

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Revelation: God's Revelation To His Servants Today On Events About To Occur

Part IV: "The Things Which Shall Be Hereafter": Events After The Rapture Of The Church

C. The Great Tribulation Period, Revelation 6:1-19:21

2. God's Gracious Evangelism Of The Lost In The Great Tribulation

(Revelation 7:1-17)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

In our study of the book of Revelation so far, we have learned that after God takes the Church to heaven in the rapture, the world will face a traumatic seven-year Great Tribulation era for not having trusted in Christ as Savior.

We who know the Lord will escape that era when God takes us to heaven, but such a hope for ourselves does little to ease our concern for unsaved associates we know who will be left behind.

Need: *So we ask, "How do I handle the realization that some of my associates may face the Great Tribulation?!"*

- I. When Christ administers God's 6th seal judgment and upsets the whole creative order, unsaved people on earth will ask, "Who shall be able to stand?", or, who can be saved, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 949.
- II. Revelation 7 answers this question (Ibid.), with Revelation 7:1-3 showing that *BEFORE* the Great Tribulation era judgments *EVER BEGIN*, GOD will make *SURE* provisions to *EVANGELIZE* the *LOST*:
 - A. The Revelation 7:1a four angels who stand at the "four corners of the earth" minister to the "whole earth," for this "four corners" term is an ancient Middle Eastern title for the entire world, Z. P. E. B., v. One, p. 979.
 - B. These angels hinder the earth's four winds from blowing and hurting anything (Rev. 7:1b), signaling their restraint of God's judgment, for these winds picture His judgment on the nation of Elam in Jeremiah 49:36.
 - C. Another angel then [literally] "ascends from the rising of the sun" (*anabainonta apo anatoles heliou*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 853; Rev. 7:2a ESV), following the sun's track in the sky from its rising to its setting, pointing us to Isaiah 45:6, 59:19 and Malachi 1:11 where God anticipates that from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun, all men on earth will know and honor Him as the one, true, great God!
 - D. This angel who tracks the sun's movement to highlight God's anticipation that the world's peoples will thus acknowledge Him calls loudly and thus reflective of God's will that the 4 angels who restrain His judgments continue their restraining action until they seal God's servants on their foreheads, Rev. 7:2b-3. This sealing points us to Ezekiel 9:4 where God sent an angel to mark the foreheads of believers in Jerusalem to preserve them from God's coming destructive judgment on the city! (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Ezekiel 9:4)
 - E. The seal this angel holds is the "seal of the *living* God," a term used in Scripture of the **true, powerful** God as **OPPOSED** to non-living, false and weak pagan idols, Rev. 7:2a. This seal *INSURES* God's *PROTECTION* of His *servants* from *harm* so they can fulfill His assignment in the highly destructive Great Tribulation era.
 - F. In summary, then, **before** the **first** Rev. 6 seal judgment *BEGINS*, *that is, before even the antichrist rises to reign*, God's concern for the **lost left on earth after He raptures the Church** will be so **great**, He will keep His angels from starting to administer His judgments until they seal to preserve securely His messengers to unbelievers. Thus, right after the rapture, some will trust in Christ and become His servants so that *as God starts His Great Tribulation judgments, He will surely be giving a worldwide witness to the unsaved world!*
- III. The identity of God's messengers and their salvation Gospel is signaled in Revelation 7:4-8 (as follows):
 - A. There will be at least 144,000 Jews who trust in Christ right after the rapture of the Church, and they will be sealed as God's secured evangelistic servants to the lost, Rev 7:4-8. Though some claim these are the Church, the Church is taken to heaven in the pretribulation rapture in Rev. 4:1-2, and everywhere else where Israel's tribes are named and numbered in Scripture, they refer to the literal nation of Israel, Ibid., B. K. C., N. T.
 - B. Their **number may** signify their **message**: the number 1,000 may stand for Christ's 1,000 year Messianic reign, Rev. 20:4-5; one of the 12s may stand for the 12 tribes of Israel in Christ's core Messianic kingdom and the other number 12 may represent the number of the tribes who give this message in the Great Tribulation. Thus, 1,000 x 12 x 12 = 144,000, so these witnesses may well testify of the world's need to trust in Christ, the Messiah of Israel, looking for His coming Messianic Kingdom versus the reign of the antichrist!
- IV. The results of this worldwide evangelistic ministry of God's servants is presented in Revelation 7:9-14:
 - A. John then saw a humanly innumerable throng of people from all the world's people groups stand before the throne of God and Christ, dressed in white robes (righteousness, Rev. 19:8) and holding **palm** branches in their hands, Rev. 7:9. Elsewhere in Scripture, only John 12:13 refers to **palm** branches in men's hands

