joni Eareckson Tada
- *Turn It To Gold* (in the midst of heartache, disappointment, and pain) by D. James Kennedy
- *Where Is God When It Hurts* by Philip Yancey
- *Making Sense Out Of Suffering* by Peter Kreeft
For Further Reading & Study

- *If God Is Good* by Randy Alcorn
- *Dark Night of the Soul* by St. John of the Cross
- *Shattered Dreams* by Larry Crabb
- *Cry of the Soul* by Dan Allender & Tremper Longman
For Further Reading & Study

• **Consolation** by John W. Alexander
• **Distressed But Not Destroyed** by Pamela Gardner
• **The Last Thing We Talk About: Help and Hope for Those Who Grieve** by Joseph Bayly
• **How To Overcome Evil** by Jay E. Adams
• **The Problem of Pain** by C.S. Lewis
• **How Long, O Lord?** by D.A. Carson
“No checker player minds losing a checker when he’s headed toward King territory.”