

GRACE IN THE TRIBULATION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. NEED FOR THIS STUDY

Usual treatment of grace. The subject of God's manifestation of grace, as presented by the majority of writers and commentators, is confined, for the most part, to the present dispensation. The reason for this is quite understandable and can no doubt be attributed to the fact that this dispensation, in contrast to all other periods of God's dealing with man, is commonly designated as the age of grace.

The fact, however, must not be overlooked that much has been written concerning God's gracious dealings with man apart from the present age. In fact, some take great pains to point out exhibitions of grace under law in an effort to display the unlimited love of God throughout time and eternity.

Usual treatment of the tribulation. Even though many are quick to point out God's numerous bestowals of grace in the remaining periods, one generally finds the wrath of God emphasized when the tribulation period is discussed. Any reference to grace in the tribulation has only been incidental, and generally made only when commenting on individual passages.

The emphasis upon the wrath of God is obviously in order since the tribulation period is fundamentally described as a time of judgment, calamity, and distress upon the earth that has never been equaled in history. The fact remains, however, that the grace of God is by no means absent during the tribulation.

Conclusion. On the basis of this usual emphasis upon judgment and obvious lack in respect to God's grace, the need was recognized for a systematic and accurate presentation of the evident manifestation and bestowal of divine grace in the tribulation period.

II. NATURE OF THIS STUDY

The subject of God's grace as noted throughout His marvelous plan of the ages is by no means one of major emphasis in the tribulation period, but since its presence is quite obvious in this time of judgment, it must definitely be important and should not be neglected.

Procedure of this study. The procedure will be to deal with the three groups receiving benefits of God's grace in the tribulation period, dealing firstly with the individual Israelites, and secondly with the individual Gentiles. Finally, the bestowal of grace upon the nation of Israel as a unified group will be dealt with in detail.

Purpose of this study. The three groups will be examined in a similar manner, setting forth the subjects, the substance, the method, and the results of the bestowal. These aspects will be dealt with, as previously stated, in an effort to accurately and informatively display the unspeakable riches of God's grace, and bring glory to Him who has so wisely designed the program of the ages.

CHAPTER II

GRACE BESTOWED TO THE INDIVIDUAL ISRAELITES

Numerous Old Testament passages reveal a future outpouring of God's grace upon the Israelites (Jer. 30:7; Joel 2:31-32; Zech. 13:1, 8-9), particularly in reference to salvation. From an observation of these passages, it is normally concluded that the Old Testament predictions regarding the salvation of the Jews principally depict their conversion as a nation.

The fact, however, might well be noted, as Pentecost points out:

It should be borne in mind that, while the emphasis is placed on the national salvation, that national salvation must be preceded by individual salvation. Paul himself (Rom. 9:6) restricts the "all Israel" of Romans 11:26 to the saved individuals. Thus, in the Old Testament any promise of salvation must include both aspects.¹

It is quite obvious that this salvation has not yet been experienced by Israel. Consequently, three factors remain which would seem to indicate that this salvation must occur during the tribulation period. First, the promises are specifically related to the Day of the Lord, or "that day." Second, it must occur to the nation during a time

¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, p. 267.

when God is dealing with them as a nation, which He will do again in the tribulation. In the third place, it must necessarily take place before the institution of the millennium since only saved Israelites will enter therein. The first two factors indicate that this salvation cannot occur before the tribulation begins, and the third would necessitate its occurrence before the millennium, which logically places this gracious act of God somewhere in the tribulation period.

Two visions are contained in the seventh chapter of Revelation which appeared to John. The first vision is referred to in verses one through eight and relates to the five angels and the sealing of the 144,000 from among the twelve tribes of Israel. The record of the second vision is presented in the remaining verses of the chapter and refers to the great multitude composed of a select group from all nations, kindreds, peoples, and tongues.

These visions, though placed between the sixth and seventh seals, do not have any chronological relationship to them. Placed in the midst of the unfolding drama of God's judgment, as set forth in chapters six through seventeen of Revelation, they serve as a parenthetical revelation of the grace of God. Scott has written concerning this fact, and he declares:

The contents of our chapter form no part of events

under the Seals. There is no historical sequence... Thus between the sixth and seventh, yet forming no part of either, a deeply interesting episode of blessing ... is introduced. The course of judgments is suspended and the veil drawn aside that we may witness the heart of our God. It is not all judgment in those dark and evil days. It must not be supposed, however, that the salvation of these respective companies from amongst Israel and the Gentiles necessarily takes places between the sixth and seventh Seals... The chapter is without dates.²

Thus the first eight verses of this seventh chapter form the central passage revealing God's bestowal of grace to the individual Israelites in the tribulation period. It is to the explanation of this bestowal that attention is now given. The discussion concerns the subjects, substance, method, and results of the bestowal.

I. THE SUBJECTS OF THE BESTOWAL

This first vision in Revelation 7:1-8 deals specifically with a rather well defined group. Verse four states that this great host is composed of 144,000, and verses five through eight indicate that this total number is made up of 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, which are in turn individually named. In spite of this detailed explanation, much confusion has arisen over the identification of this group. Seiss discusses this disturbing situation as he writes:

² Walter Scott, Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 162.

Who then are these 144,000 sealed ones? This is a vital question in the right interpretation of this part of holy writ. But very conflicting and uncertain have been the answers generally given to it. Many writers are so perplexed and confounded with it, that they scarcely presume to answer it, and seek to quiet inquiry by saying that the subject is too difficult for man to handle.³

In light of a multiplicity of designations, the following is given over to the identity of this group.

Mistaken identity. Many are quick to find the church represented by this group, as does Simpson when he declares:

These, as we shall see later, are not Jews, but they are corresponding people of God, representing the Bride of Christ, the Gentile Church; or perhaps more correctly, the Church of Christ of no particular race or family, but every race and tongue.⁴

For quite obvious reasons, verses one through eight can have no application to the earthly or heavenly church. The first and most elementary fact, as Gaebelien points out, is that the church is already complete and has been translated to glory.⁵ The second reason concerns the specific and detailed references to the twelve tribes of Israel, both individually and collectively. To call Israel the church is a serious mistake made by many, which creates more problems than it solves. The comments of Seiss are most emphatic at

³ Joseph A. Seiss, The Apocalypse, pp. 160-61.

⁴ A. B. Simpson, Heaven Opened, p. 141.

