



A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE END TIMES

Week 48: The 144,000, Part 2

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Review:

- A. In terms of a prophetic timeline, we are somewhere right around the transition point between the Seal Judgments and the Trumpet Judgments.
- B. That means several things as I understand the Scriptures and what they are telling us:
 1. It means we are somewhere right around the start of The Tribulation as I have shared and shown in past lessons, I think the greater weight of Biblical evidence places the Seal Judgements, or most of them, in that gap of time between the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation.
 2. It means Israel (a.) either has, or (b.) is about to sign the covenant with the antichrist. This, of course, is what kicks off The Tribulation according to ***Daniel 9:27***.
 3. If I had to guess, I'd say Israel signs the covenant right around the 6th Seal Judgement, and that's the reason for all the supernatural celestial events taking place.
 4. It's the reason the 'earthdwellers' state that the great day of God's wrath has now come, and it's the reason God gives depraved humanity a visual of Himself on His throne.
 5. Lastly, this means that the judgements of The Tribulation, the seven years specifically, are the Trumpet and Bowl Judgments which we will be studying. There are 7 of each of those, for a total of 14 judgments.
- C. We are now at that transition point. The Tribulation has just started, or is just about to start. (I think it is the latter). Before it begins, God chooses to seal 144,000 Jewish men, 12,000 from each of 12 tribes.
- D. This is what we studied last week, and several points were made clear in that lesson: Four angels are ordered to hold back "the four winds of heaven" until the sealing of these 144,000 Jewish men has been completed.
 1. The Bible seems to make a direct connection between these winds and the judgements of God.
 2. The angels are ordered to keep these winds or judgements at bay in order to not harm the land, sea, or any tree.
 3. It's notable that the first three Trumpet Judgments which are still pending will do exactly that, harm the land, sea, and plant life of earth.
- E. The list of the 12,000 Jews from each of the twelve tribes are presented in an unusual order. It is not the standard sequence of birth order or anything which typically structures such lists.
- F. Moreover, there is a message given in the specific order of these twelve tribes when one considers the names of each tribe and what each name means. That special Gospel message is:

“Praise God for the gospel of Christ, a Son of good fortune and happiness. My struggle with sin and the Mosaic Law, God has caused me to forget. Hearing of the mystery of our grafting in with the Gentiles, God has reinstated me into an elevated position of ministry once again, and is increasing those being saved through Christ, the Son of the right hand.”

- G. That message is not clear if any other order of these twelve tribes is given. It is ONLY in this order of THESE names that this supernatural communication is made clear.
- H. One of the things that becomes clear from this message is God’s focus on the Jewish nation once more. The Tribulation is called “Daniel’s 70th Week” and the “Time of Jacob’s Trouble” for that very reason.
- I. With the church removed from planet earth in the Rapture, God returns His attention to the refining and redemption of the nation of Israel. This is made very clear in ***Daniel Ch. 9*** (and other texts). This is the PRIMARY purpose of The Tribulation.
- J. I think it is why – at the outset of those 7 years – God supernaturally seals and protects 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each of twelve tribes. In this event alone, we see God’s return to a Judeo-centric focus.
- K. As I shared last week, there is no Scriptural evidence that I can find that argues these 144,000 Jews come from the land of Israel proper at the time of their sealing. In fact, I believe they are from all points of the globe instead:
 - 1. They are a worldwide population of Jews, representing many countries, nations, and cultures.
 - 2. They are in all these different places due to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple all the way back in 70 AD. In God’s sovereign plan, He used the terrible judgment of that ancient time to position this Jewish population around the globe for this future time.
 - 3. That is why we read in ***Revelation 7:9-10***, that AFTER the sealing of these 144,000, John saw “*a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people, and language*” praising God.
 - 4. This shows the evangelistic impact of these 144,000 who, by that time, will already know the various cultures and people in which they have been providentially placed for centuries. Their salvation message will be clear and powerful.

