

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

“The Great Tribulation”

Revelation 7:9-12

INTRODUCTION

1. The Great Tribulation has commenced (6:1). In the text, it follows the revelation of the Father’s throne (4:1-11) and the Son’s right to being Kinsman-Redeemer and possessing the title-deed to the universe (5:1-14).
2. Make no mistake about it. The six seals of the little book (6:1-17) parallel the events predicted by our Lord in the opening verses of His Olivet Discourse (Mt., 24:4, 5, 7, 8, 9-13, 29, 30).
3. Before the seventh seal is opened, God seals, through angels, 144,000 Jews on their foreheads. These represent 12,000 from the tribes of physical literal Israel (7:1-8). Dan and Ephraim are omitted from the enumeration, but are later listed among the tribes in the land distribution of the Millennium (Ezek. 48:1-7, 23-29). They pass through the Tribulation without the seal.
4. The sealed Israelites become the Lord’s witnesses during the Tribulation Period (Dan. 12:3). Their message is the “Gospel of the Kingdom” (Isa. 66:19; Mt. 24:14).
5. Does the preaching of the 144,000 accomplish anything? On the authority of Scripture -- yes! It appears that at least two specifics are possible: a) The reaching of the unreached (Mt. 24:14). This explains how the whole () inhabited world () will be Gospelized before the end (). b) The understanding of “sheep and goats” (Mt. 25:31-46). The “sheep” are among those “nations” who treated well the “brethren” (Jewish witnesses in the Tribulation).

Note: The dispensational interpretation of Scripture provides answers to many eschatological questions. Here are two of them.

6. How are those outside the 144,000 sealed brought to salvation? What information is provided in the Word? Consider what John saw.

JOHN’S VISION

1. THE MULTITUDE vv. 9, 10

Note: There is no doubt that this event follows the sealing of the 144,000. The text says “after these things” () v. 9. Two verbs assert the Vision of John: “I beheld” () and “I saw” (). Attention must be given!

a. The Multitude is Great

Two expressions are given to emphasize the largeness of the crowd ():

- 1) Great This is an adjective noting the size of the throng.

2) Unnumbered The imperfect tense of the verb “able” (could, KJV) is joined with an aorist (number) to show that it is utterly impossible to count the figure involved. The Greek verb for number () is only found a few times in the N.T. (here, Mt. 10:30; Lk 12:7). Surely, the Lord is not slack in reaching the world population in the Tribulation.

b. The Multitude is World-Wide

The use of words “nation, kindreds, people, and tongues” covers the gamut of the world. Moreover, the preposition “of” () connotes some from “out of” the groups mentioned. Further the adjective “all” () does not allow one exception in the counting. The world practices discrimination, but God is utterly blind indifferent to the ethnic origins of those whom He saves (cf. 5:9; 13:7; 14:6).

c. The Multitude is Before the Lord

The perfect tense verb “stand” () is significant. The multitude is able to stand (cf. 6:17). Surely this affirms a justified position in His presence. They are fully accredited before the “throne” (God the Father) and the Lamb (God the Son). The multitude, therefore, have dual rights. The persons of the Trinity are also obliquely shown to be co-equal. The double preposition () strengthens the thought.

d. The Multitude is Victorious

This is plainly seen by the white robes and the palms. The perfect passive participle () denotes the crowd is “cast around with” the white robes. The matter is provided (passive) and complete (perfect tense). The “robes” indicate God’s perfect righteousness. The palms in the hands connote victory and triumph. This group has arrived in His presence and there is no doubt about the future! What an incredible display of God’s grace!

e. The Multitude is Vocal

The present tenses of the verbs “crying” and “saying” assert continuous action. These people cease not to raise their voices in praise to “our” God. The articulation of the multitude is “salvation” and that with a “loud voice.” Now that is one wonderful shout which keeps on and on! To Whom? God the Father “on the Throne” (cf. 4:1-11) and the “Lamb” (cf. 5:1-14). It is the Father who “sits” (pres. participle), but one preposition () shows the unity within the divine economy.

NOTE: “Salvation” is obviously a completed fact. The term includes all that God does for a believing sinner to take him from earth to glory. Here it is fully done.

2. THE ANGELS vv. 11, 12

The verbs “I saw” and “behold” extend beyond the “multitude” to “all the angels.” Here, John’s vision is continued.

a. The Angels Stood

The perfect passive verb is employed like an imperfect. Therefore, the angels continually stood around about (in a circle) the throne, elders, and four beasts. Angelic beings have their role to play in connection with the salvation of the Tribulation multitudes (cf. Lk 15:7, 10).

b. The Angels Fell

The verb “fell” () is linked with the verb “worshipped” () teaching that worship is not associated with clapping of hands, etc., but prostration “before the throne” and “on their faces.” Angels are not to be worshipped, since they are created by God, but belong on their faces before God.

c. The Angels Spoke

The Angels give seven wonderful attributions to God: blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might. Each attribution has its own article to accent each with forcefulness. These expressions of praise are started and ended with “amen.” The first “amen” may well be a response to the “cry” of the multitude. The last “amen” is an affirmation of truthfulness to their own praise.

Conclusion Do you know the reality of the multitude? Can you say what the angels say? May you answer “yes” in honesty?