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W. O. Vaught

Ouachita Baptist University

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THE CONVERTS OF THE TRIBULATION

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION
NUMBER 13
REVELATION 7:9-17

Dr. W. O. Vaught, Jr.
Immanuel Baptist Church
Little Rock, Arkansas

REVELATION 7:9-17 "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God. Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

One of the great issues of the Tribulation and The Angelic Conflict is evangelism. Man was put on the earth with a free will. The free will is part of man's soul, and because of this man is able to go either positive or negative toward God. Man must face the issue of God's grace at the point of salvation. It is clearly the will of God for all men to be saved, though many will go on negative signals and not believe. The Scripture is quite clear in reminding us in many ways that it is not the will of God that any man miss the way of salvation. In every age or dispensation there must be some system of salvation.

In the first dispensation, the dispensation of the Gentiles, the unit for evangelism was the family. This is the story of Genesis 1-11. Next came the second dispensation, the dispensation of Israel. During this period the Jews were responsible for evangelism. God took Abraham, a Gentile, and made him into the first Jew. He was converted, and regeneration, not natural generation, became the hallmark of the Jewish race. The Jewish race was founded on regeneration and God was called "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob". All three were born again individuals. This is the summary of Romans 9:6-13. The Jews were the custodians of the Word of God and were responsible for its dissemination. But in this great task the Jews failed, and God raised up the Church to carry on his work. Thus in the third dispensation the Church became the agency responsible for evangelism. Every person who believes in Christ enters into union with Christ and is a member of the body of Christ and is responsible for evangelism in the Church Age. From the time of David the Jews had 490 years to fulfill their mission. But they failed and went into Babylonian captivity for seventy years. God gave them 490 years more, but the cross cut them short after 483 years. So when the Jews went out under discipline they had seven years left. This is a part of Jewish history, and this seven years due the Jews we call the Tribulation. During this period Jews will again become the evangelists and at the end of that seven year period Christ will return to the earth. In our last study we saw the 144,000 Jewish evangelists take over the task of evangelism during the Tribulation. They were sealed, set-aside, protected by God, and they became the evangelists of the Tribulation. The thing we need to do here is to review the doctrine of heathenism. There is no such thing as a person dying without having an opportunity to be saved.

The Doctrine Of Heathenism

1. The Essence Viewpoint. God is fair and righteous and a perfect God cannot and will not do anything that is wrong. God never has been unfair or unjust in anything.
2. Next we consider the doctrine of unlimited atonement. Christ dealt with all the sins of the human race when he died on the cross. So sin is not the issue in salvation. Christ paid not for just the sins of those who are saved, but for the sins of the whole human race.
1 JOHN 2:2 "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."
3. Next we mention the principle of the will of God.
2 PETER 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
4. Next we look at the problem from human volition. First consider the principle of God-consciousness. All normal members of the human race reach God-consciousness at some time in their lives. The age when one reaches God-consciousness depends on the type of culture in which one is reared. If at the point of God-consciousness one goes on positive signals, then God assumes the responsibility of giving him the gospel. This is regardless of geographical location or linguistic barriers. There never has been a member of the human race who was willing to be saved who has not had the opportunity
JOHN 7:17 "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."
ACTS 17:27 "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us."
JEREMIAH 29:13 "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."
5. Heathen are heathen not because they have never heard the gospel, but because they have gone on negative signals and are not willing to believe, or have heard the gospel and have rejected it. When people go on negative signals there is a vacuum created in their souls and into the vacuum is drawn such things as Communism or Socialism or some other strange thing.

Now in the Tribulation there will be something we have never had before--and that is maximum positive volition throughout the entire earth. All of a sudden it breaks out everywhere. So the Tribulation is the worst disaster of all times, yet in the midst of it is the greatest evangelistic effort of all times. The Jews who are scattered all over the earth find Christ. These Jews speak Gentile languages and they will evangelize Gentiles in Gentile languages. During the time from the cross to 70 A.D. God gave them a fantastic warning, and this warning is explained in Isaiah 28. The Jews were warned of their coming discipline, and one of the signs to watch for was the evangelizing of Jews in Gentile languages. The Jews failed to pass the test and didn't take heed to the warning. Now when you get down to the end of the Jewish age, which is called the Tribulation, the Jews are saved in large numbers and they begin an evangelistic push all over the world in Gentile languages.

The Pharaoh of Egypt is an illustration of what happens when one goes on negative signals. The Pharaoh of the Exodus at the point of God-consciousness went on negative signals, then at the point of gospel-hearing he went on negative signals. At that point God took the restrainer off his negative volition (This is what is meant by God hardened his heart) and his negative volition went farther than most anyone in history.

Miracle after miracle was shown him and he said "No". Most people after about the third plague would have turned to God, but Pharaoh said "No". He kept saying it and in this way showed his negative volition. So through the negative volition of one man the whole world was confronted with the gospel (Exodus 9:16 and Romans 9:17). Earlier in this chapter 7 of Revelation in verses 1-3, we saw the principle of grace before judgment. "Hurt not" until these people were sealed. In verse one we saw preservation, in verse two we saw protection and in verse three we saw a guarantee.