⁵ A. C. Gaebelien, The Revelation, p. 57.

this point, as he states:

No wonder, therefore, that they cannot find a consistent interpretation of a vision of grace which is predicated of Jacob's literal seed, in contradistinction from all others. Nor is there a vice or device of sacred hermeneutics, which so beclouds the Scriptures, and so unsettles the faith of men, as this constant attempt to read Church for Israel, and Christian peoples for Jewish tribes. As I read the bible, when God says "Children of Israel," I do not understand Him to mean any but people of Jewish blood, be they Christians or not; and when He speaks of the twelve tribes of the sons of Jacob, and gives the names of the tribes, it is impossible for me to believe that He means Gentiles, in any sense or degree, whether they be believers or not.⁶

Not only has it been the mistake of many to find the church referred to in these verses, but numerous small sects today claim to be the 144,000. This claim, writes Gaebelein, is made by a number of Holiness sects, Advent sects, healers, Pentecostal people and others.⁷

Ironside comments upon the unreasonableness of these groups in the following statement:

Besides these, there are many other sects, whose leaders consider their own peculiar followers will be the hundred and forty-four thousand sealed ones at the time of the end. All of these, however, overlook a very simple fact, which, if observed, would save them from their folly. That is, the hundred and forty-four thousand are composed of twelve thousand from each tribe of the children of Israel. There is not a Gentile among them, nor is there confusion as to tribe. Whenever I meet people who tell me they belong to the hundred and forty-four thousand, I always ask them, "Which tribe, please?" and they are invariably put to confusion for

⁶ Seiss, *loc. cit.*

⁷ Gaebelein, *loc. cit.*

want of an answer.⁸

Thus, it seems logical to conclude that the 144,000 cannot be identified as the church, nor can the classification presented in the passage in question be applied to any sect or group existing today.

Correct identity. The correct identity of this large group will serve to cast some light on the benefits received from God's gracious act. The preference of designation usually revolves around the application of a literal or mystical interpretation. As Grant questions, "Is it in fact Israel literally, or a typical spiritual Israel that we are to think of?"⁹

Those who hold to a mystical or symbolical interpretation, and they are not few in number, arrive at many different and strange conclusions. Lange is typical of this group, as he writes:

So far as Jews are concerned, those commentators are entirely at odds with the text who teach that the Jews in a literal sense are intended here. As surely as the New Jerusalem of Chapter xxi, cannot denote a new Jewish city; ... just so surely are the people of Israel, here, representative of the whole body of the people God....

Be it observed, moreover, that if the symbolical

⁸ H. A. Ironside, Lectures on the Book of Revelation, pp. 124-25.

⁹ F. W. Grant, The Revelation of Christ, p. 72.

Significance be lost sight of in the leading matter, the Twelve Tribes must also be taken literally; as also the 12,000 of every Tribe; the omission of the Tribe of Dan, and everything else.

...what we have here, therefore, is not a special scene from the last time, but an entirely new cycle of the whole New Testament time which, as a whole, is eschatological;--a heavenly portrait of the ideal Church.¹⁰

In spite of such statements, a close observation of the record reveals that the language used in this passage is very clear and plain, and no indication is given that this should be taken symbolically. Grant contends for the literal sense here as he sets forth strong arguments from the context:

The context argues for the literal sense. The innumerable multitude seen afterward before the throne, "out of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues," shows us plainly a characteristically Gentile gathering, and that they are in some sense in contrast with the Israelitish one seems clear. Taken together, they throw light upon one another, and display the divine mercy both to Jews and Gentiles in the latter days. While the separatedness of these companies, and the priority given to Israel, agree with the character of a time when the Christian Church being removed to heaven, the old distinctions are again in force.¹¹

This sealed company from the twelve tribes plainly and literally sets Israel before us. Along this same line, Ottman succinctly notes, "To assert that Israel is not intended is to make language mean anything man may choose

¹⁰ John Peter Lange, The Revelation, p. 182.

¹¹ Grant, op. cit., pp. 72-73.

to make it."¹²

II. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE BESTOWAL

Each member of this group, composed of individual Israelites, was a recipient of definite acts of God's marvelous grace. These specific acts reveal the substance of this bestowal as they effect (sic) the individuals both inwardly and outwardly.

Outward. Since the first eight verses of chapter seven are concerned with the 144,000 sealed servants of God, an investigation of the outward nature of this sealing seems to be in order at this point.

There has been considerable question as to the visible character of the seal. Most futurists hold for a visible seal. Govett argues strongly in this direction when he writes:

That the mark left by the seal is an object of sight seems proved by these considerations.

1. The locusts, though animals possessed of but small intelligence, are able to see it, and respect it.
2. The sign of the old covenant was a mark visible in the flesh.
3. The sign of God's servants in Egypt was the visible mark of blood on the door.
4. Satan imitates God: and his mark . . . is assuredly visible. xiii.
5. The sign set on Cain to preserve him was literal.¹³

¹² Ford C. Ottman, The Unfolding of the Ages, p. 180.

¹³ Robert Govett, The Apocalypse, p. 152.

Seiss writes concerning this, and he points out a parallel between the sealing referred to herein and the sealing discussed in Ezekiel 9:3-4. Arriving at a conclusion, he states:

That mark was to be a visible means of identifying those who receive it, and of securing their safety in the midst of general destruction. And so these 144,000 have impressed upon them some manifest token, at least as conspicuous (sic) and prominent as a physical inscription upon their foreheads, if not, indeed a physical mark. It is described as a sealing "in their foreheads," and as the "Father's name written in their foreheads," (Rev. 9:4; 14:1), and cannot be otherwise than something particularly distinguishing.¹⁴

Thus, in concurrence with the above writers, it seems reasonable to assume that the seal is probably a visible one, and as the text clearly implies, is for the purpose of physical preservation throughout the tribulation period. As Scott concisely indicates:

"The seal of the living God" implies immunity from death, and the seal upon the forehead intimates public open acknowledgment that those who are sealed belong to God.¹⁵

Inward. Not only did this sealing effect (sic) the 144,000 outwardly, but it had its inward effects as well.

The record in chapter seven seems to imply a spiritual salvation for this number. Kopecky comments on this matter of implied spiritual salvation as he makes the following

¹⁴ Seiss, op. cit., pp. 164-65.

¹⁵ Scott, op. cit., p. 165.

observation:

Salvation is, strictly speaking, not predicated here of the 144,000. They are said rather to be "sealed" by the angels of verse 2. However, salvation is implied not only by the sealing, but by the fact that they are called "servants of our God" (verse 3).¹⁶

Pentecost argues along this same line with a somewhat fuller statement, as he declares:

In this passage the circumstances of their salvation are only implied. The fact that they are said to "have the seal of the living God" implies their salvation, for the seal is the designation of ownership. Again their salvation is implied in that they are called "the servants of our God." Such a designation could only be ascribed to saved individuals.¹⁷

Having observed that spiritual salvation is implied in chapter seven, as investigation of chapter fourteen gives assurance of this fact. Pentecost is noted once again as he quite significantly concludes:

In chapter fourteen these 144,000 are specifically said to be "redeemed from among men" (v. 4), and are "the firstfruits unto God." The fact that they are associated with the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders in the worship of God assures their salvation.¹⁸

Not only did this group receive spiritual salvation, but they are reported to possess and manifest an unusually pure testimony in this time of great wickedness. They are

¹⁶ Donald W. Kopecky, "Salvation in the Tribulation," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 109:360, October, 1952.

¹⁷ J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, p. 269.

