

**Bible Study Notes from Calvary Chapel Portsmouth's verse-by-verse study of the book of Revelation
March 2016**

Operation Rescue

CHAPTER 7

In Revelation 7 we have a respite in the text from the judgment that is being poured out. It is a much needed break for the reader after the horror of the first six seals.

Rev 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.

These angels are holding back God's judgment, which is seen as coming by the four winds.

In Daniel chapter 7 we also read of four winds, which on that occasion brought about a change in the government of the world – the same job is being done here.

The four 'corners' does not imply that the earth is flat! Isaiah referred to the 'circle' of the earth, which literally translated would be 'globe'. In this verse we simply have a figure of speech. We have the four points of the compass and the world can, and often is, divided into four quarters. Military strategists have divided the world into four quadrants, and from some satellite images the world appears to be divided by four mountain ranges into four sections.

Rev 7:2

And I saw another angel ascending from the east.....

Adding further weight to the above point, the fact that this angel is ascending from the east shows the earth cannot be flat (or square) as the critics suggest the Bible teaches. If the John was looking at a flat earth, this angel could not be ascending from the east but merely coming from the east. For John to see the angel ascend, which means to rise, from the east shows that the earth must be spherical, as the angel would appear to arise from the distant horizon in much the same way as the sun rises and could also be said to ascend from the east.

Anyway, this angel..... ***[has] 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,***

As in verse one, the command is to hold back from hurting the earth and sea. In chapter 8 we meet the Trumpet judgments, the first four of which see these angels with the four winds then released and as we will see, they do indeed harm the earth, sea and the trees.

Rev 7:3

The angel that arises from the east then says to the other four angels:

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

So the reason that the four angels are to hold back is to allow time for God's servants to be sealed so that they will be immunised (supernaturally protected) from the coming judgments. We have heard much about the 'mark of the beast', which we will encounter in chapter 13, but Satan does nothing new, he simply distorts what God has already done. In Ezekiel 9 we read of an angel going through Jerusalem marking the foreheads of those who still worshipped the true and living God and were not given over to idolatry, so that they would be spared when the judgment came. Here we see the servants of God being marked on their foreheads, with some sort of mark that identified them as God's.

Rev 7:4

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.

The JW's and the Worldwide Church of God (Armstrongism) both claim that they are (or some of them are) the 144,000 – despite the fact that we have just read that the 144,000 are from all the tribes of Israel. The JW's actually had a convention for the '144,000 elect' some years ago and 250,000 people turned up! So don't become a JW because their Heaven is already over subscribed!

Rev 7:5-8

5 Of the tribe of Judah 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 Asher were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nathalie were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasseh 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 Zebulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

God could not have made this clearer or easier to understand; 144,000 Jews from the 12 tribes of Israel – sealed by God for a particular work that they will accomplish for Him during the first half of the Tribulation.

See Appendix A - The Purpose of the Sealing of the 144,000

Rev 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;

We are now introduced to another group, which appears to startle John by its size and sudden appearance in Heaven. This great multitude are given white robes to wear – the reason for this we will look at in a moment – and have palms in their hands, possibly as a sign of victory and celebration, or more likely drawing from the feast of Tabernacles where palm branches were used, this feast also being known as the feast of ‘ingathering’ or harvest, and this great multitude are indeed a great harvest that has been gathered in.

Rev 7:10

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

This verse shows once again that Salvation is the work of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Although the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in their praise, His work in the salvation of souls is not negated, for Jesus said clearly in John 16:13-14 that the Holy Spirit would not speak of Himself, but would glorify Jesus.

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come..... he shall not speak of himselfHe shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” (John 16:13-14)

Rev 7:11 - 12

***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.***

It is fitting that these souls who have entered Heaven begin their time there as they will continue - in praise to God whom they (like us) owe everything, for His great mercy.

Rev 7:13

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

The question and John’s answer indicate that the multitude were new arrivals in heaven that John hadn’t previously seen. Again mention is made of the white robes that they had been given.

It should be obvious but it’s worth pointing out, that the elders are not the multitude and vice versa for the 24 elders (representing the Church) are around the throne but the ‘great multitude’ are before the throne (verse 9), and it is one of the elders who puts the question to John as to the identity of the great multitude, showing that they are distinct from the elders.

(See: Appendix B – The 12 Tribes of Revelation 7 & Appendix C - The Division of the Land)

Rev 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.

This shows that they were saved in the same way as all other men – by the blood of the Lamb, and links them to the previous group that John had seen under the alter when the fifth seal who also came out of the Tribulation (see again Rev 6:9-10) – who also were given white robes to wear.

Rev 7:15 a

Therefore are they before the throne of God....,

Some scholars have suggested that this is a glimpse forward into the millennium, and that these events will take place on earth. However, the fact that the 24 elders, four living creatures, angels, etc. are all in view shows that John is seeing this event taking place in heaven during the Tribulation, and not on earth during the Millennium.