Then in verses 4-8 we saw the sealing of the Jewish evangelists by tribes.

REVELATION 7:9 "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands" Now we come to the converts of these 144,000 Jewish evangelists. A great multitude, that no man could number. The word for number is "arithmeo". Of all nations, and the word for nations is "ethne" and means Gentiles, non-Jews.

Turn back to Matthew 25

MATTHEW 25:31 "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" When the Son of Man (This refers to his humanity) comes back to the earth, he comes in Glory. This is his Second Advent. The elect angels come along to see the end of the Angelic Conflict.

MATTHEW 25:32 "And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" The "All nations" refers to all Gentiles. They are divided into two groups--The sheep and the goats. The 144,000 preach Christ to them and those who accept Christ go into the Millennium, and the unbelievers are taken off the earth.

MATTHEW 25:34 "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This is Christ's invitation to these saved Gentiles of the Tribulation to enter into the Millennium.

MATTHEW 25:35 "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in" The sheep were confused and didn't know what Jesus meant. The principle was this. When you touch a Christian you touch Christ. Paul was persecuting Christians on the road to Damascus and the voice of Jesus said to him, "Why art thou persecuting me?" When you touch a Christian you touch Christ.

MATTHEW 25:40 "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." "These least my brethren" are the 144,000 Jewish evangelists during the Tribulation. Gentiles take in these Jewish evangelists and befriend them and give them shelter and in this way they show forth their faith in Christ and they receive a blessing for their faith.

MATTHEW 25:41 "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" "Ye cursed" is a perfect tense and means that every time they heard the gospel they rejected Christ and said "No". And as a result of their own free will they rejected Christ.

MATTHEW 25:44 "Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" The important thing in the verse is "Lord when did we do this?".

MATTHEW 25:45 "Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." "One of the least of these" refers to the 144,000 Jewish evangelists.

MATTHEW 25:46 "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." These are the Gentiles who will not believe the message of these Jewish evangelists and they go into everlasting judgment.
(Now back to Revelation 7)

REVELATION 7:9 "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands" These are the saved Gentiles who survived as described in Matthew 25. These are Gentile martyrs. Tongues in this passage refers to Gentile languages. No such thing as "unknown" tongues in the Bible.

The word "stood" is in the perfect tense and means they stand and keep on standing. "White robes" refers to their imputed righteousness. "Palms in their hands" is a sign of victory.

REVELATION 7:10 "And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." This is their testimony, loud and clear. It means "Salvation belongs to our God". God planned it and Jesus executed it and the Holy Spirit empowered the plan. We cannot take one bit of credit for salvation. He did all the work of salvation. Religion says you must add something to salvation like church membership--baptism--or keeping the golden rule. But this verse describes salvation as it is--it is all from God. Don't make an issue out of sin. Make the issue out of Christ. So these people understand salvation, it was the work of Christ. "The salvation" belongs to our God. Holy Spirit is not mentioned for he is the one who reveals it and empowers it. His work is a silent force.

REVELATION 7:11-12 "And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." Here the angels get into the picture and we hear the angelic chorus. Amen means "I believe it".

Notice the seven characteristics they mention.

1. BLESSING. This is benefit bestowed by God on a non-meritorious basis. We don't get it because we deserve it but because of the character of God.
2. GLORY. This is the plan of God. The plan glorifies God. God does the work and God gets the glory.
3. WISDOM. This is omniscience. God did the thinking in the plan. Therefore, the plan is perfect.
4. THANKSGIVING. This is the response of the believer to God's grace.
5. HONOUR. This means value. God provides something of perfect value.
6. POWER. This is God's ability to provide--Omnipotence.
7. MIGHT. This is power as a faculty in us so we are empowered to live the Christian life.

REVELATION 7:13-14 "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Now we have the identity of the converts. One of the ruling angels said, "Who are these and where did they come from?"

John said, "You know, you give the answer". These are the converts of the great tribulation. Their robes were white--imputed righteousness.

"Made them white in the blood of the Lamb" refers to the cross.

(We find references to this in 1 John 1:7, 1 Peter 1:18-19, Hebrews 9:22, Rev. 1:5 and Ephesians 1:7.) This refers to God the Father judging Christ.

REVELATION 7:15-17 "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." This is a picture of God dwelling among his own.

Religion had tried to boycott them during the Tribulation and they didn't have their approved credit cards and couldn't get food. But now they will hunger no more.

"Neither thirst any more" means that the persecution is over.

This verse 17 is a fantastic verse. Jesus Christ will shepherd them. There will be no more tears.

He will lead them beside the "Fountains of water".

1. Water is used for salvation. Isaiah 55:1 and Revelation 22:17.
2. Water is used for the Holy Spirit. John 7:37-39.
3. Water is used for the Word of God. 1 Peter 1

So what you don't understand about the Word of God down here, you will understand when you get to Heaven.

So Christ fulfilled his obligation as a shepherd. All tears and grief are over forever.