NOTE: This mostly covers the points of last week’s lesson. It brings us back to this topic where I want to wrap it up this week with several more insights about this group of 144,000:

I. The omission of some tribes and the inclusion of others:

NOTE: Specifically, the tribe of Dan is omitted from this list. Moreover, Ephraim, one of Joseph’s sons is not mentioned, however his father is instead. Levi has also been added which is uncharacteristic of how the twelve tribes were mentioned in several other Old Testament accounts.

NOTE: Without getting “lost in the weeds,” here are some basic comments I want to make:

- A. Some people argue that Dan is omitted here because either: (a.) Dan is the tribe from which the antichrist will come, or (b.) Dan will sovereignly perish due to a lack of seal protection during the Tribulation.
1. People who tend to support these explanations for Dan's absence argue that the tribe of Dan suffered from the problem of idolatry. It seemed to plague this tribe throughout its history.
 2. Others suggest that because, during the time of the judges, when Deborah and Barak led Israel to war, all the tribes sent men to fight, but not Dan. Dan's failure to participate is even noted upon in Scripture: "*Why did Dan remain on ships?*" (**Cf. Judges 5:17**).
 3. Also because several Biblical passages seem to suggest the antichrist will arise from that part of the world in which the tribe of Dan once had some territory, some folks believe the antichrist will be Jewish and will be from the tribe of Dan.
 4. The operative passage for this last point seems to be from **Jeremiah 8:16** which says concerning the antichrist,

"We shall hear the voice of his swift horses from Dan; the whole earth shall be moved by the voice of the neighing of his galloping horses: he shall also come and devour the earth, and the fulness thereof, the city also, and they that dwell therein."

5. Again, it is VERY important to never camp on one or two passages in the Bible to the exclusion of others on the same topic. This is how cults manipulate the Bible to serve their purposes. It is also how most heresies in the church gain their traction.
 6. The full counsel of God's Word makes it clear the antichrist will be Gentile, not Jewish, and that he will emerge from that part of the world which was within the Eastern Leg of the Roman Empire, specifically that area known as ancient Assyria (which today includes parts of Syria, southern Turkey, and even NW Iraq).
 7. The tribe of Dan was originally given land within this region when the Israelites conquered the Promised Land and it was divided up among the twelve tribes. So, the **Jeremiah 8:16** passage is a comment about **location** rather than **ethnic** origin.
- B. There are lots of problems with each of these suggestions, and others like them, that try to explain why Dan is absent from the list in **Revelation Ch. 7**:
1. For example, Dan was not the only tribe which struggled with idolatry. Ephraim is also noted for having the same problems.
 2. I could labor over each point that suggests why Dan is omitted from this list of 12 tribes in **Revelation Ch. 7**, or why Ephraim is also absent, however his father is mentioned, but let's just cut to the chase here.
 3. At a point beyond (future to) the sealing of this 144,000 lies the 1000-year Millennial Kingdom. Descriptions about that time, the total geographical territory of Israel then, the Millennial temple, etc. are all given in **Ezekiel chapters 40-48**.
 4. It's worth noting that Dan is named first in the future distribution of land amongst the tribes during that Millennial time (**Cf. Ezekiel 48:2**). Clearly, God is not done

with the tribe of Dan in the larger picture. If anything, Dan's re-emergence and inclusion is another indication of God's great grace.

5. Moreover, in the description of the city of New Jerusalem given in **Revelation 21:12**, there are twelve gates, three each facing the four primary directions, and these are made of solid pearl.
 - a. These twelve gates are stated to have the names of "the twelve tribes of Israel" on them.
 - b. We don't know what twelve names are specifically engraved on these gates, but some of the older, more literal, translations say "the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" (or similar wording) which seems to suggest the twelve birth sons of Jacob. In that case, Dan would be included there as well.
 - c. We cannot be certain, but this would be consistent with Dan being clearly mentioned in the Millennial context.

NOTE: Here's the bottom line: we really don't know why Dan and Ephraim are omitted from this list in **Revelation Ch. 7**, or why, unconventionally, Levi is added, or why Manasseh is listed before his father, Joseph.

