

Deuteronomy 4:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice;

Analysis

When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days...

The Hebrew *batsar lekha* (בָּצָר לָךְ, 'when tribulation comes upon you') acknowledges that suffering often precedes repentance. The phrase *be'acharit hayamim* (בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים, 'in the latter days') has both near and far horizons in prophetic usage—it refers to future times of decisive divine action, whether the Babylonian exile, the messianic age, or eschatological consummation.

Moses presents tribulation not as purposeless suffering but as the catalyst for return: *veshavta* (וּשָׁבְתָּ, 'thou shalt turn/return'). The same root (*shuv*) means both physical return from exile and spiritual repentance—geography and theology merge. Returning to the land requires returning to the LORD; returning to God enables return to the land. The verb *veshama'ta* (וּשְׁמַעְתָּ, 'obey his voice') shows that true repentance produces obedience, not merely emotional regret.

God's redemptive pattern emerges: blessing, unfaithfulness, discipline, tribulation, repentance, restoration. This cycle repeats throughout Israel's history and informs Christian understanding of sanctification. God uses adversity to break self-sufficiency and draw hearts back to Himself. The latter days intensify this pattern, bringing ultimate tribulation and ultimate restoration.

Historical Context

Moses prophesies 'latter days' tribulation that would lead to repentance and return to God. Speaking around 1406 BC, he looks forward across centuries to future events. This verse has been interpreted by various traditions as referring to the Babylonian exile, the inter-testamental period, and eschatological times.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How has tribulation in your own life served as a catalyst for spiritual return and deeper dependence on God?
2. What does it mean that true repentance involves not just feeling sorry but actually obeying God's voice?

Interlinear Text

בְּצָר	לֵב	וּמָצָא וְכָל	הַדְּבָרִים	
When thou art in tribulation	H0	are come	H3605 and all these things	
H6862		H4672	H1697	
הָא לָהּ	בְּאַחֲרִית	הַיָּמִים	וְשָׁבָת עַד	יְהוָה
H428	upon thee even in the latter	days	if thou turn	H5704 to the LORD
	H319	H3117	H7725	H3068
אֱלֹהֶיךָ	וְשָׁמַעְתָּ	בְּקוֹלוֹ		
thy God	and shalt be obedient	unto his voice		
H430	H8085	H6963		

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 23:20 (References Lord): The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

Isaiah 1:19 (Parallel theme): If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

Jeremiah 7:23 (References God): But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.

Genesis 49:1 (Parallel theme): And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.

Deuteronomy 31:29 (References Lord): For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.

Hosea 3:5 (References God): Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.

Numbers 24:20 (Parallel theme): And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever.