

Much speculation has arisen about why the tribe of Dan is omitted. Joseph and one of his two sons, Manasseh, are listed, but Ephraim, Joseph's other son, is omitted. Thus if Dan were included, there would have been 13 tribes. According to J.B. Smith, Scripture contains 29 lists of the tribes of Israel in the Old and New Testaments and in no case are more than 12 tribes mentioned (*A Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 130). The tribe omitted was usually Levi, from which the priesthood came. Inasmuch as it is normal to have only 12 and not 13 tribes, the omission of Dan is not significant. Perhaps Dan was omitted here because it was one of the first tribes to go into idolatry (Jud. 18:30; cf. 1 Kings 12:28-29). However, Dan is mentioned in Ezekiel 48:2 in the millennial land distribution.

The most important fact taught here is that God continues to watch over Israel even in the time of Israel's great distress. There is no justification whatever for spiritualizing either the number or the names of the tribes in this passage, to make them represent the church.

2. THE MULTITUDE OF MARTYRS (7:9-17).

7:9-12. Then John saw a **multitude** of people **from every nation, tribe, people, and language**, who were **standing before the throne** (i.e., before God the Father) **and in front of the Lamb** (i.e., God the Son). This is the same group mentioned in 6:9, but here they were **wearing white robes** and **holding palm branches**, apparently signifying righteous triumph. As this multitude ascribed salvation to God and to the Lamb, **all the angels**, the **24 elders**, and the **4 living creatures** joined them in worship as they did in 5:9-10.

7:13-17. One of the **24 elders** asked about the origin of those who stood **in white robes**. Is it not significant that if the 24 elders represent the church these described here are a different group of the saved? When John indicated that he did not know the answer (v. 14a) the elder himself answered the question as to who this multitude was and where they came from: **These are they who have come out of the Great Tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**

It seems evident that these "who have come out of the Great Tribulation" have been martyred and were then safe in heaven. They were given the special privilege of being before God's **throne** and serving **Him day and night in His temple**. They were protected by God Himself and never again would they experience **hunger . . . thirst**, or **scorching heat**, with the implication that this was their experience of suffering on earth. They were under the special shepherd-care of **the Lamb** and were drinking from **springs of living water**. The narration concludes with the comforting truth that all their tears would be wiped away.

The two groups seen by John were the 144,000 Israelites and a great multitude from every nation, including some Israelites who were not thus protected and who were martyred in the Great Tribulation. A natural explanation of these two groups is that neither represents the church, the body of Christ in the present Age, because both groups are distinguished from the 24 elders and neither group is clearly identified with the church in this present dispensation.

The events of this chapter, like those in other chapters to follow, do not advance the narrative but are a pause in the description of the events to spotlight a concentrated revelation on a special feature, in this case the answer to the question of 6:17, "Who can stand?"

Though the chapters of Revelation are not all in chronological sequence, chapter 7 depicts a scene in heaven which precedes the second coming of Christ to the earth. Those seen in heaven were said to "come out of the Great Tribulation" (v. 14). The chapter accordingly indicates how they will be marvelously blessed in heaven after their trials on earth. The 144,000 will appear again (14:1-5), and the multitude of martyrs who were killed for refusing to worship the beast appear again at the time of the resurrection in 20:4. That they are not millennial saints should be evident from the fact that they will be in heaven before God's throne, and will have been resurrected.

August 8, 2010

Pastor David King

Part 3—The Seal Judgments: The Seals of Death and Destruction Revelation 6



“At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

Daniel 12:1-3

✚ The Pictured Realities of the Seals

- ✚ Seal #1—The White Horse – The anti-christ's political campaigns
Daniel 9:26-27, 1 Thess. 5:1-3
- ✚ Seal #2—The Red Horse – The anti-christ's military campaigns
Daniel 9:26; Matthew 24:4-17
- ✚ Seal #3—The Black Horse—Famine
- ✚ Seal #4—The Pale (light green) horse— quarter of world population destroyed by famine, war, disease and beasts
Leviticus 13:49; Mt. 24:7; Daniel 12:1
- ✚ Seal #5—The Cry of the Martyrs
- ✚ Seal #6—Cosmic Disturbances—Topography of the globe changed

✚ The Lessons about God in the Seals

- ✚ Don't confuse God's love and patience with indifference and injustice
- ✚ Don't confuse your pain and suffering with God' wrath and anger
- ✚ Don't confuse worldly "power" with divine POWER
- ✚ Don't refuse God's salvation while it can be found!

And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Revelation 6:15-17

Preparation for Next Sunday's Message
 Part 4-**The 144,000-The Sealed for Life and Righteousness**
 Revelation 7

Revelation 6 shifts the attention from the glories of heaven and its throne room to the earth that is coming under God's wrath. This time of God's wrath is known as the tribulation period or Daniel's 70th week (Daniel 9:20-27). This week I am going to encourage you to take time to read through Revelation 6 multiple times and to find some other sources to study out this passage more fully.

Monday

Read Revelation 7 and write down 3 observations from the text that you would like to study further:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Tuesday

Read Revelation 7 and then take some time to study out your questions from Monday. Write your findings

Wednesday

Do some research today on the 144,000 that are sealed. What are some of the different views on who these 144,00 are? What do you believe the Bible teaches on the matter?

Thursday

Read Revelation 7:1-4 and write out the observations you find about God in these verses? Take time to praise God for His sovereignty over the affairs of mankind.

Friday

Read Revelation 7:9-17 these verses describe the thanksgiving and worship that the tribulation martyrs bring before God. What a stark contrast to their suffering during the tribulation (Rev. 6 and Mt. 24). How does this scene help us today?

The great glory of this chapter is the reality that God once again is saving a remnant for himself, the 144,000, and he is ultimately saving even the martyred for a grander purpose in heaven! As Paul said, "*For me to live is Christ and to die is gain!*"

Commentary on Revelation 7
 Bible Knowledge Commentary by Walvoord and Zuck

1. THE SEALING OF THE 144,000 OF ISRAEL (7:1-8).
- 7:1-3.** The question was raised in 6:17 whether any would be saved in the Tribulation. This is answered in this chapter, and two classes of the saved are mentioned specifically: (1) those who are saved in Israel, (2) those of all nations who, though saved spiritually, are martyred. **Four angels** were told to withhold judgment on **the earth** until the **servants of . . . God** were sealed (v. 3). The **seal on their foreheads** symbolizes protection and ownership and God's intention to protect the 12 tribes that are mentioned, much as He protected Noah from the Flood, Israel from the plagues of Egypt, and Rahab and her household in Jericho.
- 7:4-8.** John heard the names of 12 **tribes** with **12,000** from each **tribe . . . sealed** and thus protected. The 12 tribes are not "lost" as some contend.
- Attempts have been made to identify the 12 tribes here with the church, mostly to avoid the implication that this is literally **Israel**. The fact that specific tribes were mentioned and specific numbers from each tribe were indicated would seem to remove this from the symbolic and to justify literal interpretation. If God intended these verses to represent Israel literally, He would have used this means. Nowhere else in the Bible do a dozen references to the 12 tribes mean the church. Obviously Israel will be in the Tribulation, and though men do not know the identification of each tribe today, certainly God knows.