

Rev. 7:1-17 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. 2And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, 3saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads." 4And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: 5from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, 6from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, 7from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, 8from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed. 9After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; 10and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." 11And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen." 13Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" 14I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15"For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. 16"They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; 17for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the

water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”

I think there is startling revelation here. A dream made real.

The true church has dreamed of combing the earth with the gospel of Jesus and reaching all of the kindreds, peoples, tongues, nations. Indeed it was our marching orders, and we are slaves to a Master.

The first century church started out to do that. Paul goes to Asia Minor. Philip goes to Ethiopia. After the stoning of Steven, the church fanned out from Jerusalem and began to complete the great commission for their Lord, Jesus.

Satan returned fire. Persecution followed. Death for some. Cruelty for others. That didn't phase the true church very much.

But in the 3rd century, Satan was smart enough to do it a different way. The Roman world embraced christianity, it became the state religion, and it became bloated with political power and all of the corruption of Satan's world.

The lights basically went out until the reformation in the 1500's. Still there was brutality and cost to be a real saint. Many christians were burned at the stake by . . . christians - so-called. Roman Catholicism fought for it's darkness.

In the late 1500's though, Tyndale finally succeeded, in hiding, to produce a new english translation of most of the Bible. The King James followed in 1611. The lights came back on, and the church picked up where it had left off 1500 years earlier.

In the 1700's the great missionary movements spread out from Britain and Scotland. In the 1800's America joined in. You can trace much of the current missionary movement to that time frame. India. China.

There are some 50,000 missionary's working in the world today. How many of those have joined Christ by the Holy Spirit laboring with unction? No one knows. I have 2 I feel safe investing my money in.

Are there hundreds? Thousands? Effective. Powerful in the Spirit. Who knows?

Satan just keeps knocking Jesus soldiers down. Ease. Comfort. Immorality. Bad doctrine. Let me count the ways. I don't know about you, but I look around, and it looks to me like Satan's winning.

The church is old, fat, debilitated. We've replaced spiritual power with loud music. We've ignored the destitute so we can sit in air conditioned crystal palaces. We're like late summer fruit that will be rotting by tomorrow.

What does that have to do with Revelation 7??

Just this. The dream is still alive. I believe God is going to move the church - the saved church - up to heaven, and that He's going to reach the entire world in a missionary effort by . . . jews! First fruits of the kingdom. Follow along.

Vs. 1 *After this...* After what? The chronology referenced here is of the visions. After the vision of the 6 seals, I saw this vision.

In the chronology of the events of the book, I'll place this vision right at the time the tribulation becomes the great tribulation. After the 4th horseman.

The reason for that is I think the folks we see in the 5th seal are the same folks we'll see in this chapter. Tribulation saints that have been slaughtered because of the testimony of Jesus.

1After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree.

When we get into the trumpet judgements, this is exactly what we'll begin to see. The earth is going to be harmed. The sea is going to be harmed. The trees are going to be burnt up.

This is an interlude before those judgements occur. In all of the destruction, this chapter is a respite in the middle.

Wind! I find it amusing that the world is getting worked up into a froth over so-called 'global warming'. Maybe it **is** real. Wind that destroys, and scorching sun are all seen in the judgements of this book.

*2And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was **granted to harm** the earth and the sea, 3saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads."*

Another (similar, like the other 4 angels)

*Ascending from the rising of the sun...*he comes down from the eastern sky.

having the seal of the living God. This is a signet, like we talked about before. Ownership. When God seals you, you're His!

This is also antithetical to what Satan is doing in the world concurrent with this event.

Anti-christ sets himself up as god in the temple, right? And what does he require? You have to take the 'mark of the beast' if you want to continue living in the world. You can't buy or sell without it, and ultimately, if you don't take the mark of the beast, you will be murdered.

Satan has a mark . . for his possessions. God has a seal, for His.

*and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea.....*These four angels are on a mission. Their job is to harm the earth and the sea, but God sends another messenger with orders from the Commander of heaven. Wait! *"Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the slaves of our God on their foreheads."*

Isn't it interesting that most christians have ignored this word, 'sealed' but the cults are fascinated with it. Mormons are sealing people all over

the place. The jW's began by believing they were this group. Sealed by God.

Are we sealed? Does it mean anything to us?

Eph. 1:3 *In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were **sealed in Him** with the Holy Spirit of promise,*

Our 'seal', our proof that we belong to God, is our downpayment, the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. He is our earnest money deposit. We get the rest when we SEE Jesus.