¹⁸ Ibid.

described in Revelation 14:4-5 as being undefiled by the common adulterous practices of that day. Their mouths gave forth only pure speech and they were faultless before the throne of God. As Seiss so aptly states: "The whole spirit of the record shows, that this their extraordinary sealing is connected with, and based upon, their extraordinary spiritual characteristics."¹⁹

III. THE METHOD OF THE BESTOWAL

Having pointed out the substance of God's grace, as granted to the 144,000, attention is now given to the method God employs in carrying out this bestowal. Three distinct persons, or groups of persons, are directly mentioned, who seem to be responsible for some definite functions in this event. They will be considered in order of their appearance in the text, in an effort to set forth the method of the bestowal.

The four angels. In observing Revelation 7, it is revealed that the four angels, in verses one and two, are assigned to the ministry of holding fast the four winds of the earth. This ministry performed by the angels provides the necessary protection for this great congregation until God's divine sealing is completed. Once again the hand of

¹⁹ Seiss, loc. cit.

God reaches forth to exert His sovereign power even over the forces of nature, that He might bestow His matchless grace upon a chosen group. This holding back of judgment seems most important to the bestowal for it is essential that it be carried out until the last one of this great host has been sealed. Concerning this matter, Seiss writes:

But in the midst of wrath, God remembers mercy.... Though the heavens and the earth are terrifically shaken, and the whole system of nature is thrown into commotion, as if on the verge of utter ruin, there is a lull in the storm; the angels who have charge of the disturbing blasts are commanded to hold them back for a season; and a scene of calm, and of gracious manifestation to certain of the children of men, ensues, before the great and terrible day of the Lord advances to its meridian.... still Divine compassion lingers, grace has not entirely departed, and the merciful act of the sealing of the 144,000 has to be completed before another step in the succession of judicial wonders can occur.²⁰

“Another angel” and his company. The sealing of the 144,000 is carried out by angelic beings led by “another angel” who is evidently a distinguished spiritual being having an exalted mission. Lincoln²¹ and Govett²² are two prominent commentators who argue that the one referred to as “another angel” is none other than Christ, but the text seems quite clearly to indicate differently. The words and

²⁰ Ibid., p. 160.

²¹ W. Lincoln, Lectures on the Book of Revelation, pp. 124-25.

²² Robert Govett, The Apocalypse, p. 152.

ministry of this angelic being presented here reveal rather strong evidence that he is not Christ.

Grant relates this distinction as follows:

The sealing is angelic,--a very different thing therefore from present sealing with the Holy Ghost, and from any power or gift of the Spirit. No angel could confer this, and the creaturehood of the angel here is manifest from his words, "Till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." The "we" shows that more than one execute the ministry, and they that do this speak of God as "our God."²³

Scott also argues in favor of angelic beings as opposed to Christ in this passage.²⁴

God the Father. The powerful force behind this bestowal of grace is evidently realized in the person of God the Father. This is very evident in the sealing, since the seal in verse two is said to be the "seal of the living God," and verse three indicates that the sealed ones are "the servants of our God.

IV. THE RESULTS OF THE BESTOWAL

The grace of God bestowed to individuals down through the ages has brought, and continues to bring about marvelous results in and for those who are the recipients. Scripture reveals that God's grace will bring about marvelous results in and for those who are the recipients. Scripture reveals that God's grace will bring about marvelous results of

²³ Grant, op. cit., p. 75.

²⁴ Scott, op. cit., pp. 164-65.

a similar nature even in the midst of severe judgment. The purpose of this section is to point out the major and more obvious results of God's grace bestowed upon the 144,000 at this time.

Spiritual salvation. As previously indicated, the language of Revelation 7 and 14 seems to clearly imply a spiritual salvation for this group. The spiritual aspect naturally carries with it the idea of personal cleansing, as well as future blessings, both millennial and eternal. These Jews have been made acceptable to God and therefore are entitled to all of these blessings.

Physical preservation. It has also been pointed out in an earlier discussion in this chapter, that the possession of the visible seal insures physical preservation throughout this period of terrible judgment.

The reality of this physical preservation is most vividly portrayed in Revelation 9:4, as the locusts are commanded to hurt only those not possessing the seal of God. This is unquestionably a most vital result of God's gracious action. Jennings comments on this passage as he writes:

Outwardly, at a time of which this trumpet treats, it will doubtless look as if it were the God-fearing remnant of Israel that was suffering everything, whilst the mass, on the side of the persecutors, were in comparative ease and comfort. So flesh might judge, but God withdraws the veil and bids us look beneath the surface, and lo, at

once, in His light, everything is reversed; the afflicted remnant are treading on the scorpions . . . whilst the apostate mass are suffering from their stings.²⁵

Special ministration. Perhaps the most significant result of God's bestowal of grace is seen in the special ministry of this group as God graciously grants to them the privilege of serving Him in a distinctive manner.

It is pointed out by many that those included in the innumerable company referred to in the latter half of Revelation 7 are the fruitage of the labor of the servants of God, the 144,000.

Gaebelein remarks concerning their ministry:

This sealed company also bears a great testimony. They are the preachers of the Gospel of the Kingdom, as a witness to all nations before the end comes (Matt. xxiv:14). Therefore during the time when the judgments are executed from above there will be a worldwide preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom, proclaiming the coming of the King, calling to repentance and faith in His Name, and offering mercy still.²⁶

This privilege of serving is manifested in two further specific measures, First, the provision for service illustrated a granting of preparatory grace. The text reveals that the multitude reached was of all nations, kindreds, peoples and tongues. It seems only logical that the 144,000, having been scattered before the tribulation begins, will have

²⁵ F. C. Jennings, Studies in Revelation, pp. 260-261.

²⁶ Gaebelein, op. cit., p. 58.

knowledge of numerous languages. Kopecky makes the following observation:

In the description they are said to be out of every nation. Undoubtedly, therefore, the preachers who will have given them the message of salvation must have evangelized people of every nation and language in the world. The 144,000, having been scattered before the tribulation begins, will have known all languages of the world at that time.²⁷

Thus, it seems reasonable to concur with the above writer and further conclude that God's preparatory grace will provide for a removal of language barriers in the ministry of this group. They will be able to minister to the world in that day unhindered by any language difficulty.

Second in the discussion of the privilege of service, the permission to serve must be given consideration. How strange that God would select this great host of Israelites to be His ministers; for it was the Israelites, to whom God had shown so much favor and kindness, who turned from Jehovah and His ways innumerable times. Yes, these same Israelites had rejected God's only Son at His first coming, now are sealed and chosen to serve this Christ they rejected. Only the matchless grace of God could result in such a privilege.

²⁷ Kopecky, loc. cit.

CHAPTER III

GRACE BESTOWED TO THE INDIVIDUAL GENTILES

Not only does the Word of God reveal a marvelous bestowal of God's grace to the individual Israelites, but a great host of Gentiles as well, are the objects of a gracious outpouring of blessing during this time of harsh judgment. This too, was promised in the Old Testament, particularly as it was revealed to the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 2:2, 4; 60:3, 5; 62:2).

