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5-24-1981

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Recommended Citation

Vaught, W. O., "Evangelism in the Tribulation" (1981). *Vaught Sermon Notes: A Study of the Book of Revelation*. 14.

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EVANGELISM IN THE TRIBULATION

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION
NUMBER 12
REVELATION 7:1-8

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REVELATION 7:1-8 "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And 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 given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand."

The Tribulation is the last seven years of the Jewish Age. Keep in mind that salvation has always been the same since the beginning of time. The Essence of God demands this. Every person who has ever lived, except Jesus Christ, has had an old sin nature. The old sin nature has an area of weakness and this is the source of all our sins. The old sin nature also has an area of strength, and this is the source of human good. The old sin nature has trends also which leads us into all kinds of lust patterns. The Bible says the wages of sin is death, and this refers to spiritual death. But the problem of the old sin nature was solved at the cross. All sins were judged at the cross. Christ judged sins and rejected human good. So the issue is divine good versus human good. Sin is not the issue, for Christ paid for every sin of the whole human race at the cross. The issue is human good. The issue is really this--will we stand on our own human good or accept Christ? So in the real sense Christ is the issue. Will we believe in Christ or not? The issue involved in our condemnation is our dependence upon our human good. But human good is not acceptable to God. Human good is always minus righteousness. We must have perfect righteousness in order to be saved and we can have this only "In Christ". Socialism is built on human good. But man does not have the ability to solve man's problems. Man by man's efforts cannot solve man's problems. An imperfect man cannot come up with a perfect plan. But God's plan is perfect because God is perfect. The plan is no stronger than its weakest link. Grace is the principle upon which God operated.

Now the Jews had their first major discipline (We call it the first administration of the 5th cycle of discipline) in Babylon from 586 to 516 B.C. Then they came back to Palestine and had the golden era of their history, and this lasted until the death of Alexander The Great, in 323 B.C. In 63 B. C. they went under the 4th cycle of discipline again and this lasted until 70 A.D. when Titus came and destroyed Jerusalem and they went under major discipline again, and have been there ever since. At that time God formed a new nation, a spiritual nation, the Church. This is the Body of Christ and every believer is in union with Christ. When the right number has come into the Kingdom, the Church will be taken up out of the world and the Tribulation will begin.

When the Jews came into Canaan God promised them 490 years. They were to give him one year in seven, called a Sabbatical year. But they didn't do this, so God collected all his seventy years at one time in Babylon. When they came back into the land he promised them 490 more years to complete their responsibility, but the cross came in 483 years and they were cut short seven years. These Jews had seven years to go, and this seven year period is the period we call the Tribulation. So here in Revelation 7 we are to study about evangelism during the Tribulation.

In this seven year period there will be an amazing amount of evangelism. There are four waves of evangelism during this Tribulation period, but only one of these waves is studied here in Revelation 7.

Four Waves Of Evangelism During The Tribulation

1. The evangelistic effort of the 144,000 Jewish Evangelists. These are born again Jews. They are not what some people call Jehovah's Witnesses.
2. The second wave of evangelism in the Tribulation comes from the converts of these 144,000 evangelists.
3. The two special witnesses--Moses and Elijah. Revelation 11.
4. Angels are going to evangelize before this period ends.

This reminds us of the fact that God is not going to be unfair to any member of the human race. Let us remember the doctrine of unlimited atonement. God is not willing that any should perish. We know that all normal members of the human race reach the age of God-consciousness. Man has a free will and if he goes on negative signals God is no longer responsible for giving him the Gospel. But if he goes on positive signals and is willing to believe, God assumes the responsibility of giving the Gospel to him. This is taught in Jeremiah 29:13, John 7:17 and Acts 17:27. Positive volition, at the point of Gospel hearing, results in faith in Christ and this is always a non-meritorious experience. If anyone goes on positive signals, then God will provide the information whereby one can be saved.

Positive volition expressed itself in Jerusalem and thousands were saved. Then it moved to Antioch, and then to Ephesus and to parts of the Roman Empire. Then in the first century it moved to North Africa. In the 4th Century there was a great evidence of positive volition in Scotland and then in Ireland, and in the 6th Century positive volition moved to China. This is really the story of the missionary movement. People become willing to believe and missionaries go and tell them the story of salvation and in many of these places they say, "We have been waiting for you for all of our lives".

Now in the seven year Tribulation period we are in the worst period of world history, but it is also the period of concentrated evangelism. Religion will claim unbelievers and Christianity will claim believers. The Tribulation is also the period when religion is intensified. Religion is the worst evil that ever came to mankind and is the worst enemy Christ ever had. The issue in the Tribulation will be religion versus Christ.

REVELATION 7:1 "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree." This is evangelism in the Tribulation. In the last verse of Chapter 6 the Tribulation is called "The day of his wrath". Who can live through this period? Believers will be able to survive because they have

doctrine. Chapter 7 begins with the words "And after all these things" and this refers to chapter 6 which is a summary of the Tribulation events. The four angels standing on the four corners of the earth is simply to give directions. Christ was preaching this sermon and he had created the earth and he knew it didn't have corners. The Bible is a sphere and this is an idiom to convey this idea. It refers to the four points of the compass. An angel is standing at each place to judge various segments of the human race. Each must have a chance to be saved. They are holding back the winds of judgment. This is the doctrine of "grace before judgment". "Holding" here means restraining. You see, the church has left the earth and there are no believers on the earth but this "restraining" is going to be on earth to give all of them a chance to be saved.

