

c. Detailed

There are about 18 enumerations of the tribes of Israel in the Scriptures. In this one, Dan and Ephraim are omitted. This may well be due to their involvement in idolatry (Deut. 29:18-21). It does not mean that these tribes will not enjoy millennial participation, for the Word teaches they will be there (Ezek. 48:1-7, 23-29). It does indicate, however, that they will be preserved through the Tribulation without the sealing. It is almost a greater demonstration of grace than one can imagine. In their place, Levi and Joseph are mentioned. One of the major errors of the sects and isms of modern and past days is this: they have not identified these 144,000 as outlined in the Word--Israelites!

Conclusion The account of the horrible events of the Tribulation Period are broken by this parenthesis of God's grace. Through the intermediate use of angels, God sets aside 144,000 Israelites who are His servants (bondslaves). The ground for this is the blood of Christ. It could be no other. It is a faithful testimony that God is never left without a witness to His grace. It is not now nor will it be in the Tribulation Period. Have you personally through faith received the blood of Christ for the remission of your sins? Do it now!

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

"Tribulation Saints" (1)

Revelation 7:1-8

Introduction

1. The church has been raptured (4:1). The dreadful judgment of the Lord upon the earth-dwellers has come (6:1ff.). It is the Lamb of God, in all of His grace and judgment, Who is worthy to bring these judgments upon the earth (5:6, 7; 6:1).

2. The parallel between Revelation 6 and Matthew 24 is more than coincidental. It is a logical one. Mark how carefully God has provided this:

First seal: false Christs. Rev. 6:1,2; Matt. 24:4,5.

Second seal: wars. Rev. 6:3,4; Matt. 24:6,7.

Third seal: famines. Rev. 6:5,6; Matt. 24:7.

Fourth seal: pestilence and death. Rev. 6:7,8;
Matt. 24:7,8.

Fifth seal: martyrdoms. Rev. 6:9-11; Matt. 24:9-13.

Sixth seal: physical changes. Rev. 6:12-17; Matt.
24:29,30.

3. Before the seventh seal is broken (8:1), there is a gracious interlude. It is a divine parenthesis. It relates to a "seal" of a different order all together. The words "after this" (7:1) identify a change in content. The matter is not chronological, but it is a statement of fact. This chapter does not come between seals 6 and 7, rather prior to seal one! It is an answer to the question raised at the end of the previous chapter (6:17). God has those whom He will allow to withstand the day of His wrath. Here is an intervention of infinite grace! Look at it in detail:

1. INTERVENTION BY ANGELS vv. 1-3.

a. For judgment

1) Their numeration The Bible indicates there were four angels which came into the vision of John. This is a number of completeness and universality. It relates to the four "corners" of the earth and the four "winds" of the earth. Total coverage is in view.

2) Their action. Two statements are made about the angels. They are "standing." This is a perfect participle and points to an established position for them. The second verb is "holding" and is present tense indicating delegated control.

3) Their mission. It is clear that they are charged with the responsibility to "hurt" the earth, sea, and trees (vv. 1-3). This would be effected by "winds" which would continually "blow" upon these items mentioned (v. 1). The present tense of the verb supports this continual blowing! The "earth" is a reference to settled government; the "sea" to the nations and people of the earth; the "trees" to the might and pride of the earth. It should be noted that the angels had this great work "given" to them (v. 2). There is no inherent right with them nor anyone to "hurt" the earth, the sea, and the trees. God is sovereign.

NOTE: Angels are very active in the Book of Revelation (5:2-11; 8:3-11; 10:7; 14:18; 16:5,8; 19:17). Apparently, God delights to carry out His sovereign rule over the universe through His servants! Read how He controls the universe (Psa. 148:8; Amos 4:7,8,13; 5:8; Matt. 5:45). But He gives this, according to His will, to secondary agents. Here it is the angels who play a primary role. What an amazing God He is!

b. For deferment

1) Who involved? Here comes a special angelic agent (v. 2). This cannot refer to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is below His dignity as God (note the use of the "we" and "our" in v. 3). Hence, this is a specific agent of God sent forth to accomplish an infinite activity. One thing is certain: this angel had authority given to him to withhold activity on the part of the previously mentioned four.

2) How designated? The "seal" is again employed here to designate certain persons from destruction. The terrible judgment to come on the earth was to be held off for this activity. True believers of this age of grace are "sealed" by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13,14; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22). This concept carries with it such wonderful ideas as a) ownership, b) secrecy, c) a finished transaction, d) inviolability, and 3) a certain destina-

tion. Since the church is already raptured, it is seen here that God seals another group, Israel, as a witness for Himself during the Tribulation. The seal is worldwide as the "four winds" show (v. 1). It has O.T. precedent (Ezek. 9:1-11). The seal is designed to prohibit any harm to the persons sealed (v. 3). This does not mean that more than this number of Jews do not come out of the Tribulation, but it does teach that this number are sealed so as to come out of it.

3) When determined? The particle "until" gives the answer. God has many "untils" in His Word (actually one full page in a standard concordance, but note these: Jer. 32:5; Dan. 9:27; Matt. 14:25; Luke 21:24). The instruction here is that the movement in judgment against the earth-dwellers was not to begin "until" certain of Israel were sealed. God has His timing for everything! Beloved, whatever He does with you, it is "until" His purpose is realized!

2. ENUMERATION OF ISRAEL vv. 4-8.

a. Heard

John is not involved here in the counting nor in the seeing of the sealed persons. All he does is "hear" about it. That is enough. He put it down in the Word under the Spirit's guidance. Today we read about it and glorify God for it. We have knowledge before the time in relation to the event.

b. Specified

God has signified through His Word the precise figure involved: 144,000. This is an accurate figure and should not be taken as a symbol. If this is a symbol, then how is it possible to take other figures in the Revelation as accurate, for example the 1000 years of Revelation 20. Hence, here is a figure of Israelites whom God sets apart and seals for protection through the Tribulation Period. God has said it. We believe it. Twelve is the signature number of Israel. The number seems to connote rule, government, and earthly administration. Consider the number twelve in connection with Israel, the apostles, gates in New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12), and Israel represented by the twelve stones on the breastplate of the high priest (Ex. 28; Lev. 24).