During His earthly ministry, Christ also spoke of these promises, as Pentecost states:

Not only does the Old Testament predict the salvation of Israelites before the coming of the Lord, but a host of Gentiles as well.

.....

The Lord, during His earthly ministry, reiterated the same promises in such passages as Matthew 13:47-50; Matthew 24:13; and John 3:1-21. The promises were not nullified.²⁸

The Scriptures also give us a picture of the fulfillment of these promises. It is to this fulfillment, as recorded in Revelation 7, that attention is now given. The first eight verses of Revelation 7 present the principal details of the bestowal of grace to the individual Jews, and

²⁸ J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, p. 268.

the concluding verses of the chapter serve as the central passage, setting forth Gentile blessing in the tribulation. The discussion of this bestowal of grace to the individual Gentiles will be treated in respect to its subjects, substance, method, and results.

I. THE SUBJECTS OF THE BESTOWAL

There are a number of important factors which set forth the innumerable company, described in Revelation 7:9-17, in sharp contrast to the 144,000 of verses one through seven. Swete shows keen perception as he briefly sets forth these distinctions:

The second vision, introduced by a fresh *μετα ταυτα*, presents a series of sharp contrasts when compared with the first. In the first, the concourse can be counted; in the second, it is incalculably great. In the first, it is drawn from the twelve tribes of Israel; in the second, from every nation. In the first, it is being prepared for imminent peril; in the second, it is victorious and secure.²⁹

In spite of these clear and quite obvious distinctions presented in the text, much confusion yet remains as to the identity of this multitude.

In view of this confusion, the following concerns the identification of this group. The mistaken identity will be considered first, followed by a presentation of the correct

²⁹ Henry B. Swete, The Apocalypse of St. John, p. 99.

identity.

Mistaken identity. Some commentators, however a minority, seem to confuse the identity of this mixed multitude with the Israelites of the preceding vision, concluding that both groups refer to the whole company of the redeemed. Mauro is guilty of clouding the issue in this manner as he writes:

This vision I regard as another pictora representation of the whole company of the redeemed supplementing that which immediately precedes it, and showing details that could not be introduced into the preceding vision. Indeed, what is given in verses 4-8 is not strictly a “vision” at all. Those verses only record what John “heard” concerning “the number of them which were sealed.” But now he is given to see them: and lo, it is an innumerable company gathered out of all nations, kindreds, peoples, and tongues of the earth.³⁰

At this point it would seem well to note the words of Kopecky concerning this and similar interpretations when he says:

The innumerable company of Gentiles (verses 8-17) are not to be confused in any manner with the Israelites of the preceding verses. . . . It is true that they are to share in the kingdom blessings with Israel as has already been pointed out: but their separate identity is maintained here.³¹

The most common error, in the identification of this great host, is to see the church, in any form, in this

³⁰ Philip Mauro, The Patmos Visions, p. 257.

³¹ Donald W. Kopecky, "Salvation in the Tribulation," Bibliotheca Sacra, 109:360, October 1952.

passage. C. A. Scott is typical of those who hold this view. He declared:

The seventh chapter of the apocalypse contains a vision, that of the “multitude which no man could number,” which is among the most familiar and most highly treasure passages in the book. The meaning of this vision stands little in need of explanation; its value is not to be enhanced by exposition. It speaks straight to the heart of every Christian. The picture of the church triumphant, drawn “out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues.” offering the praise of heaven to God and the Lamb.³²

Lange³³ and Govett³⁴ are among the commentators in this camp, and heartily agree with the above writer as they argue for the church in this portion of Revelation 7.

If the plain statements of the text are observed, it seems quite unreasonable to conclude that these verses speak of the church in any form whatsoever. The statements of Gaebelein are very strong and pointed as he comments on this error:

The application of this passage of Scripture to the redeemed Church in glory is wrong. This Scripture does not apply to the Church in glory, but to saved Gentiles on earth. . . . The church enters the glory before that great tribulation begins.³⁵

From an observation of the above statements, it seems

³² C. A. Scott, The Book of the Revelation, p. 190

³³ John Peter Lange, The Revelation of John, pp. 184-85.

³⁴ Robert Govett, The Apocalypse, pp. 157-59.

³⁵ A. C. Gaebelein, The Revelation, p. 59.

logical to conclude that the multitude referred to in these verses can not be legitimately confused with the 144,000, nor can this passage have any possible reference to the church. These conclusions will find further support in a presentation of the correct identity which follows.

Correct identity. As previously pointed out, the clear statements of the text serve as a basis for the proper identity of this great host of Gentiles, particularly as stated in verse fourteen. In verse thirteen there is direct questioning concerning this identification, and since verse fourteen contains an obvious answer to the questioning, it seems only reasonable that sufficient ground for a proper identification should be contained therein. “These are they which came out of the great tribulation” (Rev. 7:14) is the determining statement for the identification. This statement in itself, is sufficient to indicate that these are none other than tribulation saints; not the church or the 144,000. The words of Grant are very significant at this point, as he writes:

This expression, “the great tribulation,” is one that rules in the interpretation of this scene as should be evident. When people simply read, “out of great tribulation” it was natural to think of all the redeemed of all generations as being included here, and the multitude and universality of the throng thus gathered would confirm the idea; but now it ought to be no longer possible. That it is “the great tribulation” is even emphasized in the original--”The tribulation, the great one,”--to forbid all generalizing in this way. We are reminded of one

specific one, which as thus named we are expected to know; and he who will take Scripture simply will surely find without difficulty, the one intended. . . . and there is scarcely need to remind our readers that the “great tribulation” of which our Lord spoke to His disciples, “such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be,” which is shortened by divine grace for otherwise “no flesh should be saved,” and at the close of which they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven,” must needs be that out of which the multitude before us come.³⁶

Thus in concurrence with the above writer, as well as such prominent commentators as Kelly,³⁷ Gaebelien,³⁸ and Ironside,³⁹ this innumerable multitude can properly be identified as the saints of God, saved in the period of great tribulation which follows the rapture of the church and precedes the second advent of Christ. The remarks of Scott present an accurate conclusion in respect to the identity of this group when he declares:

The palm-bearing Gentile multitude must not be confounded either with the Church or with Israel. The innumerable multitude here beheld in vision is the fruit of an extensive work of grace begun immediately or soon after the translation of the heavenly saints (1 Thess. 4), and continued during the future prophetic week of seven years (Matt. 24. 14). this world-wide testimony actively carried on between the Translation and the Appearing will be signally owned of God. Thus ample time under the good and controlling hand of God is afforded for the mighty work of grace, which in extensive

³⁶ F. W. Grant, The Revelation of Christ, p. 79.

³⁷ William Kelly, Lectures on the Revelation, pp. 159-60.

³⁸ Gaebelien, loc. cit.