What settles the question is that they are before the throne of God, not the throne of David that Jesus will reign upon during the Millennium. Added to this is the simple fact that John has already given a good description of the throne room of heaven, and that he doesn't elaborate any further would indicate that he expected his readers to know what throne he was talking about.

If this is so, it is interesting that from this verse there appears to be day and night in heaven, and again we have mention of the heavenly Temple (tabernacle) on which the earthly copies were modelled.

Rev 7:15 b

.....and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

From this we can be sure that the 'great multitude' are not, nor will be part of the church (as represented by the elders) because when the Church gets to heaven they are not there as servants, but are invited to sit on thrones (Rev 3:21 / Rev 4:4), whereas this 'great multitude' serve day and night in His temple.

This is also confirmed in Rev 19:6-9 where we read: "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God."

Rev 7:15 cont'd

Here the 'great multitude' announce the marriage of the Lamb, and declare that His wife has made herself ready. The Bride of Christ is the Church as Paul explains in Ephesians 5:25-32, so the fact that the 'great multitude' are declaring that she is ready show that they are not themselves part of the Bride. Furthermore we then read that the one speaking to John told him to write: Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. From this it seems safe to assume that the 'great multitude', after announcing the wedding, would indeed be invited, and therefore are the ones who are called to the marriage supper. And surely it is no coincidence that, as with a Jewish wedding where the guests are given a wedding robe to wear, the 'great multitude' are given white robes to wear.

Added to this, as the Millennium is about to begin in chapter 20 of Revelation we read: *"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection."* (Rev 20:4-5)

Here John sees a group who are sitting on thrones who are given the authority to pass judgment. This can only be the Church, the Bride of Christ (see also 1 Cor 6:3). However in addition to this John sees a second group who appear to not have received their resurrected bodies yet – they are seen as 'souls' only, who are about to receive new bodies in verse 5 - these are clearly identified as those who came out of the Tribulation. So again these must be the 'great multitude' who were invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

The fact that they have not received their resurrected bodies at this point shows they were not raptured, but rather martyred for their witness, as is confirmed by Rev 6:9 / Rev 7:14-17 / Rev 20:4.

Rev 7:16

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

Unlike the 144,000 the 'great multitude' are not sealed, so they will experience the effects of the Tribulation. They will also hunger and thirst because they won't be able to earn money to buy food unless they receive the mark of the beast, which they will not do.

Rev 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 tears are because they had suffered great persecution – this is borne out by Rev 13:7-10.

I believe that the only way 'out' of the Tribulation is to be martyred for Jesus. Those who do take a stand for Christ will be martyred, enter Heaven where they will receive a white wedding robe, and then be invited guests at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

This is indeed a great privilege, but how much greater a privilege to 'escape the wrath to come' and actually be part of the Bride!

There have been those who have said they will wait to see if the Rapture takes place before putting their trust in Christ. Not only is that foolish given what the Tribulation saints will have to endure, but as Pastor Chuck Smith says, "If you don't have enough guts to live for Him now, how in the world are you going to have enough strength to die for Him then?"

Appendix A

The Purpose of the Sealing of the 144,000

One thing that is not told in the text is why are the 144,000 sealed anyway? What is their function? It is clear from the text that the 144,000 Jews are sealed after the sixth seal, which ends the 'natural' / manmade judgments, and comes before the opening of the seventh seal. But why?

Although it is not specifically stated, most scholars agree that the purpose of the 144,000 is to preach the 'Gospel of the Kingdom'. In Matthew 24: 14-15 Jesus said : "*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place.....*" (Matt 24:14-15)

A popular view in the church today is to take verses like this to mean that the Church is responsible for preaching the gospel in the whole world, and until we do, Jesus can't come back.

This has led to various errors suggesting that the Church will win the world for Christ, and then He'll come back. If this were true, it puts a great onus on the Church to reach the whole world, a task made all the harder by the fact that we are told in 1 Timothy 4:1 of a great 'departing from the faith' in the last days! Jesus also makes it clear that the end will come – starting with the *abomination of desolation* - after the gospel has been preached for a witness to all nations. A witness of what? Surely a witness of the coming Kingdom and the need to repent now!

In Matthew 24, the Church would have already departed by the time that Jesus gets to this verse, so someone other than the Church must be doing the preaching! Jesus has just warned of the beginning of sorrows (which echo the first six seals of Revelation 6), and then tells the disciples that the 'gospel will be preached....' – and then the end will come. The end that Jesus is referring to is the Great Tribulation (the last 3 1/2 years) as is confirmed by the fact that Jesus then points to the 'abomination of desolation' as we have just mentioned. This abomination will be when the image of Antichrist will be erected in the Temple in Jerusalem. From Dan 9:27 we know that this will mark the 'middle of the week' (or mid-way point through the 7 years).

