



THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

"Seal Team" 7:1-8

Revelation 7:1 After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.

Revelation 7:2 Then 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 granted to harm the earth and the sea,

Revelation 7:3 saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

Revelation 7:4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred *and* forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel *were* sealed:

Revelation 7:5 of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand *were* sealed;

Revelation 7:6 of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand *were* sealed;

Revelation 7:7 of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand *were* sealed;

Revelation 7:8 of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand *were* sealed.

Must the gospel be preached to every person on the earth before Jesus can return?

Jesus Himself once said to His disciples,

Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

This statement has led many to conclude that, “Yes, the gospel must be preached to every person on the earth before Jesus can return.”

I don’t mean to be difficult, but the answer is both *yes* and *no*! Jesus will first return to take the church to heaven. Scripture says that He returns in the air and snatches believers away. This is the rapture of the church. Seven years later Jesus will return again, this time to the earth in His Second Coming to establish a kingdom upon the earth.

With that sequence of events in mind, the answer to our question regarding the necessity of preaching the gospel to every person on earth is both *yes* and *no*:

- “No,” the gospel won’t necessarily be preached to every person before Jesus returns in the air to rapture His church.
- “Yes,” the gospel will definitely be preached to every person before Jesus returns to the earth to establish His kingdom.

When Jesus told His disciples *this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come*, He was describing gospel preaching that would take place after the rapture of the church and during the Great Tribulation on the earth.

Our text in chapter seven of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is about the preaching of the gospel after the rapture of the church and during the Great Tribulation on the earth.

Revelation 7:1 After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.

After these things refers to the opening of six seals of the seven sealed scroll in chapter six. The opening of the seals marks the beginning of the seven year Great Tribulation on the earth - the future day of God's wrath that everyone knows is coming. The first six seals describe events during the first three and one half years of the Great Tribulation. The seventh seal will be opened in chapter eight, and it will unleash further judgments upon the earth. But before the angels who will administer those judgments are released, there is a pause.

We see the seals as chronologically successive, i.e., they follow one after another. Likewise the trumpets that are blown and the bowls that are poured out. In-between the seals, trumpets, and bowls chapters are inserted that give additional details about what is happening on the earth.

Chapter seven is a good example. While the first six seals are opened God raises up evangelists to extend His mercy to the inhabitants of the earth.

Follow the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls and you see the chronological sequence of events. The intervening chapters fill-out your understanding.

Revelation 7:2 Then 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 granted to harm the earth and the sea,

Revelation 7:3 saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

A special group of God's servants on the earth are **sealed**. A seal was a mark that signified ownership and protection. This group, owned by God as His servants, will be supernaturally protected during the Great Tribulation on the earth.

Will this mark on their **foreheads** be visible? I can't say one way or the other. It will certainly be visible in the angelic realm. Satan and his demons will see it upon these servants and will have no power

over them. The mark that Satan causes the antichrist to require on his followers is a counterfeit of this seal of God upon His servants.

There has been much speculation throughout history as to the true identity of these who are sealed. The speculation is needless because you are told explicitly who they are:

Revelation 7:4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel *were* sealed:

The Jehovah's Witnesses claim that certain members of their cult are the true 144,000. Others teach that the English speaking people of Europe are the 144,000, having descended from dispersed Jews who settled in Europe after the Assyrians conquered Israel. Others teach that the term "144,000" is a new name for the church.

All of these speculations, and all the others throughout history, assume that God is through dealing with the nation of Israel. Nothing could be farther from the truth! God is not through with His chosen people. The book of Romans devotes three full chapters - chapters nine, ten, and eleven - to a discussion of God's future plans for the physical descendants of Abraham.

These 144,000 are exactly who God says they are - 12,000 each from the twelve tribes listed here of the Jews living on the earth during the Great Tribulation.

Revelation 7:5 of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand *were* sealed;

Reuben was the eldest son but **Judah** is mentioned first. The reason is discussed in First Chronicles five where you're told that Judah was given Reuben's birthright because Reuben defiled his father's bed.

Revelation 7:6 of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand *were* sealed;

Asher and **Naphtali** were the eight and sixth sons of Jacob. **Manasseh** was the first son of Joseph, Jacob's eleventh son. No

reason is given for the order the sons are placed. The twelve tribes are listed about thirty times in Scripture and the order is different in almost every case. Except for the firstborn the order is irrelevant.

Revelation 7:7 of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand *were* sealed;

Revelation 7:8 of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand *were* sealed.

That rounds out the list. You might notice that the tribe of Dan is not included. Scholars speculate that Dan is not chosen because even in the Tribulation that tribe is still being disciplined by God for being the first to lapse into idolatry in the Promised Land (Judges 18:30-31). The Danites were still being disciplined in their hundredth generation in a warning given in Deuteronomy 29:18-21.

It could also simply be that there are not enough Danites ready in the Tribulation.

At any rate the tribe of Dan will be the first listed in the division of the land as the Millennial Kingdom begins (Ezekiel 48:1). God is great in His mercy!

You might also have noticed that Joseph's other son, Ephraim, is not mentioned. Because they descend from Joseph Ephraim and Manasseh are sometimes considered only one tribe. Here Ephraim is called Joseph. I'm not sure why!

It seems that the 144,000 will be among those who bring the gospel to **every person on the earth** during the Great Tribulation. The books of Isaiah¹ and Joel² both speak of a special group of Jews who will bring the gospel to the world during the Great Tribulation. Jesus spoke of a special group, calling them His "brethren," who would preach the gospel to the world during the Great Tribulation.³

¹ Isaiah 66:19-23

² quoted by Peter in Acts 2:16-21

³ Matthew 25

Dr. Harry Ostrer, Chairman of the Human Genetics Program at the NYU School of Medicine, is quoted as saying,

Recent work from genetics labs has validated the Biblical record of a Semitic people who chose a Jewish way of life several thousand years ago. These observations are the biological equivalent to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

They are not JW's... Or Mormons... Or anyone else. They are the physical descendants of Abraham and will be 144,000 strong. They are God's evangelistic army - supernaturally protected to preach the good news around the globe to the last generation before Jesus returns.