³⁹ H. A. Ironside, Lectures on the Book of Revelation, pp. 128-29.

results remind us of the palmy days of Pentecost.

We may also note another interesting distinction between the two companies of millennial saints in our chapter. The elect of Israel are beheld before they enter into “the time of Jacob’s a trouble,” whereas the Gentile saved multitude are here witnessed after having come out of “the great tribulation.”⁴⁰

II. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE BESTOWAL

Having established a proper identity of this Gentile host, attention is now turned to a consideration of the substance of this bestowal of grace. This is composed principally of present spiritual salvation and future blessings for the individuals involved.

Present spiritual salvation. The salvation spoken of by this multitude, of which they partake during the tribulation, must first be realized as a most gracious act on God’s behalf. The passage reveals that the foundation their salvation is the blood of the Lamb. Gaebelein remarks concerning this salvation as follows:

The great multitude represents those Gentiles who will hear the final testimony and believe. They will have turned in repentance to Him and will be washed in His precious Blood. Our Lord speaks of them in the great judgment of the nations as sheep, who stand at His right hand and inherit the Kingdom (Matt. xxv:31, etc.).⁴¹

⁴⁰ Walter Scott, Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 167.

⁴¹ Gaebelein, loc. cit.

It would seem permissible to conclude that the fact of this saving, on the part of God, is as marvelous a bestowal and blessing of His grace as the salvation received in this age. When one considers the darkness of the time and circumstances of this bestowal, it appears even reasonable to conceive that this will possibly be a greater manifestation of God's grace. This multitude has been saved out of a time of great tribulation; a time when the wrath of God is being poured out upon mankind. Apart from the marvelous and miraculous grace of God, the salvation of this innumerable company would be inconceivable.

Future blessings. The reality of salvation, not only here, but throughout the word of God, naturally implies many future blessings. Not only are these blessings implied in this instance, but the very nature of them is clearly indicated in the text. Some idea of this can be gathered from an observation of the character of those receiving the blessings. The place of blessing is said to be "before the throne of God," (Rev. 7:15) Which naturally requires a cleansed and purified nature. Kopecky comments on the significance of their position when he states:

They are "before the throne of God." the Greek word for "before" is used in Luke 1:75; Acts 7:46; 10:33; 2 Corinthians 4:2 ; 7:12, to mean "in the approving sight of God." Thus it is indicated that they have a perfect standing before God.⁴²

⁴² Kopecky, op. cit., p. 361.

The future blessings, with all the privileges and gracious responsibilities involved, are simply noted at this point. The characteristics and implications of these blessings will be discussed more fully under the results of the bestowal to follow.

III. THE METHOD OF THE BESTOWAL

As one attempts to study the scriptures, and observe the gracious works of God from Genesis through Revelation, he cannot fail to see the marvelous planning and providing involved as God so wonderfully prepares instruments for His use, and marks out channels through which His grace might be manifested. The method of God's bestowal in this particular instance in question is seen through an observation of the ministry of those involved as His instruments and channels of blessing.

The Lamb. As the apostle John mentions in his gospel record, "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17), so it will again be realized in this period of tribulation yet to come, since Christ, the Lamb, will be directly responsible for the salvation of this great multitude. The salvation of this innumerable host is quite obviously dependent upon the ministry of the Lamb, who could be none other than Christ, the shedding of whose blood is the basis for

salvation in all dispensations.

It must also be noted that the text clearly indicates the future blessings to be dependent upon the ministry of the Lamb. The comments of Scott are quite fitting at this point. He states:

The Lamb “in the midst of the throne” exercising its power and expressing in Himself its majesty will graciously provide for every need. Not angelic and providential care as now (Heb. 1:14), but the shepherd grace of the Lamb will then be in exercise—tending, caring, preserving, and guiding each and all of the redeemed Gentile multitude. . . . The fulness of joy and earthly blessing shall be theirs—the Lamb Himself being their guide to these fountains or sources of unalloyed delight.⁴³

Thus, the Lamb is observed in His ministry to this great multitude of gentiles, as He is actively engaged in the work of salvation and is then responsible, as the source of their future blessings. He who presently cares and provides for His sheep, will likewise be the source of everlasting joy and blessing for these tribulation saints.

The 144,000. Just as each individual saved today has been chosen to fulfill a particular and specific part in the marvelous plan of God, it is quite evident that the sealing of the 144,000 Israelites was not only for the preservation of a Jewish remnant, but was also for the purpose of evangelizing this great multitude of Gentiles. This was quite

⁴³ Walter Scott, op. cit., p. 175.

obviously an important service delegated to the sealed servants of God. How unusual the procedure that God follows, as he chooses servants from amongst Israel, who has rejected God and His Son down through the ages; now commissioned to preach the gospel to the Gentiles that this innumerable host might be saved. This gracious privilege was mentioned and discussed in the previous chapter, but some significant word by Kopecky might well be added as he declares:

This innumerable company is probably the fruitage of the labor of the servants of God, the 144,000 Israelites. At least we are told by Christ that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations during the tribulation (Matt. 24:14). It is most reasonable to conclude that his preaching will be done by the 144,000 mentioned here and that the result of their labor will be the conversion of this vast multitude of Gentiles.⁴⁴

Truly this grace in action, as one marvelous bestowal of grace, that to the 144,000, is responsible for a second, that to the innumerable company. How marvelous the reality of these events, yet it is even more amazing that this unfolding of such a plan was revealed long before its coming to pass, that one might see and know the wonderful works of God and praise Him for them.

IV. THE RESULTS OF THE BESTOWAL

The individual Gentiles, saved through the ministry

⁴⁴ Kopecky, op. cit., p. 361.

of the Lamb and the 144,000 Israelites, manifest the results of this bestowal in two principal areas. This section will involve a discussion of the results of the bestowal realized during the tribulation and the results realized after the tribulation has ended.

Results during the tribulation. Nearly all commentators agree that the vision in Revelation 7:9-17 sets forth a scene that must be placed, in time, after the tribulation. Since the text does not give direct statements concerning this company during the time of trouble, the results of the bestowal during the tribulation can only be implied from logical conclusions derived from the nature of the tribulation and the known facts of salvation in any age.

There is no doubt in the mind of most futurists that the period of great tribulation will be a time of severe judgment, a time of unequaled and unsurpassed trouble, such as has never been experienced before. It has also been concluded that during this time of harsh judgment the Gentile company will receive their salvation. As Seiss so aptly states:

They are a people who were living on the earth in the period of the judgment. The great tribulation times are everywhere inseparably linked with the judgment times (see Dan. 12, Matt. 24, Mark 13, Rev. 1:7); and this whole multitude is made up of those who came out of the great tribulation.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Joseph A. Seiss, The Apocalypse, p. 174.

In view of just such a situation, these individual Gentiles will benefit greatly during the tribulation from their intimate fellowship and personal relationship with God, which can only result from a newness of life from Him. This would seem to be a most reasonable conclusion, for the personal experience of a believer today will testify to the fact that presence of God becomes more vital and precious in the face of trouble and danger, and this will indeed be a time of great trouble and persecution for every individual who is a part of this Gentile host.