As we have said before, we must always be alert to the fact that the Holy Spirit is very clear and specific in the words He uses. The 'preachers' in Matt 24:14 are preaching the 'gospel of the kingdom'. This is the same 'gospel' that was preached by John the Baptist (Matt 3:1-2) who was expecting the Messiah to establish His throne there and then, as had been prophesied (2 Sam 7:12 & 29 / Luke 1:33).

John the Baptist was surprised / confused that Jesus had not established his throne so sent some of his own disciples to ask Jesus if He really was the One they had been waiting for (Luke 7:20). John the Baptist, like the Jews, didn't understand that Messiah had to come twice, once as a suffering servant (Isaiah 53), and then again as King of kings when He would then assume the throne of David and rule the earth from Jerusalem

As the late Barry Smith pointed out, the gospel that is now preached by the Church is not the 'gospel of the kingdom', but the 'Gospel of the Grace of God'. The Church's main message is not warning that the kingdom is about come, but telling people about God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ which is available to all men everywhere, and that 'whosoever' will can become a part of His Church.

The time will come when this offer will expire, and when it does (at the time of the Rapture) the preaching will revert to announcing the coming kingdom when the Messiah will come to rule on David's throne in Jerusalem. Given this, who better to preach this message than 144,000 Jewish evangelists, or as one commentator put, 144,000 Jewish Billy Grahams!

With 144,000 Jewish evangelists, which no doubt will speak many languages (as is the case with many Jews today), it makes preaching the gospel of the Kingdom to all nations a fairly simple task – especially when we consider that they will be supernaturally bullet proof(!), and also that their preaching is for a witness – so no one will be able to plead ignorance.

It is very likely that the 'great multitude' in Rev 7:9-17, and their predecessors in Rev 6:9-12, will be converted by the preaching of these Jews. This makes sense of why in Revelation chapter 7 we read first about the 144,000, followed by the great multitude – the fruit of their ministry.

Appendix B

The 12 Tribes of Revelation 7

Dan is missing from this list, some have suggested that this is because Antichrist will come from the tribe of Dan – possibly, but not really supported by scripture. In fact Antichrist is called the ‘Assyrian’ in Micah 5:5-6, so this would suggest that he is a gentile, a view also supported by Daniel 9:26. One possible reason that Dan is omitted is found in Deut 29 where a curse is pronounced upon any tribe that goes after false gods. Whilst this was true of all tribes, Dan and Ephraim (who is also conspicuous by his absence) were the first, and as a result the other tribes followed.

When king Solomon died and the kingdom was divided into the north (Israel) and south (Judah), Jeroboam led the people into idol worship as recorded in 1 Kings 12:26-30: *“And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David (he was worried that people would abandon him and pledge allegiance to king Rehoboam again if they went up to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to God as was their custom): If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.”*

As just mentioned, we note that Joseph is listed in the 144,000, but the half-tribe of Ephraim is not; so it comes as no surprise to discover that the principle town in the region of Ephraim was Bethel – the other location that Jeroboam put a golden calf.

This is all just speculation, but as they say, it’s a theory that fits the facts, and it does account for why both Dan and Ephraim are absent.

What we do know is that there are actually 29 places where the 12 tribes are listed in the Bible, and they are often listed differently. The reason for this is that there are actually 12 tribes + the two half tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (being the sons of Joseph). When the land was divided up among the 12 tribes the Levites didn’t receive a piece of land because they were to be the priests. Joseph’s portion was then split between his two sons to get us back to the 12. Because of this, it means that each time a list is given there are a potential of 14 names to choose from,