If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. Ro. 8:9 That's our seal. The cults don't believe in the trinity, so it's a moot point for them. Kind of hard to be sealed unto God by the indwelling Spirit when you don't believe He is.

These 'slaves'. Please replace the word bond-servant any time you see it with 'slave'. These slaves of God are sealed on their foreheads. Visible!

4And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

You say, I thought the tribes were obliterated after the 10 northern tribes were taken into captivity, and the 2 southern tribes had their nationality decimated in 70 AD.

Apparently, so did a lot of commentators because you've got everything from soup to nuts about who this group is.

It makes me really sad how many modern christians just say, this is the church. Spiritual Israel. This is us. And not only that, the group as the church, has no definitions. It isn't a real 144,000, it's just a number that means the church.

My my my. Why did the Author of this book, God Almighty, waste time perfectly delineating who this group is?? And Why did He waste

time saying a particular number!!

Paul's warning to the church in Romans 11 comes to mind. The entire chapter is appropriate, but we'll just read a portion...

17But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree,18do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.19You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."20Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear;21for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.

What arrogance to flippantly say God isn't able to make His word come true *EXACTLY* as He dictated it. Frightening arrogance. Spew the church out of His mouth arrogance.

Can * God * come * up * with * 144,000 jews? Can He even do it so there are exactly 12,000 from each of the lost tribes?

OK, *free will* people? How is that going to work? Yet another reason for the lukewarm church to jettison a literal translation. God is apparently anemic. He can only wait and hope for ONE jew to choose Him, let alone 144,000. Exactly 12,000 from each tribe.

Let me show you an obscure verse. I've had this verse filed away in my brain for years. So long, that when the time came that I wanted to pull it back out, I had some trouble finding it again.

Amos, chapter 9, I love it;

*1 I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and He said,
"Smite the capitals so that the thresholds will shake,
And break them on the heads of them all!
Then I will slay the rest of them with the sword;
They will not have a fugitive who will flee,*

Or a refugee who will escape.

*2“Though they dig into Sheol,
From there will My hand take them;
And though they ascend to heaven,
From there will I bring them down.*

*3“Though they hide on the summit of Carmel,
I will search them out and take them from there;
And though they conceal themselves from My sight on the floor of the
sea,
From there I will command the serpent and it will bite them.*

*4“And though they go into captivity before their enemies,
From there I will command the sword that it slay them,
And I will set My eyes against them for evil and not for good.”*

*5The Lord GOD of hosts,
The One who touches the land so that it melts,
And all those who dwell in it mourn,
And all of it rises up like the Nile
And subsides like the Nile of Egypt;*

*6The One who builds His upper chambers in the heavens
And has founded His vaulted dome over the earth,
He who calls for the waters of the sea
And pours them out on the face of the earth,
The LORD is His name.*

*7“Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me,
O sons of Israel?” declares the LORD.
“Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt,
And the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?*

*8“Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom,
And I will destroy it from the face of the earth;
Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,”
Declares the LORD.*

9“*For behold, I am commanding,
And I will shake the house of Israel among all nations
As grain is shaken in a sieve,
But not a kernel will fall to the ground.*

Did you catch that last. Israel, destroyed from the face of the earth. It was, in 70 AD. Obliterated. Gone.

But look again in vs. 8. The kingdom is gone, *Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the **house** of Jacob,” Declares the LORD.*

Then look at vs. 9. This is marvelous. First, God's will; *For behold, I am commanding,*

Israel, the house of Israel, is going to be put into a great sieve, all the nations,

And I will shake the house of Israel among all nations; As grain is shaken in a sieve,

They're going to be shaken in the sieve, but, guess what. *not a kernel will fall to the ground.* Not one escapes the knowledge of God. The nations shake through that sieve. Israel is separate. God knows who His people are.

Read through that chapter again. All these things that the God who has built His Vaulted dome over the earth is capable of doing, including ripping open a hole in that vaulted dome like we saw last week. Why would we think for one second that a God like that would have any trouble quickening 144,000 jews from the dead and making them His first fruits among His nation.

God is in control of every life that He has written in the Lambs book of life. He is the one that throws that switch, that quickens them from the dead, that makes them alive together with Him . . . when it pleases Him.

That's how you get exactly 12,000 from every tribe. Not 11,998 from

Issachar and 12,002 from Manasseh.

5from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, 6from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, 7from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, 8from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.

