You say to me, "Oh brother, we are 'in the world' [and not of it]." Sure you are, but you don't have to pump it into your living room!! Garbage in, Garbage out!!!
Paul Washer

REVELATION CHAPTER SEVEN
THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL AND THE REDEEMED GENTILE COMPANY
Handout 13
Prayer Study #412
First Love Ministries of Perry, Georgia USA

Last week we looked at Chapter 6 where the first six seals were opened. The first seal represented a false Christ; the second, war; the third, famine; the fourth, death; the fifth, the martyred remnant; and the sixth, anarchy or global upheaval. These six representations are the group of signs that Jesus told his disciples would come, as recorded in Matthew and Luke:

- FALSE CHRIST: Matthew 24:4-5, Luke 21:4, Revelation 6:1-2
- WARS: Matthew 24:6, Luke 21:9-10, Revelation 6:3-4
- FAMINES: Matthew 24:7a, Luke 21:11, Revelation 6:5-6
- DEATH: Matthew 24:7b-8; Luke 21:12, Revelation 6:7-8
- MARTYRS: Matthew 24:9, Luke 21:24, Revelation 6:9-11
- ANARCHY: Matthew 24:10-13, Luke 21:25, Revelation 6:12-17

Chapter Seven follows a pattern that we will see throughout Revelation. Chapter Six deals with 6 of the 7 seals, and then Chapter 7, instead of covering the 7th seal, digresses to discuss such things as the Jews and Gentiles that will be saved during the Tribulation. It begins with what John was now seeing. Jesus speaks of this time in Matthew 24:21-22: ***For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless these days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened*** (compare Mark 13:19).

Barclay speaks of this time: "In this coming tribulation, there was to be a final assault by every evil power and a final devastation that the winds are waiting; but for a little while, they are being held back. Before this time of terror and devastation, the faithful are to be sealed with the seal of God in order that they may survive it. It is not that they are to be exempt from it but that they are to be brought safely through it."

Barclay goes on to say, "There are really three elements in this picture. (1) There is a *warning.* The last unparalleled and inconceivable time of tribulation is coming soon. (2) There is an *assurance.* In that time of destruction, the faithful will suffer terribly; but they will come out on the other side because they are sealed with the seal of God. (3) There is

a *promise.* When they have passed through that time, they will come to the blessedness in which all pain and sorrow have gone and there is nothing but peace and joy."

The Winds of the Living God

1 After this I saw four angels stationed at the four corners of the earth, firmly holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind should blow on the earth or sea or upon any tree.
2 Then I saw a second angel coming up from the east (the rising of the sun) and carrying the seal of the living God. And with a loud voice he called out to the four angels who had been given authority *and* power to injure earth and sea,
3 Saying, Harm neither the earth nor the sea nor the trees, until we have sealed the bond servants of our God upon their foreheads.

The four corners of the earth are North, South, East, and West. John has seen the tremendous judgments of the first six seals and after this, beginning in this seventh chapter, he sees these angels. These angels are holding back the winds of judgment. God uses wind to judge, and He controls the winds: *Fire and hail; and snow and vapors; stormy wind fulfilling His word* (Psalm 148:8).

This second angel from the east has more authority, giving orders to the other four. We have studied extensively at how well Satan has organized his evil angels, which is well documented in scripture, especially in Ephesians 6. We have talked less about the organization of God's angels. The only archangel in scripture is Michael, who is a warrior and chief among the angels. The Bible never speaks of archangels but only of *the* archangel. Michael's names mean *"who is like unto the Lord."*

Under Michael is God's messenger angel, Gabriel. His name means *the mighty one* or *God is great.* The Bible refers to his work more than it does Michael's. He appears four times in the scriptures (Daniel 8:16 and 9:21 and Luke 1:9 and 1:26). In each instance he is bringing good news

Under Michael and Gabriel are the seraphim, with six wings whose ministry is to praise the Lord, and the cherubim, with wings and feet and hands, and which are full of eyes. The cherubim have to do with the glory of God.

These classes of angels are followed by multitudes of angelic beings or ministering spirits sent to minister to God's people. Most theologians believe that there are specific guardian angels whose assignment is to watch over individual people, and that everyone has one. John Calvin in Volume 1 of his Institutes of the Christian Religion said, "Angels are the dispensers and administrators of the divine beneficence toward us. They regard our safety, undertake our defense, direct our ways, and exercise a constant solicitude that no evil befalls us."

The Bible also shows us that angels intervene in the affairs of nations and are used to bring the judgment of God in the midst of suffering and persecution. They are created

beings but operate in a different dimension than do humans and have greater power, greater knowledge, and greater mobility than we do. Their chief business is to carry out the orders of Almighty God. They have no ability to reproduce and neither marry nor are given in marriage.

Matthew Henry, the great Biblical commentator, in commenting on Psalm 68:17, said, "Angels are the 'chariots of God,' His chariots of war, which He makes use of against His enemies, His chariots of conveyance, which He sends for His friends, as He did for Elijah…, His chariots of state, in the midst of which He shows His glory and power. They are vastly numerous: 'Twenty thousand,' even thousands multiplied."