Results after the tribulation. From an investigation of this innumerable group, and the Scripture concerning them, one would probably agree that the results of this marvelous bestowal are principally future. It is to this particular future aspect that attention is now given. The main thrust of Revelation 7:9-17 is obviously a setting forth of future blessings. Before the nature and characteristics of these results can be discussed more fully, the location of the multitude observed in this vision must be determined. Since their location has been a matter of much controversy, some discussion will now be given to this subject.

This controversy centers around the matter of discerning whether this is an earthly or heavenly multitude. Does John see this great host situated in heaven or on earth?

Newell is quite emphatic as he argues for a heavenly scene. He declares:

I would rather credit the general spirit of reverent commentators of all the Christian centuries (which regard this company as a heavenly one) than the opinions of some, who awakened sense of the literalness and glory of the millennial kingdom led them, in commenting on both chapter 7 and 21:9, to ascribe to earthly millennial times what the passages themselves necessarily make heavenly and eternal.

The Millennium is a reign on earth “with Christ” of 1,000 years. Its form of worship is fully set forth in Ezekiel, Zachariah and other Old Testament prophets.

But the language used of this company in Revelation 7:9-14 is not one of reigning; nor of any scene on earth; but “they are before the throne of God” (the throne of Revelation 4) “and they serve him day and night in his temple.” “Day and night” is used of eternity in 20:10. It sets forth ceaselessness. Moreover, the complete resemblance of those divine comforts given to those of Revelation 7:15-17 and to those of 21:3, 4, 6, is convincing. It is heavenly service—not that of a reign on earth that is described.⁴⁶

There is some merit to the above view, however, much appears in the text which would seem to indicate that this is an earthly gathering. Ironside has contributed much in commenting upon this view. He states:

They are said in verse fourteen to “come out of the great tribulation,” to have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; but they are nowhere said to be taken away to heaven—quite the contrary; they are in a scene where it is necessary that the lamb should feed them and lead them, and spread His tabernacle over them. Verse 15 plainly tells us: “therefore they are before the throne of God, and minister before Him day and night in His temple”: That is, I

⁴⁶ W. R. Newell, The Book of the Revelation, p. 115.

take it, the millennial temple, which is to be built in the land in that coming day. There will be no day and night in heaven. The expression can only refer, in this connection, to the temple on earth. Then we read, “He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them.” The reference is undoubtedly to the Lord’s covering His people when He led them of old through the wilderness. . . . Thus will He protect and shield His redeemed ones in the age to come.

We are also told that “they shall hunger no more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them, and shall lead them into living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” It is probably because people have not realized the blessedness of the millennial day that these verses are made to refer to heaven, but they are at one with the predictions of Isaiah, and others of the prophets, in regard to the blessing that the saved nations shall enjoy when the Lamb Himself reigns.⁴⁷

Gabelein is in agreement with the above writer in stating that this company does not stand before a heavenly throne, but before a millennial throne on earth. He identifies it as a millennial scene after the tribulation has passed.⁴⁸

The words of Grant are particularly significant concerning this matter and deserve noting at this point. He concludes:

That the tribulation is thus immediately followed by the coming of the Lord from heaven makes it easier to understand another thing, that their standing before the throne, as the prophet sees them, does not necessitate the thought of their being in heaven. There is no hint

⁴⁷ Ironside, op. cit., pp. 129-30.

⁴⁸ Gabelein, loc. cit.

of their being raised from the dead, or having died at all. They simply are “before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple.” Here again it is natural to the common habits of thought to suppose that the temple of God must be in heaven, and passages from this book would doubtless be cited in support of this (chap. xi. 19; xv. 5): These will come naturally before us for consideration in their own place; but here it is sufficient to say that it is not said “in heaven,” and that on earth there is yet to be a temple, as Ezekiel shows. Isaiah also declares that also of the Gentiles the Lord will “take for priests and Levites” (lxv. 21).⁴⁹

The identification of this as an earthly scene logically implies that the benefits resulting from the bestowal are of an earthly nature. The description revealed in the text would therefore clearly indicate that this bestowal of grace will result in a belief of all physical discomforts previously experienced. They shall hunger no more for the Lamb shall feed them. They shall thirst no more for the Lamb shall lead them into fountains of living water. They shall not be made to suffer from the sun and burning heat. God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and as Kopeccky indicates, this fact in itself implies everlasting consolation.⁵⁰ How rich and great these blessings which will bring endless physical comfort to this company of Gentiles.

The innumerable multitude shall possess great benefits and blessings resulting in the realm of service also.

⁴⁹ Grant, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

⁵⁰ Kopeccky, op. cit., p. 362.

As indicated by the text, they have a place of ministry before the throne of God, to worship and praise Him for His gracious and wonderful salvation. Concerning this privilege of service, Scott writes:

Their struggles and trials are over. The throne before which they stand is now and forever, their strength and security. The countless multitudes of these redeemed ones break out in one loud and united cry.

What is the burden of this intense and thrilling cry? Salvation in its most comprehensive sense is ascribed to God and to the Lamb. Not a member of that redeemed host is silent. . . . Sovereign grace has done its mighty work. . . . How fitting then that the triumph of divine grace should be grandly celebrated and traced to the source—God in divine sovereignty and to the Lamb, the expression of His love and grace.⁵¹

Not only will they have a position of service before the throne, but they will serve Him day and night in the temple. This service seems to be one of serving Him in worship in the millennial temple (Ezek. 40-44).⁵² What a privilege and blessing to serve God in this way as a result of redemption which occurs in a time of great wickedness and severe judgment.

It must not be forgotten, that one of the important results of this bestowal is realized in active fellowship with God Himself, as He tabernacles with them; not as that found in Revelation 21:3, but as that in Isaiah 4:5-6.

⁵¹ Walter Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-69.

⁵² Gaebelien, *loc. cit.*

Jennings describes it as “a millennial earthly blessedness rather than the spiritual blessedness of heaven.”⁵³ God’s grace will indeed result in joy unspeakable for this great host of Gentiles as they enjoy their future blessings in the millennium.

⁵³ F. C. Jennings, Studies in Revelation, pp. 234-35.

CHAPTER IV

GRACE BESTOWED TO THE NATION OF ISRAEL

In the two previous chapters the main concern has been with both Israelites and Gentiles in an individual sense, but in this chapter attention is turned to God's grace bestowed upon Israel as a nation.