6. But the order of the names of the tribes that ARE listed are the only names and the only order that reveals that special Gospel message which I first shared last week and reviewed once more at the beginning of this lesson.
7. So, it seems that this message reaffirms a "Divine Purpose" when it's all said and done. God has HIS reasons for who is listed and how and why. We'll leave it in HIS hands.

II. There are the timeline considerations concerning this list of Twelve Tribes.

NOTE: As I've shared before, and likely will again at various points to come, the book of **Revelation** more or less follows a systematic chronological sequence. It moves from one point in time to the next one after that. This is generally the case.

- A. However, here and there, to lend a bigger picture of what is going on, **Revelation** does look forwards and backwards at various points to provide some clarity. We have that dynamic happening here in **Revelation Ch. 7** too, in **vss. 9-17**.
- B. In **vss. 9-17**, we see that an innumerable crowd "*from every nation, tribe, people, and language*" that have clearly come to saving faith as a result of the evangelistic ministry of the 144,000.
- C. In **Revelation 7:14**, the elder tells John that, "*These are they who have come out of the great Tribulation.*" It's clear from the elder's comments in that verse that this global mass of humanity is not only saved, but they are being accounted for here AFTER the seven years of the Tribulation are complete.
- D. **Chapter 7 of Revelation** jumps around a bit in terms of its perspectives. It gives us glimpses of the start of those seven years when they are sealed and protected, and it gives us glimpses of the end of those seven years when their ministry impact is made clear.

- E. What becomes abundantly obvious with both perspectives is that the impact of the 144,000 is very successful. What is also clear is the ministry of the 144,000 endures for all seven years.
1. These facts are reinforced in **vss. 16-17** where several statements are made that line up with specific judgments of the Tribulation. For example:
 - a. They will never hunger or thirst again.
 - b. The sun and scorching heat will no longer beat down upon them, etc.
 - c. These are insights to the impact of judgments like the Fourth Bowl Judgment which causes the sun to scorch the earth, and people, with fire.
 - d. It goes to show that those believers who go through the Tribulation will not be protected from God's judgments. They will have to endure some of them along with those who are unsaved.
 - e. This is important because some people erroneously believe that we will go through the Tribulation, but we will also be insulated from God's wrath as we do so. This, of course, is NOT supported in Scripture.

III. **The 144,000 are part of the supernatural worldwide regathering of the Jews back to their homeland.**

- A. From a prophetic standpoint, there are ONLY two regatherings of the Jews back to their ancestral homeland. I accept the Scriptures at face value, so it's evident to me that this is how things are laid out.
1. First, the Jewish people were to be regathered back to their ancestral homeland by a sovereign act of God (***Cf. Ezekiel Chapters 36 & 37***).
 - a. Historically, the early rumblings of this began with the Balfour Declaration.
 - b. The Balfour Declaration was issued towards the end of WW1, around 1917. It outlined Britain's intentions to establish a homeland for the Jewish people in the area, then called "Palestine" and now called "Israel."
 - c. These original efforts climaxed when Israel became a nation in 1948, and it started a strong regathering of Jews back to their nation.
 - d. For all practical reasons, that regathering continues today, and it is referred to now in our times as "Aliyah," which means "ascent" or "going up." It is about immigration of the Jews back into Israel.
 - e. IMPORTANT: The Jews today in this process of "Aliyah" remain in spiritual unbelief just as the Bible declared they would be (***Cf. Ezekiel 20:33-38; 22:17-22***)
 - f. You will often hear various pastors and teachers minimize any idea of modern-day Israel. They camp on the notion that because the Jews today are returning to Israel in a state of 'unbelief' that this cannot be prophetically significant (John Piper is a great case in point here..)
 - g. They fail to recognize that this state of unbelief is EXACTLY what the Bible predicts. Right now, the Jews, for the most part, do not recognize

Jesus Christ as their Messiah. This IS what the Bible says their spiritual condition will be at this present time.