These are very fascinating beings, and I believe that some in this place will have the scales removed from their eyes so that they will be able to actually see into the spirit realm in meetings and thus will see angels.

God has given "His angels charge of you, to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone" (Psalm 91:11-12 RSV).

We must, however, be very careful that we do not worship angels. Romans 1;24-25 warns us against worshiping the creature (this includes angels) rather than the Creator. I believe that some modern-day ministries put too much emphasis on angels and receiving messages from angels to the point of glorifying them in a way that seems like worship to me.

Paul somewhat addressed this problem in Galatians 1:6-8: *I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel, which is not another, but there are some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we or* ***an angel from heaven,*** *preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*

We are not to pray to angels, and I believe that scripture teaches that only God can command them. It is, however, acceptable, and Biblical to ask the Father to send angels to help us in any situation.

We have already also spoke about bond servants. Those who claimed this designation in scripture include Peter, Paul, Timothy, John, James (the Lord's half-brother), and others. The Book of Revelation was written to the bond slaves of Jesus Christ. The term for bond slave is the Greek *doulos.* This is the lowest, most servile term in the New Testament. A bond slave was one that had been freed but chose to stay with his master. These men and women surrendered all of their rights and loved the Master so much that they were devoted to Him to the total disregard of their own interests. They had no rights and were bound to the Master until death. Certainly, these bond slaves could say with Paul in Galatians 2:20: *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life, which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

How truly amazing that God would not allow the angels to harm the earth until He

had sealed His bond servants, until He had put His mark upon their foreheads.

This sealing of the faithful is probably an allusion to Ezekiel 9, where the man with the inkhorn, whom I take to be the Holy Spirit, before the final slaughter begins, mark the forehead of the faithful ones so that the avengers (demons most likely) cannot touch them. The seal as used here is a sign that these people belong to God and are under his power and protection and authority.

The Seal of God and the Number of the Faithful

4 And [then] I heard how many were sealed (marked) out of every tribe of the sons of Israel: there were 144,000.
5 Twelve thousand were sealed (marked) out of the tribe of Judah, 12,000 of the tribe of Reuben, 12,000 of the tribe of Gad,
6 Twelve thousand of the tribe of Asher, 12,000 of the tribe of Naphtali, 12,000 of the tribe of Manasseh,
7 Twelve thousand of the tribe of Simeon, 12,000 of the tribe of Levi, 12,000 of the tribe of Issachar,
8 Twelve thousand of the tribe of Zebulun, 12,000 of the tribe of Joseph, 12,000 of the tribe of Benjamin.

This passage of scripture was used by the Jehovah Witnesses to promote the heresy that only Jehovah Witnesses were in the 144,000. They had to backtrack somewhat when their numbers grew to over 144,000. They believe that since Pentecost God has been calling out a special body of 144,000 who will rule with Christ as kings and priests during the Millennium and go to heaven. They believe that Christ, who they say is in reality Michael the archangel, a created being, and not God the Son, returned invisibly in 1874. He is now in the process of overthrowing Satan's kingdom on the earth. The 144,000, according to their doctrine, is a special "Bride class," who after the Millennium, will reign with Christ in heaven, while the remaining millions of righteous saints will dwell as God's servants on the new earth. Those who are not in one of these two companies will be eternally annihilated or cease to exist because there is no hell or eternal punishment in their doctrinal stance. Of course, these opinions of men are not scriptural and thus totally false.

What does the 144,000 number mean? This could be the number of saints in John's day who are sealed and preserved from the tribulation that was coming upon them as Rome becomes more and more hostile and violent to Christians. Domitian, the emperor, wanted to be worshiped as God. No true Christian would worship any man, and this infuriated Domitian and that was his beef with John. We know the story (that seems to have an historical basis of truth) of John being thrown into boiling oil but emerging unscathed, infuriating Domitian that much more and causing the emperor to ban John to Patmos.

I believe a more plausible explanation is that this number is symbolic in nature and represents a number beyond what can be counted. In scripture the number 12 represents apostolic fullness or divine government (Genesis 49:28, Exodus 15:27, Matthew 19:28, Revelation 12, Revelation 22:2). One hundred forty-four represents God's ultimate in creation (Revelation 21:17, 7:1-6, 14:1-3, and 1st Chronicles 25:7). Twelve squared times 1000 means an extremely large number. This seemingly is confirmed by verse 9.

I disagree that this 144,000 is referring only to the Jews, as some teach. The New Testament over and over refers to the Body of Christ as the real Israel. This is in no way to discount Israel or the Jewish roots of the faith or the Old Covenant Jewish believers. We love Israel and the Jewish people and desire to honor them. Paul wrote to the Romans, however, in Romans 2:28-29: *For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart-it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God.* Furthermore, Paul tells the Galatians: *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation* (Galatians 6:15), and *"... if you are Christ*'s, *then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise* (Galatians 3:29).