Ever since God spoke to Abram in Ur of the Chaldees and related His promises to him, God has been dealing with Israel as a national group. From that time until this, Israel, though nearly obliterated at times, has existed because God's promises must be fulfilled. The Abrahamic covenant, as well as the other unconditional covenants between God and Israel which followed, necessitate the existence of a Jewish remnant. Pentecost remarks concerning the necessity of a remnant in the following manner:

The existence of a remnant in the last days is inextricably tied in with the covenants which God made with the nation Israel. Since these covenants were unconditional, their very nature demands the existence of a remnant to whom and through whom these covenants can be fulfilled.⁵⁴

From Jehovah's choice of Abraham, down through the ages, He has kept this remnant in existence (Isa. 26, 33, 35, 65; Jer. 30-33; Ezek. 20:34-38; 37:21-22; Rom. 11:5, 26).

⁵⁴ J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, p. 291.

In like manner, a remnant will be preserved throughout the period of tribulation. Gaebelein declares that:

. . . there is yet to be a Jewish remnant, a strong and mighty witness that God hath not cast away His people. This future remnant of believing Hebrews will be called as soon as the church is complete and removed from the earth. This remnant to be called through Grace corresponds to the remnant at the beginning of this age.⁵⁵

It is with this Jewish remnant and God's bestowal of grace upon them as a national entity in the tribulation that the following discussion is directed. The bestowal of grace upon the nation of Israel will be treated in respect to its substance, method, and results.

I. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE BESTOWAL

The Scriptures leave no doubt concerning a future time of tribulation since it is predicted in detail from Deuteronomy through Revelation. From an observation of the numerous passages which speak of the tribulation, one is able to discern God's two major purposes in bringing to pass just such a time. This tribulation is distinct from all preceding, not only in intensity, but also in kind, since it comes from God Himself.⁵⁶ The two major purposes of God reveal the substance of His bestowal of grace to Israel as a nation and will be treated in the following discussion.

⁵⁵ A. C. Gaebelein, Hath God Cast Away His People? p. 28.

⁵⁶ Pentecost, op. cit., p. 237.

National salvation. That the tribulation period is primarily Jewish is unquestioned by most who hold to a literal interpretation of the Scriptures. It is particularly designated as “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7), and such a statement could only refer to Israel. Many have sought to include the church in the tribulation, but Scripture does not allow for such conclusions. Stanton stresses the Jewish character as he writes:

The tribulation does not deal with the Church at all, but with the purification of Israel. It is not the “time of the Church’s trouble,” but the “time of Jacob’s trouble.” The emphasis of the Tribulation is primarily Jewish. The fact is borne out in Old Testament Scripture (Deut. 4:30; Jer. 30:7; Ezek. 20:37; Dan. 12:1; Zech. 13:8, 9), by the Olivet Discourse of Christ (Matt. 24:9-26) and by the book of Revelation itself (Rev. 7:408; 12:1, 2, 17, etc.). . . . These all speak of Israel and clearly demonstrate that the tribulation is largely a time of God’s dealing with His ancient people prior to their entrance into the promised kingdom. The many Old Testament prophecies yet to be fulfilled for Israel further indicate a future time when god will deal expressly with this nation (Deut. 30:1-6; Jer. 30:8-10, etc.).⁵⁷

With this fact in mind, it can be reasonably asserted that God’s main purposes must concern Israel. The word of God does not leave us lacking at this point, but clearly indicates that the national salvation of Israel is one of the major objectives of God in bringing about this time of great trouble. It may seem strange that God would work in such a way, but His ways are not to be understood in many

⁵⁷ Gerald B. Stanton, Kept From the Hour, pp. 35-36.

instances. The inconceivable factors of Israel's national salvation in such a time of trouble can perhaps be compared to the lack of understanding on the part of Habakkuk at such a time when God was working behind the scenes in an unusual manner, preparing an instrument to do a divinely appointed task. In the midst of judgment, God will be doing a work that will be difficult for those present and involved to believe.

Jeremiah makes specific reference to this salvation in his prophecy. "Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it."

(Jer. 30:7) Ironside comments on the passage in Jeremiah 30:4-8 in the following manner:

It is the time of Jacob's trouble; and what must be the result? That Jacob is scattered and broken and practically destroyed? No, the very opposite. He is saved out of it. The Great Tribulation will end with the deliverance of Israel rather than the scattering.⁵⁸

In spite of Israel's past and present judicial blindness, God promises to bring salvation to this nation. Isaiah speaks of this in Isaiah 29:18-20. Gaebelien comments on this passage as he declares:

We do not need to go outside of this chapter . . . to show that judicial blindness is not the final state of Israel. In the closing verses of Isaiah xxix we have Jehovah's comfortable word for Israel:

⁵⁸ H. A. Ironside, The Lamp of Prophecy, p. 95.

“And in that day the deaf shall hear the words of the Book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. . . .” (verses 18-20). This is a prophecy relating to the future. “That day” is the day of our Lord’s manifestation in power and glory.⁵⁹

Thus the Word of God gives evidence of a national salvation for a people, chosen by God thousands of years previous to this magnificent undertaking. This nation, although graciously chosen and marvelously preserved for numerous centuries, has been known, not for its dedication and faithfulness to God, but for its sinfulness, idolatry, and utter rebellion against the one responsible for so great a salvation in the tribulation. Such an impossible salvation could only be brought about by means of His matchless grace. This salvation that occurs to individuals throughout the tribulation will be realized nationally at the second advent. The comments of Pentecost serve as fitting conclusion in this connection. He writes:

It would be concluded, then, that the nation, unsaved at the beginning of the tribulation, receives a multitude of witnesses of various kinds so that the individuals are experiencing salvation through the period and the nation will be saved finally at the second advent (Rom. 11:26-27). The fact that the brethren, referred to in Revelation 12:10-11, overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony indicates that many will be saved during the tribulation period.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Gaebelin, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

⁶⁰ Pentecost, op. cit., pp. 295-96.

Judgment of godlessness. The second major objective of God in bringing about the tribulation, is a judgment of godlessness, which ultimately necessitates the destruction of those responsible. God will be interested in pouring out judgment upon sinful men and nations at this time. Revelation 3:10 plainly asserts that this hour “shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” Again the words of the prophet Isaiah are observed: “For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. . . .” (Isa. 26:21). The nations of the earth can thus be seen receiving judgment for their godlessness.

The question might well be asked at this point, “How can this fact of judgment be considered a bestowal of grace to the nation Israel?” The interrogation is no doubt in order, but the fact must not be overlooked, that the tribulation is definitely a time of preparation for the coming kingdom, wherein Israel will receive rich blessings. Godlessness must be judged in order that the reign of righteousness might be initiated. One must also remember that the judgment and destruction of these sinful nations will, in essence, be a destruction of Israel’s enemies. Israel will ultimately receive blessing and peace from this action of God, which can therefore be considered as grace to this nation, perhaps indirectly bestowed.