- (*phoinix*, Arndt & Gingrich, *A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T.*, 1967, p. 872), and there people hail Jesus as King at His Triumphant Entry. This great throng are thus those who trust in Christ as Messiah in the ministry of the 144,000, and they have been martyred mainly by being beheaded by the antichrist, Rev. 13:15; 20:4.
- B. They cry out, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb," (Rev. 7:10), to which all the angels, the Church and the cherubs fall down before the throne and worship God, Revelation 7:11-12.
- C. One of the elders then told John that this crowd were those who had come out of the Great Tribulation, who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, having trusted in Christ, Rev. 7:13-14.
- V. This throng saved out of the Great Tribulation will enjoy a special relationship with God, Rev. 7:15-17:**
- A. Those saved and martyred out of the Great Tribulation will stand before the throne, serving God day and night in His temple, and the Lord will dwell among them, providing rewarding fellowship with Him, Rev. 7:15.
- B. They will no longer hunger or thirst, nor will the natural creation disorder disturbances due to God's judgment ever again afflict them (Rev. 7:16), for Christ, the Lamb of God in the midst of the throne, will "protect, care for, nurture" (*poimaino*, *Ibid.*, p. 690) them, leading them to living fountains of waters, and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes, tears from their trauma in the Great Tribulation, Revelation 7:17; Isaiah 25:8.
- VI. This special relationship and fellowship between Christ and those saved out of the Great Tribulation will fulfill the Father's plan to make Jesus' ministry effective in light of His own past rejection and suffering:**
- A. When Israel did not trust in Christ in His first advent, He expressed how often He had wanted to gather her protectively as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but she was not willing, Matt. 23:37. Yet, the nation Israel would one day accept His rule (Matt. 23:38-39), and Rev. 7:15 predicts God will "spread His tent protectively over" (*skenose ep' auton*, *Ibid.*, *U. B. S. Grk. N. T.*, p. 854; *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 762) these saints, some of them Jewish and most of them Gentiles, after their salvation out of the Great Tribulation trials.
- B. Also, Isaiah 49:10 predicts Christ's Rev. 7:16-17 great post-Great Tribulation ministry after His own suffering:
1. Christ is initially prophetically presented in Isaiah 49:1-4 as being rejected by Israel in His first advent, and though it then humanly appears that He has worked in vain, Jesus waits for the Father to reward Him.
 2. Isaiah 49:5-13 then shows the Father responding to man's rejection of Christ, saying He will yet make Him a Light and Salvation "to the ends of the earth" (Isa. 49:6). God adds that He will cause Christ to nurture the afflicted (Isa. 49:9-10), what Rev. 6:16-17 shows occurs after people go through the Great Tribulation.
 3. Thus, foreseeing the world's rejection of Christ not only in His earthly ministry, but also in the later Church era, God planned for the Great Tribulation to occur to drive many lost people via its great trials to trust in Christ! They will welcome Jesus' oversight opposite the rule of antichrist and the Great Tribulation trials!

Lesson: *Though the Church is taken out of the world before the Great Tribulation era begins, God will graciously USE the GREAT TRIBULATION TRAUMAS to EVANGELIZE ONCE UNREPENTENT MEN OF EVERY PEOPLE GROUP WORLDWIDE so that many of them will WELCOME Jesus' GRACIOUS SHEPHERDING.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ today to be saved and enjoy His shepherding ministry without having to go through the Great Tribulation, John 3:16. (2) However, we can be SURE that AFTER the RAPTURE, unsaved people we know will SURELY be EVANGELIZED under GREAT DURESS, with many worldwide coming to trust in Christ only to be martyred and then wonderfully shepherded and nurtured by our Lord in line with the Father's will that the world's peoples come to heed and honor Him from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

In the October 28, 2014 daily reading of "Working For The Wind" in the RBC Ministries booklet, "Our Daily Bread," Jennifer Benson Schuldt tells how a man named Howard Levitt was one day driving his \$200,000 Ferrari on a Toronto, Canada highway when he came upon what appeared to be a large puddle in the road.

Thinking he could drive through it, Howard continued to head across it, but the water soon became so deep, the car's 450-horsepower engine seized. He was able to get out of his Ferrari and save himself, going to high ground.

That is what it will be like in the time of the Great Tribulation. Many will not have heeded Christ's Gospel in the Church era, so when the rapture occurs, they will find themselves suddenly caught up in enormous trauma.

Thankfully, God will already have his 144,000 witnesses scattered worldwide, and though many people will lose everything, including their physical lives, they will be able to gain God's eternal salvation of the soul by believing the Gospel of Christ and His coming Kingdom as heralded by God's 144,000 servants.

If we have not yet done so, (1) may we trust in Christ today to be saved. (2) May we then witness and live for Christ, (3) trusting God to deal in perfect love and justice with the lost on earth after the rapture.