

The Revelation – The Sealing of the Tribes

Before the opening of the seventh seal we reach a point where God holds back judgment until the servants of God are sealed. The 7th chapter of Revelation says:

- (1) And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.
- (2) And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,
- (3) Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.
- (4) And I heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were* sealed an hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.
- (5) Of the tribe of Juda *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad *were* sealed twelve thousand.
- (6) Of the tribe of Aser *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephtalim *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses *were* sealed twelve thousand.
- (7) Of the tribe of Simeon *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar *were* sealed twelve thousand.
- (8) Of the tribe of Zabulon *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin *were* sealed twelve thousand.
- (9) After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;
- (10) And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.
- (11) And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,
- (12) Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.
- (13) And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?
- (14) And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
- (15) Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.
- (16) They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.
- (17) For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

At the beginning of this chapter we're introduced to four angels which are holding the four winds. This is an obvious indication of God's control over all of the forces of nature, and over everything upon the earth. There appears to be a period of calm before the looming storm, but the storm must hold off until the servants of God are sealed.

Now let's take just a few moments to talk about who these people are. First of all, let's talk about the tribes that are mentioned here. The twelve tribes of Israel in the Old Testament were originally the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob. These were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. At the entrance into the promised land that tribe of Joseph was given two inheritances, one for each of his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. The tribe of Levi was the priestly tribe and did not have an inheritance in Israel.

In this listing in Revelation the tribes have been changed. First of all, the tribe of Dan is omitted completely, as is the name of Ephraim. These were the primary promoters of idolatry in Israel and have presumably been pruned from the vine, and others have been grafted in their place (Romans 11:17-24). In the place of Dan we have Levi added. Since Levi is the priestly tribe, and under the New Testament we have all been made kings and priests, there is no longer a need for this separation.

In Romans 9:6 Paul tells us that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." He goes on to explain that it is not the children of the flesh who count, but the children of the promise. Now the promise is Jesus Christ, and we are grafted into Israel by the blood of Jesus Christ. Romans 2:28 & 29 says:

- (28) For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:
- (29) But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

So, then, it appears that the true Jew is not one who is just a Jew by natural birthright, but rather a true Jew is one who is a Jew by faith. A true Jew is one who is a resident of Jerusalem which is above. So, then, I would contend that the shuffling of the tribes are to let us know that God has included those who have been grafted in and has rejected those who did not receive the Truth in faith.

Now I know that there are those who claim that these are Jews in the flesh, and that these are a select number who will preach the gospel to a multitude of Jews. This, though, would seem to contradict what Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews. In John 5:43 he said, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." It appears to me that Jesus said that the Jews, who in large part did not receive him (John 1:11), would later receive another. This other can be none other than Antichrist. If this is the case then there must not be a large number of Jews who are saved during the tribulation period.

The next question that would arise is, "Why 144,000?" In order to understand this number we must first realize that this is divided into twelve groups of twelve thousand. Twelve is

God's perfect governmental number. Ten represents the perfection of divine order. If ten is raised to the 3rd power (three is the number of God) then we see that God's government is brought to perfection by God's power. So, then, it would appear that this is in preparation for God's government.

These 144,000 cannot be assumed to be literally all of the people on earth who are saved. It could be a subset of the population of the saved, but this is contrary to God's prior example in Egypt. I think that this is more likely a figurative number of those who are preparing for the coming of the king to reign.

At the conclusion of this chapter we have a great number which cannot be counted. These, we are told, are the saints who come out of the great tribulation. It would appear that these, also, are put under God's protection at this time.

As we continue in our study of Revelation I hope that you will keep in mind that God will take care of his people, but the wrath of God will come upon those who have not received him. If you are not among those who God will protect, I encourage you today to call upon the name of Jesus, recognizing that you are a sinner, and believing that the righteousness of the risen Jesus is enough to wash your sins away.

If you have received Jesus as your Savior today, or if you need further instruction, please contact me on this website.

Yours in Christ,

Bro. John Rich