

Sent: Wednesday, December 1, 2021 7:12 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Revelation 7:1-8

"Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them (Israel) is that they may be saved! For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge!" (Romans 10:1-2)

At our last MOB session, on November 16th, we saw the "beloved disciple" John's vision of the glorified Jesus in heaven, opening up the first six of seven seals, with each seal unleashing a new demonstration of God's judgment on the earth, in the future Tribulation period. The openings, along with a preview of the resulting events, not only were made visible to John, in a vision, but are also now made known to us, in the book of Revelation, because God told him to write it all down for that very reason! God obviously wanted us to know about the "things to come"! And we saw, what John must have seen all the more clearly, a remarkable parallel between the order and description of these upcoming events and those described by Jesus to His disciples, earlier, during His first advent, as part of His Olivet Discourse, recorded in Matthew 24! This in answer to the disciples' questions about the "signs" for His second coming, and the end of the age!

It was only after the sixth seal, which resulted in a great earthquake, the "sun becoming black as sackcloth, the moon becoming like blood, and stars falling from the sky, which was split like a scroll, and with every mountain moved out of their places," that the so-called, "great men of the world," recognized that it was God who was orchestrating all these things; but rather than appealing to God for mercy and grace, they "hid themselves in caves and among the rocks of the mountains," and even asked the rocks (praying to "mother nature," presumably) to fall on them to hide them from "the presence of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb"! (Dan Crabtree, who led our large group session, suggested that our reaction to all this should be to "rejoice and tremble"! Rejoice that, as believers, we won't be around when all this takes place, but to tremble for those who will!)

And so, our lesson ended with the realization that "the great day of the Lord had come" (as John watches the world being destroyed), and asks the rhetorical question: "Who is able to stand?" And especially since the worst is yet to come! The seventh seal! And that sets the scene (or so we thought) for our lesson last night, on Revelation 7:1-8.

Revelation 7:1-4 says (instead): "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. And 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, saying, 'Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads! And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel!'"

Wow! What a surprise! Something else would happen before the seventh seal! A "pause" in the action! Willington, in his "Divine Guide to the Bible," called it a "divine time-out"! Pastor Jesse, in his sermon on Revelation 7 (way back in May 2016), said there was "silence, with

everything perfectly still for a moment"! Constable calls it "a dramatic literary interlude, delaying briefly the disclosure of what will follow in the seventh seal"!

And so, John sees the "four angels" standing at the "four corners" of the earth, ready to unleash the seventh seal, but "holding back the four winds" (which would release the seventh seal) at the command of "another angel...having the seal of the Living God"!

And why the pause? To "seal the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads"! The bondservants, who turn out to be 144,000 Jews, with 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of the Sons of Israel, who will be "saved, sealed, and sent" to evangelize the world and cause "a great multitude, which no one could number, from every nation and tribe and peoples and tongues" to be saved (and sealed) and "stand before the throne" (Revelation 7:9)! All to take place in the midst of the Great Tribulation! And thereby answering the question raised by John as to "who is able to stand, when the great day of God's wrath will come"!

The 144,000 will be able to stand because they will be protected by God and thus able to survive the wars and famines and pestilence and unprecedented natural disasters, and then enter the millennial kingdom alive, to reign with Christ! But how are they saved (and sealed)? Dwight Pentecost concluded that God would perform the same miraculous conversion on them that He performed on Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, only 144,000 times!

All this should give us a better understanding of Matthew 24:14, where Jesus said that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come!!!"

Those who trust in Jesus and are saved are sealed, according to Ephesians 1:13, which says that, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, having believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory!"

What about the list of names of the twelve tribes, in Revelation 7:5-8, bearing the 144,000 who were sealed? As John Neal noted last night, the list includes some differences from the other 18 lists found in Scripture. The fact that the tribe of Judah is listed first, and not Reuben, the first-born, is understandable given that Jesus descended from the tribe of Judah! But the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are missing all together, apparently due to their sinful practices (replaced by Levi, which is not normally listed, because of its priestly role among all the tribes, and Joseph, the father of Ephraim, who received a double portion)! The point seems to be that both the tribes of Dan and Ephraim, unfortunately, will miss out on their opportunity to serve God during the Tribulation! And so, saved but disqualified for service in the end time (which should be a lesson for all of us)! What a shame! But the good news is that all are included in Ezekiel's millennial temple (in Ezekiel 48:23-35 demonstrating God's amazing grace and mercy to His children!

And so, what more can we take away from this lesson? It's clear that God is continuing to fulfill His redemptive plan, which begins in Genesis, and carries through both the Old and New Testaments! And the fulfillment of His covenant with Israel! The apostle Paul addressed this in

Romans 11:1: "God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!" And he goes on to explain it further in verses 25-27, "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, so that you will not be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion; He will remove ungodliness from Jacob! This is My covenant with them when I take away their sins!'"

The prophet Zechariah writes in Zachariah 12:10, "And in that day...I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced...!"

And so, contrary to the so-called "replacement theology," the Bible seems clear that the church will not replace Israel and that God is not through with the nation of Israel! MacArthur notes that "while Israel failed in its mission to be a witness nation, that will not be the case in the future! From the Jewish people will come the greatest missionary force the world has ever known!"

There's a great website I would encourage to check out "Behold Israel!" founded by Amir Tsarfati, a messianic Jew, who's all fired up about God's plan for Israel in the end times! (And he would fit right in with the 144,000!)

Well, as we pray for each other this week, let's pray also for Israel!

Shalom!

Lowell

! With everything perfectly still, for a moment (according to Jesse, in his sermon on Revelation 7, way back on May 8, 2016)! In contrast with all the terror we saw happening through the unleashing of the first sixth seals!