

Jacob's Trouble, Part 1

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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,

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.

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.

Of all the books of the Bible, Revelation gives the Christian the most problems with its symbols, word pictures, and prophetic message of the time we are fast approaching. One must divide the books into two distinct populations. I believe that God is speaking of the Church at the beginning of the book, and then makes a dramatic shift of focus to the rebellious Gentile nations and the nation of Israel. I see a common thread that flows through the whole of Revelation and that is, God putting down all rebellion during this period of 7 years and the refining of Israel and making her ready to accept her Messiah, at long last.

After chapter 5, the churches and the redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, are not mentioned again till chapter 19. Suddenly, the focus is turned to judgment of a world devoid of God and violating willfully His commandments. Then in chapter 7, God by His Holy Spirit reveals to John the main characters of this book. Let us take a look at a common thread that follows in the coming chapters that point to only one set of people...the nation of Israel in its borders and scattered around the world.

144,000 EVANGELIST ORDAINED BY GOD

In chapter 7, God names the tribes of Israel that are symbolically 12,000 coming from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. In the bible, numbers are used as signs of perfection. Three is the sign of Divine perfection, seven is spiritual perfection, ten is the sign of ordinal perfection, and the number 12 is the sign of government perfection and is used throughout the bible as that sign of perfection. The number 144,000 from 12 tribes is 12×12 or 144 and thousand is given as a great number. Will it be just 144,000 when Israel and the scattered Jewish people amount to approximately 13 million people? This symbolism is carried out numerous times within your bible, to emphasize that the focus of this book is on Israel. Apart from Israel, the rest of the nations are in divine judgment and we read horrific descriptions of the devastation brought on by this Divine wrath. Notice in the latter parts of chapter 7, we find these words:

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;

7:10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

7:11 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,

7:12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

7:13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

7:14 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.

7:15 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.

7:16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

7:17 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.

John was just introduced to the nation of Israel and the evangelist that were being sealed with the seal of God, 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes. He then sees a great multitude that are standing in white robes and “palm fronds” in their hands. They speak different languages and come from all portions of the earth. These are the martyred Tribulation saints of God from all the people of earth, with emphasis on the nation of Israel that have believed in their Messiah through the seven terrible years, called the Tribulation. As I have identified in past sermons, palms in the hands of these saints are a sign noted of Israel and obtaining victory. Palm fronds, fig trees, and olive branches are all interpreted in the Bible as pointing to Israel as a people.

But also notice that they will serve in the Temple of God, night and day, and He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They are not kings and priests unto God noted in chapter 4 and the 24 elders as the glorified Church saints are, but are to serve God in His temple unlike what John then writes in chapter 5 about the church saints ruling and reigning on the earth,

5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Notice the difference? They have different functions and are a completely different subset of the redeemed.

Proceeding on into chapter 8 and 9 and into chapter 10, we see plague after plague coming down on a rebellious mankind. Here we see the two witnesses. Again the focus is on Jerusalem and the nation of Israel, as these men stand in front of the rebuilt temple and prophesy 3.5 years or 1260 days until they are slain by the Beast that comes up out of the pit. Some hypothesize, and it is not revealed, that these two witnesses are symbols of Elijah and Moses. Elijah is the only prophet who called fire out of heaven to accept the offered sacrifice to God in front of the Ba'al priest, and Moses who spoke plagues upon ancient Egypt preceding the Exodus. But both are Jewish, or to be more correct, Hebrew men of the nation of Israel clothed in sack cloth. Then there is this curious chapter twelve that many feel was just dropped in as a subset chapter, out of order. I believe God was identifying who the saints of this period would be and the focus of the book, Israel being refined as silver is in the fire.

ISRAEL DEPICTED AS WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN

12:1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

12:2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

12:3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

God goes all the way back to the beginning, to Genesis, where Jacob fully understood that he was the symbol of

the sun, Rachel his wife was the moon, and the twelve stars were the sons of Jacob who became Israel renamed during wrestling with the Lord. When Joseph had a dream that the sun, the moon and twelve stars would bow down to him, Jacob knew who he was speaking of. This sign was the root of the nation of Israel. Israel as depicted is a woman in a glorious way, as her beginning was glorious, and her ending will also be glorious.

Verse two speaks of this woman with child, which we understand is the nation of Israel who gave birth to our Messiah and their Messiah. Notice the symbolism here of the red dragon? It is the same symbol used to speak of the beast power, 7 heads/crowns or empires with 10 horns being kingdoms within that final empire. Satan thought he had won when Jesus was crucified and killed, but his victory became his greatest defeat, as Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to the Father in Heaven with the keys to death, hell and the grave having re-purchased His creation.

