

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. 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, ³ saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." 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: 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; 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; 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; 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. ⁹ After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *Be* to our God forever and ever. Amen." ¹³ Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" ¹⁴ And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. ¹⁶ They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; ¹⁷ for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Introduction

If I was to give a title to this chapter, it would be to quote the words of Habakkuk chapter 3 v. 2

"In wrath remember mercy"

The reason being is that in chapter 7 God is pausing for a moment.

He is pausing from the wrath that was poured out in chapter 6 to give us some good news before he continues His judgement in chapter 8 – 20.

There is a pause between the 6th and 7th seals.

This pause is allowed so that God can introduce us to two groups of people who will survive the great day of wrath.

The two groups of people are 144,000 Jews who are sealed by God and a vast crowd of Gentiles, too numerous to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language.

We are told that this group of people come out of the "Great Tribulation"

It is important today that we set the scene about the "Great Tribulation"

The outpouring of God's wrath that started in Chapter 6 will be preceded by the "Rapture" of the Church.

What do I mean by that statement?

Well first of all turn with me to 1 Thessalonians Chapter 4: v. 14-18.

¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

¹⁷Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The Greek word for “caught up” is the word “harpazo” which means to seize, to carry by force, or to snatch away.

So at some time in the future, every Christian will be snatched away from this earth to be with Jesus.

After this happens, the wrath of God will be poured out upon the unbelieving world.

There are other verses in the Bible that support this event and I have listed the important ones in the written text.

(Revelation 3: v. 10, Matthew 24: v.30-31, Daniel 12: v.1-2, Luke 17: v.34-37.)

After the Church has been taken up into Heaven, the outpouring of God’s wrath will begin as described from chapter 6.

This period is called the “Great Tribulation” (v. 14)

What we are going to look at this morning is a group of Jews who will be God’s instruments during the tribulation and also the fact that a large number of Gentiles will be saved during the tribulation, but many of them will be killed for their faith.

Before we look at these two groups of people I would like you to take note of Chapter 7: v. 1-3.

We are told that John saw four Angels standing at the four corners of the earth.

These Angels had the power to hold back any activity on the earth until 144,000 Jews were sealed by God.

This speaks to us of the importance of the sealing of these 144,000 Jews.

1. The Sealed Jews (v. 1-8)

John sees another Angel, in addition to those who were holding everything back. This Angel had the seal of the living God.

The Greek word used here for seal is the word that was often used for a signet ring.

Kings would use these rings to stamp into wax on documents or other important items.

This seal would affirm their authenticity and guarantee their security.

In Gen. 41:42 Pharaoh placed his own signet ring on Joseph’s finger as a symbol of his authority.

So we see that a seal denoted ownership and protection.

(John 6:27&2 Cor. 1:22)

Now in contrast to the seals of earthly rulers, the seal of the Angel was that of the living God.

Now we have a wonderful thing happening here.

God is guaranteeing the security of 144,000 Jews during the great tribulation.

So whatever happens, God is going to guarantee these 144,000 Jews, chosen by God during the worst ever period in the history of the world.

Only God Himself has the power and authority to do this.

In the O/T. God marked Israel with blood on their doorposts and lintels to protect them when the Angel of death killed the first born in Egypt.

God marked Rahab with a scarlet cord to keep her safe when everybody else in Jericho was being killed.

However, the illustration that nearly parallels the present passage comes from Ezekiel 9: 3-6.

³Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, who *had* the writer’s inkhorn at his side; ⁴and the LORD said to him, “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.” ⁵To the others He said in my hearing, “Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity.

⁶ Utterly slay old *and* young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom *is* the mark; and begin at My sanctuary.” So they began with the elders who *were* before the temple.

In the same way God’s mark was on his servants so that they would be protected from and preserved through the judgements yet to come.

(Rev. 9:4 says that they had the seal of God on their foreheads.)

The next question is who are the 144,000 Jews who are sealed?

In order to try and come up with a credible answer I am only going to use Bible verses.