Concerning this judgment and the necessity of it, Pentecost declares:

Since the kingdom to follow is a feign of righteousness, this judgment must be viewed as another step in the progress of god's program in dealing with sin so that the Messiah may reign. This program of judgment on sinners constitutes the second great purpose of the tribulation period.⁶¹

Israel will also receive blessing nationally from a judgment of her enemies within, mentioned in such passages as Ezekiel 20:34-38. Ironside comments on this subject as he writes:

In that unparalleled tribulation period, referred to in Matt. 24:21, the apostates of Israel will be destroyed by the judgment of the Lord; after which, those who have faithfully sought to walk in His ways will be established in the land.⁶²

God will work in a mysterious way to bestow grace upon this chosen nation, as He judges godlessness both within and without Israel. How wonderful to see Israel's preparation for the kingdom completed by God in this time of severe judgment and destruction.

II. THE METHOD OF THE BESTOWAL

God employs a number of different instruments in this bestowal of grace to the nation Israel. The great variety of

⁶¹ Pentecost, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

⁶² H. A. Ironside, Notes on the Prophecy and Lamentations of Jeremiah, p. 155.

instruments, both people and things, reveal, in their appointed ministries and uses, the method of God's gracious working at this time. Rather than discuss each of the divinely appointed ministries and uses, the method of God's gracious working at this time. Rather than discuss each of the divinely appointed instruments individually, as in previous chapters, they will be classified and discussed under the two major divisions of the substance.

National salvation. The word of god seems to reveal a number of appointed witnesses, specifically assigned to the task of bringing the nation to salvation and repentance. As noted in the previous chapters, the 144,000 sealed servants of God of Revelation 7 will undoubtedly be set apart for a ministry of evangelization during the tribulation. This group, sealed at the beginning of the tribulation, will no doubt be the nucleus of saved Israel, but it seems reasonable to assume that they will also be responsible for bringing many more Israelites to a knowledge of Christ. Revelation 11 reveals the two witnesses also responsible for giving forth a strong testimony in this wicked time. Gaebelein comments concerning these two witnesses:

We take it then that these two witnesses represent the great testimony to be given in Jerusalem during the 1,260 days of the great tribulation. . . . They maintain in the midst of the Satanic scenes a powerful testimony for God. They are called "olive trees," because the energy and power of the Holy spirit rests upon them. . . . Their testimony, besides witnessing against awful corruption, is the gospel of the Kingdom and glorious coming of the King.⁶³

⁶³ A. C. Gaebelein, The Revelation, p. 70.

There is also reason to believe that the Holy Spirit, though not actively engaged in the work of restraining sin (2 Thess. 2:7), as pointed out by Chafer⁶⁴ and as Walvoord clearly indicates, probably not indwelling in the same manner as this age,⁶⁵ will be operative in regeneration during the tribulation. The Word of God will no doubt be an available instrument for those Jews seeking to know of Christ. Concerning both the presence of the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in this future time, Pentecost declares:

The word of God is available and may be used so that those Jews who are hungering and thirsting may search that word for a knowledge of Christ. The Holy Spirit, while not indwelling a temple as He did in this age, it nevertheless operative and will do the work of convicting and enlightening.⁶⁶

The preaching of the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 24:21) will also accompany the other instruments mentioned, and will no doubt be the central message of the witnesses during this time.

Such passages as Revelation 16:9-10 reveal that the outpouring of God's wrath, in many instances, is to be directed toward bringing men to repentance. Thus it can be concluded that God will employ many different means as He

⁶⁴ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, IV, 372.

⁶⁵ John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 230.

⁶⁶ Pentecost, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

imparts salvation to the nation Israel.

Judgment of godlessness. The Scriptures seem to reveal that god, Himself, will be directly responsible for the major part of these judgments. The language would seem to indicate this when the wrath is specifically designated as the wrath of God (Rev. 11:18; 14:10, 19; 15:7; 16:1) and not the wrath of Satan or men. It must not be forgotten, however, that God will use both men and Satan, as well as the forces of nature, as He sees fit in bringing about this judgment of godlessness.

Not only will there be a general outpouring of god's wrath, as revealed throughout Revelation 6-19, bringing destruction and judgment upon godlessness, but Christ and His armies of the saints are to be directly responsible for smitting the nations, destroying the beast and the false prophet, and defeating the armies of the kings of the earth (Rev. 19:11-21).

Thus the Lord works to bring about the judgment of godlessness in the tribulation, even in the destruction of the apostates of Israel through His own judgment. What a marvelous undertaking on the part of god, as He prepares the way for the reign of righteousness. Israel receives not only salvation, but deliverance from those responsible for severe suffering through persecution as God miraculously carries

out this bestowal of grace.

III. THE RESULTS OF THE BESTOWAL

God will be responsible for a marvelous work of grace on behalf of the nation of Israel even in the tribulation period. The most important and outstanding results of this miraculous undertaking will be observed in this section as they directly concern Israel's national preparation and millennial blessings.

National preparation. As previously pointed out, God chose Abraham and his seed to be the objects of a number of marvelous unconditional covenants, but God has been and is presently unable to grant those things promised to Israel because of the unregenerate and sinful condition of the nation. Disobedience and rebellion against God has made the fulfillment of these covenants impossible. With the completion of national salvation and cleansing, Israel will at last be prepared for the fulfillment of the covenant blessings, which preparation will only have resulted from a miraculous bestowal of God's grace.

Millennial blessings. The saved of Israel, having endured much suffering as the result of persecution and judgment in the tribulation period, will be blessed richly when the millennial kingdom is set up. Pentecost gives an

adequate summary of the millennial blessings to the nation which result from this bestowal of grace.

He writes:

There will be millennial blessings. Revelation 7:15-17; 20:1-6 make it plain that salvation offered during this period will find its fulfillment in the millennial earth. All the blessings and privileges of service, position, and access to God are seen to be millennial in scope. The national promises are realized . . . in the millennial earth.⁶⁷

Israel will find joy, peace and rich blessings as subjects of Christ their king, because God's grace was manifested to this nation even in the tribulation.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 273.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The introduction of this thesis asserted that there was a definite need for the study to be undertaken, since this type of approach to the tribulation has not been systematically and accurately applied, to any extent, by writers and commentators in the past. It was indicated that the discussion herein, was presented to meet an obvious lack in the general consideration of God's grace. The nature of the study was set forth to be such that would ultimately bring glory to God, to whom it belongs, since He alone is responsible for this grace. The fact was also determined that an adequate presentation of the subject would involve an investigation of God's bestowal in three major areas dealing with the bestowal to individual Israelites, to individual Gentiles, and finally, to the nation Israel.

The three main divisions of this thesis are set forth in similar fashion. Since the first two concern groups of individuals whose identity is usually questioned, considerable effort was exerted in determining their correct identification.

All three divisions have been treated in regard to the substance, method, and results of the bestowal of God's grace. Though the tribulation is primarily a time of judg-

ment and destruction, God's grace has been bountifully outpoured in these areas bringing salvation, protection, fellowship, cleansing, and future blessings to the recipients.

Through the means of His grace, even in this time of wickedness and judgment, it has been pointed out, that the only wise God will perform mighty and loving acts that will ultimately bring glory to Himself. It is the hope of the author that those who read these pages might come to a deeper appreciation of the marvelous grace of God.

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