Satan knows of the promises made to Israel and if he can just thwart God's plan, then God is a liar in his warped thinking. He embarks on a campaign to destroy the seed of Abraham. During this time, many of the children of Israel will be slain for their testimony of Jesus Christ, but God saves a remnant and sends them into the wilderness on the wings of a great eagle.

12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

Notice the time element, 3.5 years or 1260 days? During the destruction of Israel's temple during the Babylonian invasion it is said that those who believed God, escaped Jerusalem and went to Petra, a mountain stronghold in what is now modern day Jordan. Why Petra? From an excerpt from bible-guidance.com:

“Although the Bible does not explicitly state that a remnant in Israel will escape to Petra, this possibility is strongly implied by historical events, circumstantial evidence, and a prophecy about Jordan’s position in the tribulation period. Jews who would flee by foot from Jerusalem to the mountains will, in the interest of their own safety, not go in the direction of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria or the Mediterranean Sea. The invading forces of the Antichrist will come from these directions, and be easily able to encompass and destroy fugitive Jews who might venture into these regions. They will also refrain from going east in the direction of Amman in Jordan, as this area has good access roads on which enemy forces will be able to move quickly in pursuit of the “rebels.” The only reasonably safe area to move into would be the mountains along the shores of the Dead Sea – the highest and most inaccessible mountains being south of the Dead Sea at Petra.

According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, groups of Jews fled to Edom and Petra during the Babylonian invasion of Judah in the sixth century BC, when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. When the Romans destroyed the city and the temple in 70 AD, many Jews fled to the mountains along the Dead Sea. A number of them made a futile last stand on a mountaintop at Masada. Others moved further to Bozrah and Petra south of the Dead Sea.”

Sandwiched between verses of Israel fleeing into the wilderness, we see this about Satan and his legion demons being cast to the earth.

12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

12:8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

God has cast out Satan and his demons where they are bound to the earth for the final play of this dramatic scene. Satan is frantic as he knows that his time is quickly running out and he rushes frantically in an attempt to destroy the children of Israel.

12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.(tribulation saints/Israel)

12:12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

12:13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

Satan must kill every man, woman and child that is human with emphasis on the children of Israel and any believer in his nemesis, Jesus Christ. He must make God out a liar, but Satan will be ultimately defeated.

12:14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

12:15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

12:16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

One can only speculate what this passage means but obviously, it is supernatural and can only be attributed to God's power. But two wings of a great eagle reminds me of a verse in Isaiah,

40:28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

40:29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

40:30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

*40:31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up **with wings as eagles**; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*

I believe this is divine intervention and God's protection of a remnant of the nation of Israel. During this time, a holocaust will be inflicted on the Israelite people scattered across the world, even into Israel, where it is written that 2/3 of the Jews would be martyred for their belief in Jesus Christ, but a small portion in comparison to the whole of Israel, God will save from death to enter into the 1000 reign of the Kingdom of God to repopulate the earth. Those that profess Jesus Christ will cause the dragon to be wroth with this remnant of her seed and for their testimony they will be slain. Why did some survive in a mountain fortress for 3.5 years and others are slain? These who fled, believed the testimony of the 144,000 evangelist from the 12 tribes of Israel, and when they saw the abomination of desolation, they fled. They got out of dodge, so to speak. Those who believed not, were slain in martyrdom for being Jewish, being a late believer in their Messiah, or were intent on holding onto Jewish tradition. Possibly it is a combination of all three.

In the next installment of Jacob's Trouble, we will further discuss why Israel is the focus of the Tribulation, along with unrepentant Gentiles. Now that is not to say that many people will believe their testimony preached by the

144,000 evangelist ordained by God from the 12 tribes of Israel, but the possibility of anyone who is not Jewish by birth receiving salvation becomes exponentially more difficult. If anyone thinks that they can postpone making a decision to accept Jesus Christ, as Lord and Savior of their life, and be so foolish to wait until things get really bad, then my friend, those folks play a form of “Russian Roulette”, as Gentiles are not promised that they will even be able to make that decision for Christ, as God will send a strong delusion to deceive them that they believe a lie, as Paul wrote in II Thessalonians 2:10-12:

“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

When the Bride of Christ, is suddenly and without warning is removed from this earth, then the Tribulation known as Jacob’s Trouble will begin. Woe to the person who is alive to see these coming events. See you next time.

This is Pastor Mike Taylor, praying that you accept God’s grace of eternal life, through Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. If you have any needs for prayer, counseling, or need just a listening ear, then email me at realteam1999@sbcglobal.net.

God bless you till we meet at Jesus Feet.