Notice two significant things about the listing of the tribes. First, Judah is listed first, although Reuben is the oldest. Reuben lost this position which awarded the first born with three times the other brothers, the priesthood, the birthright, and the kingdom. He lost this because of having an affair with his father's concubine. This heinous sin brought a curse upon him. Judah is listed first because out of his line would come the Messiah. On the other hand, no judge, no prophet, no hero sprang from Reuben's line.

Secondly, Dan is not listed. Dan in the Old Testament was often associated with idolatry. His own father, Jacob, on his death bed said of Dan, "*Dan shall be a snake by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider falls backward"* (Genesis 49:17). Jeremiah 8:16 reads, *"The snorting of their horses is heard from Dan, at the sound of the neighing of their stallions the whole land quakes. They come and devour the land and all that fills it."* The Jewish rabbis believed that this verse and the fact that Jacob called Dan a snake refers to the antichrist. The third century theologian Hippolytus wrote, "As the Christ was born from the tribe of Judah, so will the Antichrist be born from the tribe of Dan." The most famous Danite was Samson. Speaking of Dan, Herbert Lockyer writes, "As there was one among the Twelve Apostles, so there was one among the Twelve Tribes who had not the seal of God."

Manasseh, the elder son of Joseph, took the place of Dan. He was the founder of a tribe (Genesis 41:51, and Numbers 1:10). The interesting thing about Manasseh is he and his brother Ephraim were children of an Egyptian mother and thus were Gentiles. Yet this tribe produced two men who were listed in the Hebrews' Hall of Faith (Hebrews 11:32), Gideon and Jephthah, two of Israel's judges before Israel had kings.

The Glory of the Martyrs

9 After this I looked and a vast host appeared which no one could count, [gathered out] of every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages. These stood before the throne and before the Lamb; they were attired in white robes, with palm branches in their hands.
10 In loud voice they cried, saying, [Our] salvation is due to our God, Who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb [to Them we owe our deliverance]!

Concerning these martyrs who had died for Christ, Barclay writes: "Here we have the beginning of the vision of the future blessedness of the martyrs. There is encouragement. To the faithful is coming a time of terror such as the world has never seen; and John is telling them that, if they endure to the end, the glory will be worth all the suffering. He is setting out how infinitely worth while it is in the long run to accept everything involved in the martyrdom which holding to the faith must undergo."

The Praise of the Angels

11 And all the angels were standing round the throne and round the elders [of the heavenly Sanhedrin] and the four living creatures, and they fell prostrate before the throne and worshiped God.
12 Amen! (So be it!) they cried. Blessing and glory *and* majesty *and* splendor and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and might [be ascribed] to our God to the ages and ages (forever and ever, throughout the eternities of the eternities)! Amen! (So be it!)

Surprisingly, no where in the scriptures does it say that angels sing. They are speaking these words of praise. Notice that the martyrs talk of salvation. The angels praise Him but do not mention salvation. Why? Because they are sinless creatures, not redeemed sinners.

Washing from Sin by the Blood of the Lamb

13 Then, addressing me, one of the elders [of the heavenly Sanhedrin] said, Who are these [people] clothed in the long white robes? And from where have they come?
14 I replied, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are they who have come out of the great tribulation (persecution), and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

J. Vernon McGee tells us that John's answer to the elder is an idiomatic expression, sort of like when someone asks us a question, and we answer something like, "Beat me" or as J. Vernon puts it, "Search me."

In these times it was forbidden to approach a god unless one's garments were spotless. This also brings to mind that many, wearing white robes, are water baptized in the faith in white robes signifying that they are cleansed by the blood of Jesus as

symbolized by them going down into the water.

The Service in the Glory

15 For this reason they are [now] before the [very] throne of God and serve Him day and night in His sanctuary (temple); and He Who is sitting upon the throne will protect *and* spread His tabernacle over *and* shelter them with His presence.

J. Vernon McGee takes this verse to mean that the Church is not being referenced here. He says that the Church is never identified with the temple and that there will be no temple in the New Jerusalem.

I don't agree with McGee here. I believe that those who have been faithful will be in the very presence of God. Jesus said, ***"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"*** (Matthew 5:8). To me His presence is His sanctuary. Verse 9 seems to confirm that this is not just the Jews spoken of here, but every tribe and nation and language, etc.

I believe what is spoken of here is the *shekinah* glory of the Lord that is spread over and sheltering His people with His presence. Remember when, at the dedication of Solomon's temple, the shekinah glory of the Lord filled the temple so that the priest could not stand (2nd Chronicles 7:1-3). So, the real meaning of the passage is that we in His presence, will serve Him and live in the glory of the Lord.

The Divine Shepherd

16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun smite them, nor any scorching heat.
17 For the Lamb Who is in the midst of the throne will be their Shepherd, and He will guide them to the springs of the waters of life; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

What commentary could add to this most wonderous time when the only God of our understanding, Jesus, as our Shepherd, feeds our souls and guides us to the refreshing waters of life, wiping the tears from our eyes. The Prophet Isaiah prophesied and dream of this time in Isaiah 49:10: *They shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them down, for He who has pity on them will lead them and by springs of water will guide them.* One day our faith will become sight and our dreams will find the perfect fulfillment in Jesus.