REVELATION 7:2 "And 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 given to hurt the earth and the sea." "Another" angel here means another angel of the same kind. "The seal of the living God" refers to protection. The 144,000 are protected by divine command. You can't be removed from the earth until your time is up. You will remain on this earth as long as God wants you to remain here and no longer. So relax and remember dying grace. There is nothing greater than the plan of God. We in the Church Age are sealed until the day of redemption. We can't stay in this world after God says it is time to go home. Neither can we leave this world until he is ready for us to go. So these angels here in verses 1 and 2 are to release all those terrible things we studied in chapter 6.

REVELATION 7:3 "Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." Sealing them in the foreheads refers to the fact that in the front part of their heads is the thinking part of the mind. It is also the seat of the soul, the dwelling place of the human spirit, your mentality, your free will, your old sin nature and the place where Christ indwells you. In other words, that's where the real you lives. This does not refer to some mark on the forehead. It is not a cross or a red spot or something like that on the forehead. (This is not a rabbit's foot kind of a thing.) This refers to the doctrine they hold in their minds and this is to be protected and they will not get off base with some strange doctrine. They are going to be stabilized by doctrine. These 144,000 Jews are to be sealed.

1. It denoted preservation during the Tribulation.
 2. It denoted protection--from events like we studied in Chapter 6.
 3. It denoted a guarantee of the validity of their message.
- The truth of their message is to be guarded.

Now in verses 4-8 we get a look at these evangelists. Not a name roster but a tribe roster. They are all racial Jews and are regenerated Jews. Jews who have found Christ as Saviour. They are Jews who are scattered all over the earth and they have been under discipline all during the Church Age. These are Jews from all language groups scattered all over the earth. There are 13 tribes, not twelve. There are two tribes for Joseph--Ephraim and Manasseh. All this started with Reuben and because of his disobedience God disciplined him real good. He was entitled to the rulership, the priesthood, and the purse strings, which was the double portion. Because of disobedience he lost all three. He lost the rulership to Judah. He lost the priesthood to Levi and he lost the double portion to Joseph. So Joseph was represented here by two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, so we have thirteen tribes and not twelve. Two of them are often called $\frac{1}{2}$ tribes. We have twelve operating tribes and Levi, the priestly tribe.

REVELATION 7:4 "And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel."

"Which were sealed" is perfect, passive and means they were sealed in the past and remained sealed forever. 144,000 of all the tribes of Israel. They were Jews by race and they are protected.

1. JUDAH This is the ruling tribe. The aristocratic tribe. Jesus is of this tribe and is called the Lion Of The Tribe Of Judah. Jesus is David's greater son. David was from this tribe.
2. REUBEN Was mentioned second for he was the firstborn. But, as explained above, he lost the rulership to Judah. But by grace God gave him 12,000.
3. GAD Gad was the 7th son in the list.
4. ASHER He was the 8th son.
5. NEPHTHALIM He was the sixth son of Jacob--it means the son of my wrestling.
6. MANASSEH He was one of the weakest of the tribes, but again this illustrates the grace of God.
7. SIMEON This was a very weak tribe and they never did take any land of their own and were scattered all over Palestine. God used them nevertheless under the principle that my strength is made perfect in weakness.
8. LEVI This is the greatest principle of cursing turned to blessing. This is one of the brothers who pulled a terrible stunt and God said to this man that he would never inherit any land. Levi was to get no land. But Levi repented, and under the idea of a curse being turned into a blessing, God made him the priestly tribe. He became the spiritual administrator of the land. So they were scattered among all the other tribes to be the spiritual administrators. This is the only kind of people God can use - those who are at the end of their strength and their spiritual assets. We are what we are because of the grace of God. God uses the hopeless and the helpless. Levi rebounded and became the priests, and Simeon didn't rebound and was just phased out.
9. ISSACHAR The name really means a strong donkey. It means one who is able to produce. It is production based on grace.
10. ZABULON This means a haven for ships. Land of Zabulon is the commerce area of the land. God uses all kinds of business for his glory.
11. JOSEPH Joseph here actually refers to Ephraim. The tribe cannot be named for they led the revolt against Judah. So Ephraim is not mentioned but his father's name is mentioned instead. Ephraim had mental attitude sins and lacked love and for this reason Joseph is mentioned in his place.
12. BENJAMIN It means "Son of the right hand" and this is also a title used for Jesus Christ. Benjamin was the tribe faithful to Judah in the split which came later, and God rewarded Benjamin for their fidelity.

Here are thirteen tribes, twelve are named and Dan is omitted. There is a significant reason. Dan is omitted for from this tribe will come the false prophet. He will be the dictator of Israel during the Tribulation. We know this from Genesis 49:17 where he is described as being a serpent. Dan is also the tribe that initiated and led in idolatry. We know this from Leviticus 24:11, Judges 18:2 and 18:30-31.

The golden calf was set up by Dan according to 1 Kings 11:26.

So these are the Jewish evangelists during the Tribulation and in the next verses we are going to meet the converts of these Jewish evangelists. The details of their ministry throughout the earth is spelled out in Revelation 14.