I'm not going to go into a big recital about why Dan isn't included etc. etc. etc. If that interests you, i can recommend a free download that does an excellent job of explaining all the names here. It's way out of the area of my expertise, and I find it sort of cumbersome. GTY.org 66-28,29,30 No cost.

I'm too anxious to get to the effect. Cause and effect. Why does God quicken 144,000 first fruits from among His people Israel? I think these next verses tell us.

9After these things I looked, (this is a new vision seperate from the 144,000 sealed vision) and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;

There's a connection. These 144,000 red hot jewish believers in Jesus are going to fan out over the whole earth and preach the gospel.

We see them again in R14. Same connection. Every tribe, language, people group, nation, will hear the gospel. In Revelation 14 there are angels involved too.

I was thinking about pentecost when the whole church was speaking in other languages they didn't know, and Peter says, "It's what Joel prophecied".

Certainly that prophecy was initiated at pentecost, but it wasn't completed. Will it have another partial completion with these 144000? Will God just sweep away the language barrier as they travel all over the world with the gospel? Maybe. It fits for me.

Something else to think about. 2 vast movements. Satan's movement with his 'mark of the beast' thing happening worldwide, and God's first fruit jews covering the same ground, with angels helping, letting every person on earth know, Do Not take the mark of the beast.

The result is verse 9. *After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;*

Also Ch 6:9*When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; 10and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.*

It all starts to fit together. Multitudes will believe . . and perish. Believe and perish. Revelation 14:12 makes sense. *Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.* They persevere UNTO DEATH.

So the scene on earth is dismal. You have a choice. Believe in the message about the lamb, and perish for it; or take the mark of the beast, and ultimately perish in hell forever. The torment never ceases.

That's the scene on earth. Here's the scene in heaven, for the ones who have made the right choice;

10and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who

sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” 11And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12saying “Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

Worship! Glorious worship! Worship like we'll never experience this side of heaven.

Have you ever been to a large conference of real believers, 5, 6, 7,000 people who are really saved and love Jesus, and someone is preaching the word of God, or we're singing, and you think the roof's going to come off.

Nothing like this congregation in heaven. Millions. Maybe billions. From every tribe and people and nation on earth. Worshipping God, their saviour.

And guess what. Paul had a dream way back 2 millenia ago in Romans 11. Listen to what Paul says, and think about what's going on here;

*Ro11:11 I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.12Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!13But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,**14if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen** and save some of them.15For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*

At this point, we're very close to Israel waking up and seeing Him who they perced and mourning for Him as one mourns for an only son. It's getting pretty obvious! Satan's people have shed all their sheeps wool. God's sent 144000 jews all over the world, and innumerable multitudes are believing.

Wouldn't that make you jealous!?? How come they're getting all the

good stuff?? Maybe it's time we believed. It's gonna happen!

Why on earth would you take a non-literal approach to this?? It's so easy to interpret this in a historical ~ literal approach. It just is what it is, and it all fits together so perfectly. As soon as you abandon that, you're just up to your neck in alligators making stuff up. Mercy. Why?

Well, here's a guy who takes a literal approach; Vs. 13 *Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?"*

Just the question forces the issue. They ARE somebody? *who **are** they?* And they came from somewhere. ***where** have they come from?"*

I read a whole bunch of commentaries and the general consensus is that these folks represent all the saints of the church who died by suffering. Every one of them, church, church, church.

Finally I got to Cyrus Schofield's notes. He says these are an innumerable multitude of gentiles who are saved during the time of the great tribulation, the 3 1/2 years of the last half of Daniel's 70th week.

Poor old Cyrus. He didn't have much of an imagination. He just seems to echo what the guy in heaven said.

This is all so confusing! It would be nice if the Elder in heaven would just tell us who it is; Oh! He does;

14I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15"For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. 16" They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; 17for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

So! Clarity! This is a REAL group of people, from a REAL period in time, and they have that in common. These are saints who have come out of the tribulation.

Many or most of them martyrs. Some perhaps starved. Some were perhaps scorched with heat for a time. They were thirsty. They were broken hearted when their family members rejected them for their faith. They knew bitter tears and heartbreak on earth. They suffered some unique things that the church would find abnormal, because of the time frame, the great tribulation.

We know little or nothing of "perseverance". This group of saints, innumerable, will have stared in the faces of their families, who they loved, and their inquisitors, sent from an imposter 'Jesus' to kill them, and have said, I'll take the real Jesus, no matter the cost. And then they paid with their lives!