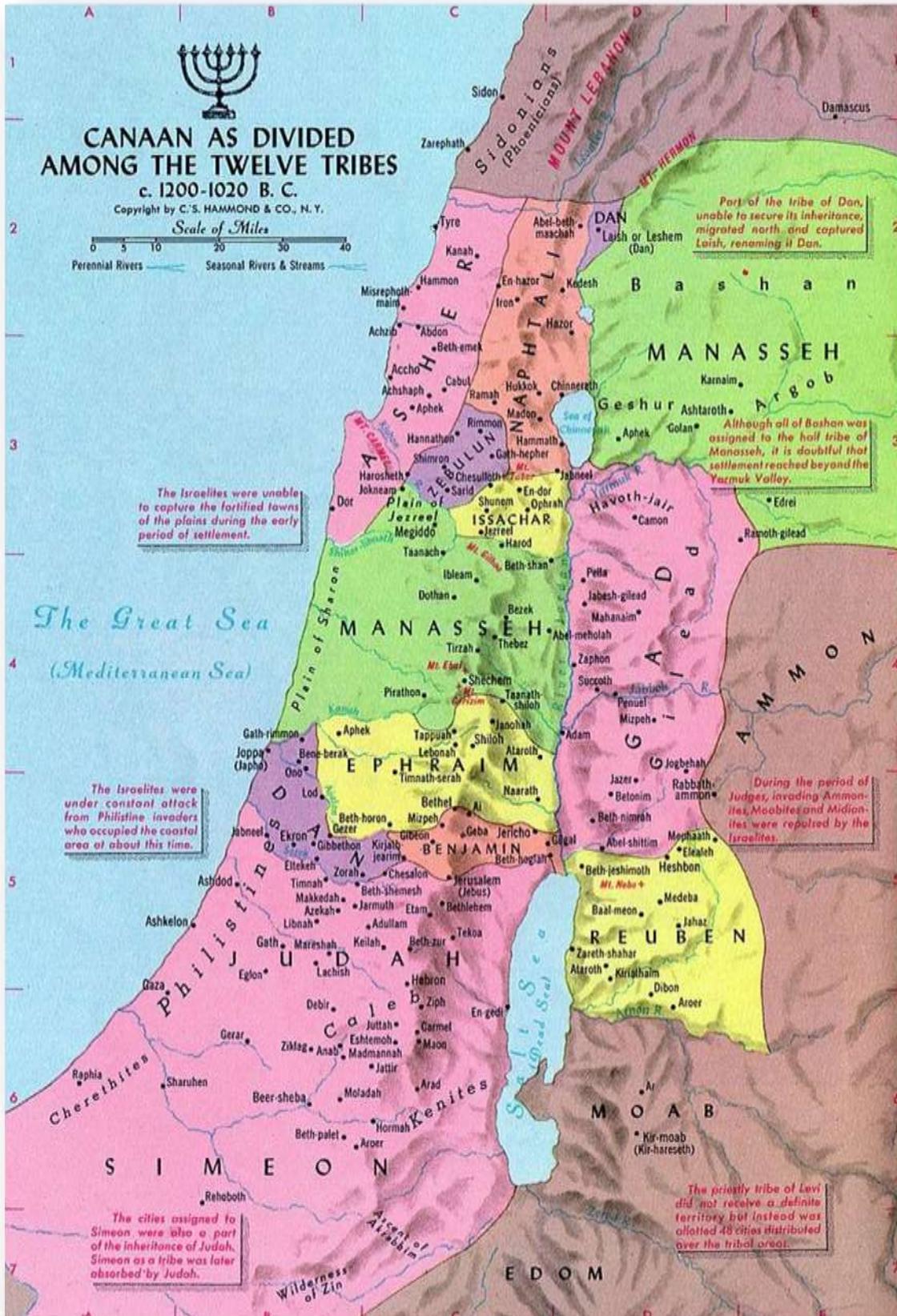
- 1) Ruben
- 2) Simeon
- 3) Levi
- 4) Judah
- 5) Issachar
- 6) Zebulun
- 7) Joseph
- 8) Benjamin
- 9) Dan
- 10) Naphtali
- 11) Gad
- 12) Asher
- 13) Ephraim
- 14) Manasseh

Despite the fact that Dan is omitted from the 144,000, he is ‘reinstated’ when the tribes are back in the land during the Millennium as listed in Ezekiel 48. This demonstrates the faithfulness of God, because we find that the same 12 tribes that God made the covenant with as listed originally in Genesis 35, are given their promised

possession in the Millennium, with the half tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim coming back under the one banner as the tribe of Joseph.

Appendix C

Division of the Land



Appendix D

Chronology of the book of Revelation

Chronology

Chapter 1 / Chapter 2-3 / Chapter 4-5 / Chapter 6 / Chapter 8-10 / Chapter 16 / Chapter 19-22

Additional Information during the Tribulation

Chapter 7 / Chapter 11-15 / Chapter 17-18

The division of the book as given by Jesus in Rev 1:19

"The things that you have seen"

Chapter 1 (The Vision of Jesus)

"The things that are"

Chapter 2 & 3 (The Church Age)

"The things that shall be hereafter"

Chapter 4-5 (The Throne Room of Heaven)

Chapter 6-18 (The Tribulation)

Chapter 19 (The Second Coming)

Chapter 20 (The Millennium)

Chapter 21-22 (The New Jerusalem, the new Heaven & Earth)

The 7 Years of Tribulation

Beginning of Sorrows

Rev Chapter 6 – 9

Matt 24: 4-14

Mark 13: 5-13

Luke 21: 8-19

Middle of the 'Week'

Rev Chapter 10 - 14

Matt 24: 15-28

Mark 13: 14-18

Daniel 9:27

The Great Tribulation

Rev Chapter 15 – 18

Matt 24: 29-31

Mark 13: 19-27

Luke 21: 25-27