There is only one other place in scripture that these 144,000 people are mentioned. Let us turn to Revelation Chapter 14: v. 1-5

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred *and* forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. ² And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. ³ They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred *and* forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. ⁴ These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from *among* men, *being* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. ⁵ And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

From this passage we discover the following facts about these 144,000.

Firstly, these people are always connected with the “Lamb” and follow Him wherever He goes. The “lamb” is Jesus. (v.1&4)

Secondly all these 144,000 were virgins.(v.4)

Thirdly these 144,000 were “first fruits” to God and the “lamb”.

Fourthly these 144,000 were without fault and no deceit was found in their mouth.

There is only one more piece of information that we need to note before we start digging in the rest of the Bible.

That bit of information is contained in Chapter 7: v. 4.

We are told in v. 4 that these 144,000 were taken from the tribes of the “children” of Israel.

With all the above information in hand we need to try and discover if there is a connection between these facts and other parts of the Bible that may give us clues to the identity of these 144,000.

Let us turn to 1 Corinthians Chapter 15: v.20.

²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is described as the “first fruits”

Immediately we have a connection between the resurrection of Jesus and these 144,000 Jews.

They are both described as “first fruits”.

(Note that the plural is used here)

Could it be that God would raise 144,000 Jews from the dead?

Yes, that is possible, but they would need to be virgins and also without fault, and have no deceit in their mouth.

Q. Where could God possibly find 144,000 Jewish children to meet this criteria?

Well, let us go to Isaiah Chapter 53: v. 8.

⁸ He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

It is clear that Isaiah Chapter 53 is a prophecy about the death of Jesus.

Isaiah asks the question, "who will declare His generation?"

Remember that when Jesus was two years old, Herod had all the babies, two years old and younger killed.

Let us go to these verses.

Matthew Chapter 2: v.13-16. (N.K.J.)

¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." ¹⁴ When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, ¹⁵ and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." ¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

Notice that the children who were killed were taken from Bethlehem and ALL its districts.

In the King James Bible, it mentions Bethlehem and all the coasts.

Every tribe of Israel had access to the coast.

Therefore, it is possible that every male child from all the tribes of Israel were killed.

Herod would not take any chances on any Jewish boy being alive in the whole of the tribes of Israel.

The next thing we need to notice is that Matthew quotes Jeremiah in connection with these killings.

Let us now go to this prophecy in Jeremiah.

Turn to Jeremiah 31: v. 15. – N.K.J.

¹⁵ Thus says the LORD: "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation *and* bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted for her children, Because they *are* no more."

Now look at what God says in v. 16 -17

¹⁶ Thus says the LORD: "Refrain your voice from weeping, And your eyes from tears; For your work shall be rewarded, says the LORD, And they shall come back from the land of the enemy. ¹⁷ There is hope in your future, says the LORD, That *your* children shall come back to their own border.

God promises that these murdered children will come back one day to their own border in Israel

This is an amazing promise from God, and it is right here in these verses and in the context of these murdered children.

One thing that we do know about these murdered children is that they were all virgins, being under two years old and it is likely that they would fit with all the requirements of the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation 7 and 14.

Could it be possible that these murdered Jewish children, will be raised from the dead in order to be Jesus Christ's evangelistic commandos during the great tribulation?

We know that God can do anything, so we know that He could do it if He wants to.

God promised in Jeremiah 31 that He was going to bring these murdered children back one day to their own border.

So we know that God will do it one day.

Q. Why not for the amazing job of working for Jesus during the great tribulation?

This may be a new thing in the book of Revelation for us to consider today, but what I have revealed to you is all in the Bible.

The Jehovah's witness movement believe that they are part of the 144,000 people mentioned here. Now you can tell them that they are definitely NOT.

The main thing to remember is that during the tribulation period, Jesus will work through 144,000 Jews who will be totally protected by God to do His work during this awful period in world history. God is doing this because in His wrath, He remembers mercy, which is the title of my message today.

The next thing we need to discover from verses 9-17 is who are all these people represented from all the nations, tribes, peoples and tongues?

