

144,000

Revelation 7:1-15

October 14-15, 2017

As we study through Revelation, we are taken with John into a scene of heaven. He saw a sea of glass like crystal. He saw a throne and He who sat upon it had a scroll in His right hand with writing on the inside and the back, sealed with seven seals. No one was found worthy to open the book and break the seals. At first this causes John to weep, but one of the elders said, “Stop weeping, the Lion from the tribe of Judah has overcome so as to open the book and the seven seals.” But when John looked, he saw a Lamb as though slain.

As the Lamb breaks each of the seven seals of the book, each one reveals an event of the coming seven-year Tribulation period which is the wrath of God poured out on the world. The first four seals revealed the four horsemen of the Apocalypse that brought first the deceiver, the Antichrist, then people slaying one another and war, then economic collapse and finally death and Hades.

When the Lamb breaks the seventh seal it will set forth seven trumpets, each of which declare more cataclysmic events of the wrath of God during the Tribulation.

After the sixth seal is broken, there is a pause before the seventh seal is broken; there is a pause so

the bond-servants of our God can receive a seal on their foreheads. We are then given the actual number...144,000 receive this mark on their forehead.

A mark on their forehead? That sounds familiar, you might say; and you would be right. First, we know that the great counterfeit, the Antichrist, puts his mark on the back of the right hand or on the forehead of people during the Tribulation so that without this mark, no one can buy or sell.

We are also sealed with the Holy Spirit. There is also a scene in Ezekiel when the Lord said to a powerful angel, *“Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst.”*

I. God Always Has a Witness

- First, it's important to remember that the Great Tribulation is the wrath of God poured out on the earth, and that God has not destined the church to receive His wrath.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10, For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.

- This means that the church is not on the earth at this point in Revelation, they have been raptured at the beginning or before the Tribulation.

A. Who the 144,000 are not

- First, is there significance to this number? Yes. Numbers are significant in Scripture.

Illus – This last Friday, Finnair flew their last flight #666 to HEL on Friday, the 13th.

- There have been several groups who have claimed to be the 144,000 of Revelation.
- The Jehovah's Witnesses used to say that only 144,000 will gain access into heaven, which of course would be Jehovah's Witnesses.
- This ran into difficulty however, when their numbers exceeded 144,000; so they declared that the next 144,000 *would live on a glorified earth*. Then, when their numbers exceeded that, they then said that the next 144,000 would be *servants* on the glorified earth.
- Historical Mormonism claimed to be the 144,000 as did Seventh Day Adventists

and finally, the Worldwide Church of God made the claim.

- We should also understand that these 144,000 are not the church since the church would be with Christ through the rapture.
- In other words, they are not Gentiles at all.
- I believe the identification of the 144,000 is found in the promise that...

B. All Israel will be saved

- And these 144,000 Jews are the first fruits...

Revelation 14:1, 4, Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him 144,000, having His name and the name of His Father written on the foreheads... These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.

- The Lord is making a special point to let us know that there will be 12,000 from each tribe of Israel, though interestingly, Ephraim and Dan are missing.

- Notice that Levi, the tribe assigned to be priests is included, they did not receive an inheritance of land, but they are one of the 12 tribes of Israel. Joseph, the father of Ephraim is listed in place of Ephraim.
- That only leaves Dan missing and many commentators believe this is because it was the tribe of Dan who first led Israel into idolatry.
- There are some who teach that Israel as a people was cut off and the church is considered the new Israel. I cannot agree with that because scripture is clear that the promises of God to Israel are irrevocable.

Romans 11:28-29, From the standpoint of God's choice they (Israel) are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

- These 144,000 are Jews are ‘completed Jews,’ meaning they have received Jesus as the Christ – the Messiah- and are now His bond-servants and witnesses on the earth.
- They will be witnesses on the earth to both Gentiles and Jews.

- In the next scene in heaven we see immediately following, people are standing before the throne from every tribe, nation and tongue. They have come out of the Tribulation. In other words, the 144,000 witnesses bring a great revival during the Tribulation!
- Israel as a nation, however, is not saved until they see Jesus return, for then they will recognize Him...

Zechariah 12:9-10, “In that day, I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”

- This will fulfill the scripture that says that all Israel will be saved.

Romans 11:25-26, A partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so, all Israel will be saved; just as it is written.

C. The message of hope is on their lips

- This is a wonderful declaration of the heart of God in that while this is the Day of the Lord and His wrath is being poured out, He gives the opportunity for mercy.

Habakkuk 3:2, Lord, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; but in wrath - remember mercy.

Illus – This can be seen throughout Israel’s history. In the days of the kings when Israel was divided with ten tribes in the north and Judah and Benjamin in the south, the Assyrian army was coming to take the northern tribes into captivity, but God gave a warning and an opportunity. Many of the ten tribes joined with the two tribes in the south.

Illus – over the years many have made wild claims about the “missing ten tribes of Israel.” Some groups in Africa claim to be descended from one tribe or another. The *Anglo-Israelism* group believe that the British are the missing ten tribes.

The Book of Mormon teaches that native American Indians are descended from Joseph; and on and on.

- None in Israel however, know which tribe they are from so there remains a mystery, but surely God know those who are His.

Deuteronomy 29:29, The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

- These witnesses declare the mercy of God in the blood of Christ and many people from all over the world come to faith in Jesus during the Tribulation.

II. Tribulation Can Bring Transformation

- The great multitude that are saved during the Tribulation is an example of how tribulation can bring transformation.
- The 144,000 Jews come to faith in Jesus as their Messiah and become bond-servants of God. They in turn share Jesus with the world.
- Can you imagine how ready the world will be to hear God's offer of grace?

A. God takes no pleasure in destruction

- The wrath of God is poured out on a world that has rejected Him.

Illus – I was witnessing to a man in Russia and I asked, “If God is our Maker does He not have the right to require allegiance? If I made a computer from dust and then booted it up only to have it tell me to leave it alone and mind my own business, what should be done with it?”

- At the same it’s important to know that God does not want anyone to choose hell.
- God gave us a free will that we might freely choose Him.

Ezekiel 33:11, Say to them, “As I live!” declares the Lord God, “I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back; turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?”

- God allows times of difficulty to get our attention; to wake us up from spiritual stupor.

Revelation 3:2, Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.

B. God wants us to turn to Him now

- The message of the 144,000 witnesses is that God wants the world to turn to Him and be reconciled to God.
- This is the message God has been speaking for many generations.

Joel 2:11-13, The day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome, and who can endure it? “Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments.” Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil.”

- When we return to Him, He promises blessing.

2 Chronicles 7:14, “and if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

- God desires the heart to be changed first. “Return to me with all your heart,” God says.

**Illus – Isn't that true for us with our own children?
Is it their behavior or their heart that is the
most important? It's their heart because we
know that if the heart is changed, the change
of life will surely follow.**