

Revelation A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #19
11/29/2006

The Judgment of God, The Great Tribulation, The Great Day of God's Wrath

As we come to chapter seven we find an **“explanatory interlude,”** the first of several that God gives us to explain things happening during the Tribulation period that are in addition to the judgments being poured out upon the earth. It is as if God is saying, **“John, I want to give you an overview of what else is happening during this Great Tribulation and how it all ends.”**

John saw five things. **First,** he saw **“four angels standing upon 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.”**

Second, John saw **“another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.”**

Third, John heard the number of them which were sealed to be one hundred and forty four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

Fourth, John saw a great multitude of people from all the nations of the earth worshipping the Lamb. He learned from one of the elders that this great multitude of people were those who were saved by the blood of the Lamb during the Great Tribulation.

Fifth, John saw this great multitude of saved people worshipping God and serving Him in the Temple, day and night.

What we are reading in chapter seven tells us about God making provisions for the presentation of His Gospel to the multitudes of people on the earth while God's judgments are being poured out during this period. The multitude of people John saw worshipping God are those who respond in faith to Christ, trusting Him as their Lord and Savior and who are then martyred for their faith. We then see them in the Millennial Kingdom serving God in His Temple. We know that this overview begins in the Great Tribulation and ends in the Millennial Kingdom, not in heaven, because there is no Temple in heaven according to Revelation 21:22, but there is a Temple in the Millennial Kingdom (Ezekiel 40-44).

Revelation 7:1 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.

Revelation 7:2 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,

Revelation 7:3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

GOD SEALING AND PROTECTING HIS OWN

At the beginning of the Tribulation period, God sends some angels to hold back the effects of His wrath upon the earth until He seals some selected Israelites to be His witnesses during this time of judgment. One of the assignments God had given to the descendants of Abraham was that they were to be His representatives and witnesses to the rest of the world. They had failed, but now, under His special empowerment and protection,

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they will succeed. God selects twelve thousand out of each tribe that He seals for this purpose. His **"seal"** is a mark of His ownership, His anointing, and His protection. The selecting and sealing of these 144,000 Israelites indicates to us that the Tribulation period has a uniquely Jewish flavor. Their sealing to empowerment and protection as God's witnesses also indicates that God is determined to offer His grace to those who have not had a clear opportunity to trust the Lamb as their Lord and Savior before the final day of judgment. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 it appears highly unlikely that those who have clearly and repeatedly rejected God's grace will be saved during this time. They have already had their opportunities to trust the Lamb and had hardened their hearts against yielding to Him and will likely continue to do so, no matter what opportunities God gives to them, choosing rather to receive the mark of the beast and serve him (Rev. 9:20-21; 14:9-11; 16:11).

As we read this list of tribes from which twelve thousand are selected and **"sealed"** we notice some peculiar differences from the list of the sons of Jacob given to us in Genesis 35:22-24. God does not choose to use any of the tribe of Dan as His witnesses during the Tribulation period. Dan was the first tribe to fall into idolatry (Judges 18:30) and became the headquarters for **"calf worship"** whereby **"Jeroboam made Israel to sin"** (1 Kings 12:28-30). That God includes Dan and gives him top priority when He apportions the division of land in the Millennial Kingdom (Eze. 48) is a beautiful picture of the grace of God. In the place of Dan God selects Manasseh, the son of Joseph. Notice also, that though Reuben was the firstborn, he is listed second behind Judah, perhaps because of his gross immorality.

In spite of the interpretations of various cult leaders have said, it is clear that these 144,000 sealed witnesses are Israelites and descendants of Abraham and Jacob. Paul had written that, out of the millions of Jews in our world, God has **"a remnant according to the election of grace"** (Romans 11:5) and that **"all Israel shall be saved"** (Romans 11:26). Paul had also written that **"if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"** (Galatians 3:29). Thus, we can understand that the reference to **"all Israel being saved"** in Romans is explained in his letter to the Galatians. In His sovereign elective authority God acts even though His actions may be beyond our understanding, but He does not have to explain Himself to us (Romans 9:15-20). Even if God did given us an explanation we likely could never fully comprehend His actions. However, He does act and pour out His grace and mercy according to His sovereign intrinsic nature and not according to our understanding or choosing.

Revelation 7:9 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;

GOD'S MULTITUDE

John sees an uncountable multitude of people composed of people from every ethnic group and nation upon the earth. They are standing before the throne of God and before the Lamb. Being from every ethnic group the multitude includes both Jews and Gentiles. **"There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him"** (Romans 10:12) and all come through the **"blood of the Lamb"** (Revelation 12:11) and been clothed in the righteousness of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). **"There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved"** (Acts 4:12) so all who are saved are saved the same way, by faith in Jesus Christ and being cleansed by His blood, whether they be Jew or Gentile.

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“White robes” are an indication that they have been cleansed from their sins and the **“palms in their hands”** are emblems of victory, indicating their victory over sin and Satan.

Revelation 7:10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Revelation 7:11 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,

Revelation 7:12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

WORSHIP IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

John saw a fantastic worship scene of worshippers before the throne of God praising Him. The throng of uncountable martyrs saved out of the Tribulation are joined by the angels, the raptured saints, which is the church in heaven, along with the four creatures, which had been introduced to us in chapter four as representing all of creation. Therefore, the assembled worshippers includes all of those who belong to the Lord by virtue of His saving grace plus all the other beings of His creation. It is an awesome assembly of worshippers, never gathered together before, worshipping God the Father and the Lamb. They are praising Him for being all that He is and doing all that He has done for them.

Revelation 7:13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

Revelation 7:14 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.

Revelation 7:15 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.

When John saw the multitude he apparently had a confused look on his face and so he was approached by one of the **“elders.”** John knew who the **“elder”** was, that he represented the raptured church, but his conversation with the **“elder”** indicates that he didn't seem to recognize the multitude in the white robes. The **“elder”** asked John who they were, but John had to ask the **“elder”** the same question. The **“elder”** responded that these were those who **“came out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”**

Apparently as a result of the witnessing of the 144,000 Jews and the **“two witnesses”** (Rev. 11:3) an uncountable number of people had trusted Christ as their Savior during the period of the tribulation. It is likely, according to some bible scholars, that more people will be saved during this time than have been saved during all the years prior to the Great Tribulation. Whether or not that is true, the number of people saved and martyred for their faith during the Great Tribulation will be an awesome number.

Notice that they are serving God **“day and night in His Temple.”** We know from Revelation 21:22 that there is no Temple in heavn **“for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”** Thus,

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one can only conclude that the worship scene presented here in chapter seven takes place in the Millennial Kingdom which is described in detail in Ezekiel, chapters forty through forty-four. Here, in chapter seven, God has given us a panoramic view covering the time from the beginning of the Tribulation Period, the time of judgment here on earth, to the glorious victory to be enjoyed in God's presence in His Millennial Kingdom.

Revelation 7:16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

Revelation 7:17 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.

The conditions experienced by those in the Millennial Kingdom are to be truly heavenly. God, with whom our contact is limited to a spiritual relationship while we are on this earth, shall dwell among those of us in the Millennial Kingdom. We will have unhindered and uninterrupted fellowship with Him there and He will provide for all of our needs. While it will not be heaven, it will be heavenly in almost all of its aspects and blissful beyond our imagination.