The simple answer is contained in v. 14.

These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.

We have to stop here a moment.

We are told that these people have been washed clean by the blood of the lamb.

The New Testament has much to say about the "blood of the lamb"

Firstly, we need to identify the lamb. The Lamb is Jesus Christ.

To us blood indicates death and certainly the blood of the lamb speaks of the death of Jesus Christ.

However, to the Jews the blood also stood for LIFE.

The Jewish people were instructed by God, never to eat anything or drink anything with blood in it.

Why was this?

Well, the blood is the LIFE and the LIFE belongs to God.

When the New Testament speaks about the blood of Jesus Christ, it not only means His DEATH, but it also means His LIFE.

The blood of JESUS CHRIST stands for all that JESUS did in His LIFE and DEATH.

With this in mind let us see all that New Testament says about the blood of Jesus.

1. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from ALL sin. (1 John 1: v.7)
2. The blood of Jesus "justifies" us before a Holy God. It is as if we had never sinned. Justification is the act whereby a Holy God forgives sinful men and women based upon the shed blood of His son Jesus Christ.
(Romans 5: v. 9)
3. The blood of Jesus Christ "redeems" us. This means that it is the price that is paid to buy us back from punishment of our sin, from God's wrath, and from being in bondage to sin.
(Ephesians 1:v.7, 1 Peter 1:19)
4. The blood of Jesus Christ provides us with peace in our hearts as we face our own death. We also live a life with peace in our heart towards God. (Colossians 1: v. 20)
5. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses our conscience.
(Hebrews 9: v.14) We no longer need to have a guilty conscience for past sins which have been forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ.

The great work of Jesus Christ is to restore a lost relationship between God and man. He had to give up His life so that we might receive all of these that I have just mentioned.

What a wonderful saviour we have in Jesus!!!

Q. Do you know Him personally?

Q. Do you love Him Sincerely?

Q. Are you following Him in obedience?

If you are, then you will experience all that His blood was meant to achieve in your life here and now and for all eternity.

The second question is, what is the function of all these people who have had their robes washed in the blood of the lamb?

a) Service

Verse 15 enlightens us, their function is to serve God night and day.

They were prepared to serve God because they were clothed in white robes, having been washed white by the blood of the lamb.

They were Holy and Pure because of Jesus.

Serving God night and day was part of the task of the Levites and Priests.

(1 Chronicles 9: v. 33)

Although it was only the Jewish Levite Priests in the earthly Tabernacle and the earthly Temple, we discover in the Heavenly Temple all nations will be represented.

Everybody who is washed in the blood of the lamb can serve Jesus.

It is our function here on earth and also in Heaven.

Q. If you are a Christian how are you serving Jesus here on this earth?

b) Protection & Satisfaction

God will dwell amongst them and look after them.

He will provide all that they need, they will not be hungry or thirsty, there will be no tears and no danger, God will Shepherd them and lead them.

In v. 16 and 17 we have an introduction to Heaven.

It will be a place of total fulfilment and 100% satisfaction.

When Jesus was walking upon this earth He made many promises.

He said "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." (Matt. 5:v.6)

Jesus said " I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst." (John 6:v. 35)

Jesus said "whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." (John 4: v. 14)

Those who get to Heaven will find that these promises are true and real, but they can also be partially fulfilled here on this earth.

Augustine said "Our hearts are restless, until they rest in JESUS."

Q. Is your heart restless today?

Well rest in JESUS and you will find His promises to be true.

There is a very old English Hymn that contains these words.

O Christ, in thee my soul has found,
And found in thee alone,
The peace, the joy, I sought so long,
The bliss till now unknown.

Now none but Christ can satisfy,
None other name for me!
There's love, and life, and lasting joy,
Lord Jesus found in thee.

If you are not fully satisfied today, it means that either you have not YET found JESUS, or you have wandered away from Him.

You can either search for JESUS, return to JESUS, or ENJOY JESUS. These are the three choices for you today.