- h. So, pastors and teachers that argue this point about unbelief to thinly disguise their own biases against the Jews and the Jewish state, are in fact failing to recognize the plain truth of Scripture or to responsibly teach it.
2. Second, because I feel future prophecies will be fulfilled just as literally as past prophecies were, I believe there will be a second worldwide regathering of the Jews to Israel.
- a. This future event will be different than the first one according to ***Isaiah 11:11-12:6***.
 - b. This passage concerns the future Millennial Kingdom, and it comments on the regathering of the Jews back to their nation a final time.
 - c. ***(Cf. Isaiah 11:10-11)***. Here, we see the next regathering will be the final such event, and it will signal Israel's imminent blessing as she enters the Millennial Kingdom.
 - d. So the sequence here becomes clear:
 - Israel will be reestablished as a nation by a sovereign act of God. That happened in May of 1948.
 - From that time to now, the Jews will return to Israel, but they are being gathered there in UNBELIEF.
 - The forthcoming seven years of Tribulation will be the time of "Jacob's Trouble." The focus of the Tribulation will be on the purging and redemption of the Jewish nation.
 - Those of them who persist in spiritual unbelief will die according to ***Zechariah 13:8-9*** which says:

"In the whole land," declares the LORD, "two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring through the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are My people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'"

- The Bible makes it clear that only the smaller portion will be spared. This is all laid out candidly in the Scriptures, so it's not hard to see.
 - The 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each of 12 tribes, in ***Revelation Ch. 7***, are PART OF this one-third that will be spared by God. They are not the entirety of this one-third, but a portion of it.
 - What is already clear from what Scripture says, is representation from all 12 Tribes of Israel will be part of that smaller portion. God will not permit any portion of Jacob's sons to be entirely lost.
- B. This second, and final, worldwide regathering of Jews back to their ancestral homeland is a supernatural event. Jesus mentions this event in ***Matthew 24:30-31***.

1. This event takes place at His physical Second Coming. The text makes this clear
2. Angels will be sent out *‘to the four winds’* (that means all points on earth) to gather in His elect (the Jews; this is a Jewish-centric portion of God’s Word) and to bring them back to Israel.
3. This is in fulfillment of ***Isaiah 11:10-11***, and it is the SECOND, and the LAST regathering to Israel. This time, the regathering is in BELIEF.
4. The Bible is clear that none of the Jews who persist in UNBELIEF will make it through the Great Tribulation.
 - a. And that brings us to the second part of God’s Word which also discusses this group of 144,000, and that is ***Revelation Ch. 14:1-5***.

NOTE: This is one of those parts of ***Revelation*** that steps out of an orderly chronology, and looks briefly, all the way to the end of the Tribulation. It mentions the 144,000 and we learn several additional things about them:

- b. They are now on Mt. Zion (Israel) after the angels brought them back from the “four winds” that was mentioned in ***Matthew 24:30-31***. They are uniquely qualified and able to sing a “new song,” don’t ask me what it is since the Bible says no one knows it.
- c. They are celibate, pure, blameless, and loyal to God.
- d. They are “firstfruits to God.” This strongly suggests that they were supernaturally and sovereignly selected by God for salvation at the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation.
- e. They are the first portion of Jews to acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior before the Tribulation began. They are the first part of the one-third which will survive the Tribulation.
- f. When you add all these things up – my understanding is this is a group of young men, who prior to this point may not have even fully known their own ethnic and tribal heritage as Jews.
- g. However, God sovereignly chooses them for salvation, places His seal on their foreheads for protection. They have an evangelistic ministry that is highly effective throughout the entire Tribulation period.
- h. Ultimately, God supernaturally transports them to Israel as part of the second and final worldwide regathering of the Jews in BELIEF.

NOTE: This is all summarized well in ***Isaiah 66:19***, where the context is, once again, immediately before the final regathering of the Jews for the millennial age:

“I will set a sign among them (likely the Seal we have discussed), and I will send some of those who survive to the nations, to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians (famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations.” (NOTE: Some translations say “Gentiles”).

NOTE: A key point here from this passage, and from all the commentary and insight we’ve learned around it, is God will graciously grant Israel a second opportunity to be His witness nation.

This next time, they will not fail. Led by these 144,000 Jewish evangelists who are chosen, sealed, and protected at the start of the Tribulation, Israel will begin the process of being a light to the nations during the darkest time of earth’s history.

