

## THE SEALED REMNANT

Tonight I want to look at the identity of the 144,000 in Revelation chapter seven, and explain why I *don't* believe the traditional, Dispensational view that these are biological Jews from the *literal* tribes of National Israel. Most of the people I have known or fellowshiped with my whole Christian life have been people who left the Religious System, and all of them hold the same view I do regarding the 144,000. Since I'm not used to being around people who think this view is unscriptural, I'm not used to being in a position where I need to defend that view. But I realized last week that many of the people who are coming to this chat room, and maybe the ones listening from off the web site, have never been exposed to this view before, so I need to explain *why* I believe they are not strictly Jews.

A few weeks ago we talked about the four different approaches, or four different schools of interpretation regarding the book of Revelation: (1) the *Preterist* view; (2) the *Historical* view; (3) the *Idealist* view; and (4) the *Futurist* view. I suspect that all of you in this room hold to the Futurist view, as do I. The Futurist interpretation of Revelation is (I believe) the correct one.

Unfortunately, most of those who hold the Futurist view have also been steeped in the doctrines and concepts of Dispensationalism. So when they read Revelation, they invariably read it from *that* perspective. Most people who have been infected with the doctrines of Dispensationalism don't realize it. In fact, they might be offended if you called them a "Dispensationalist", even though that's what they are. The reason for this is very simple. The average person in the pew has never been taught the *whole* theological system. What they have been taught are carefully managed *bits and pieces* of that system which sound very Scriptural. The majority of those who have been thoroughly indoctrinated—maybe brainwashed would be a better term—into the Dispensational system have *no idea* what has happened. They think they have been taught the Word of God. Most of them couldn't even tell you what "Dispensationalism" is.

Well, let me tell you what it is: it's theological *poison* that perverts every area of a person's doctrine and experience. It perverts our view of salvation; it perverts our view of God; it perverts our view of the Church; it perverts our view of National Israel and the Jews. It perverts the entire Bible, including and especially the book of Revelation. Once the Lord delivers you from the errors of this false theology, the Scripture will open up to you in a new way.

In order to understand the identity of the 144,000, you need to first realize that the common view of this group is the view that was super-imposed on it by the teachers of Dispensational error. There is *a reason* these particular 144,000 servants of God are to be sealed, and how you view *that* reason will largely determine your view of *who* they are. Therefore, we will have to look at more than just the passage itself to determine who these people are. So let's start with the sixth seal:

*And I beheld **when he had opened the sixth seal**, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and*

*the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, **hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?***

*Revelation 6:12-17*

The first four seals describe the events which *naturally* follow wars between nations. The rider on the white horse (the first seal) goes out to conquer. You don't conquer through diplomacy and talk. You conquer through war. Thus, the opening of the second seal describes how "peace" is taken from the earth. Many of the nations will make war on one another. The following two seals—scarcity of food and widespread death—are the natural outcome of a planet full of nations who are killing each other.

So far, everything up to this point can be explained in *natural* terms. Though the rider on the white horse is an invisible, *supernatural* power that's causing all this war, war itself, and all the horrible results of war, are quite common in man's experience. However, the events of the *sixth* seal are clearly supernatural—especially when the sky is rolled back like a scroll. These undeniably supernatural events cause the men of the earth, both great and small, to realize that God is behind what's happening. They realize these things are a manifestation of His judgment and they freely confess that: "...*the great day of his wrath is come*". They see that wrath as being so terrible and deadly, they ask who will be able to survive it. The answer to that question is given in the next chapter:

*And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. **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, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.** 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.*

*Revelation 7:1-4*

The "four winds" in this passage are not natural winds. They are *spiritual* winds of destruction that will come as part of the seventh seal. The seventh seal consists of the *seven trumpets*, and those trumpets are the wrath of God, which is to be poured out on a rebellious world. At the sound of the last trumpet, which is the *seventh* trumpet, the Lord will return. The *unsaved* who experience the sixth seal will understand that the "day of God's wrath" is upon them. But I sometimes wonder if *Christians* who are alive at that time will have as much spiritual insight because they certainly don't have it now. The majority of today's Christians would never consider the possibility that the trumpet judgements are the "wrath" of God because they don't think the wrath of God is poured out till Revelation chapter fifteen. Be that as it may, the purpose of these people being "sealed" by God at the end of the sixth seal, is to *protect them* from the events of the seventh seal. There is a parallel to this situation in the book of Ezekiel:

*He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; **and one man among them was clothed with linen**, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, **and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof**. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but **come not near any man upon whom is the mark**; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.*

*Ezekiel 9:1-6*

Notice that the ones who were sealed at this time were a *faithful* remnant of saints who were sighing and crying because of all the abominations being done in Jerusalem. God didn't send the angel to mark an arbitrary number of Jews. The ones who were sealed and protected from the coming slaughter were the ones who remained *faithful* to God. They were the ones who stayed true to God. They were the ones who were *not defiled* by the apostasy of the majority. Does any of this sound familiar?

*And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him **an hundred forty and four thousand**, having his Father's name [the seal] written in their foreheads. . . These are they which were **not defiled** with women; for they are virgins. These are they which **follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth**. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.*

*Revelation 14:1 & 4*

Do you think it's a coincidence that there is an exact parallel in the book of Ezekiel of what will take place in the last days, as recorded in Revelation chapter seven? I don't. I think the situation in Ezekiel can give us some valuable insight about what is described in Revelation chapter seven—the most important of which is that the fact that only a small remnant of God's *faithful* saints are to be sealed at that time. This, of course, doesn't set too well with the Dispensational view of the 144,000, for in that view, these will be natural Jews who, at that point are still in unbelief or have just been converted. I reject that view. To be quite frank, I believe you should reject it too because the ones who are sealed at that point, are the *only ones* who are specifically said to be protected from the trumpet judgments—particularly the one where those scorpion-like creatures are let out of the bottomless pit and torment all those who *don't* have that seal for five months. If only *natural* Jews get that seal, then we are all in for five months of suffering that will be so horrible, people will be trying to kill themselves to get relief from it.

*And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; **but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.** And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that **they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.***

*Revelation 9:1-6*

This is not a judgment upon those who have taken the mark of the beast, as in the case of the malignant sores in chapter sixteen. This judgement is specifically designed to *torment* anyone who has *not* been sealed by God—and that will include all of you in this room, if the traditional interpretation of the 144,000 is correct because none of you are Jews.

You see, it's easy for Dispensational theologians to insist that the 144,000 are natural Jews because they are convinced they will be long gone before any of this happens. They think they will be safely tucked away in heaven *before* all these things begin to come to pass. If they thought for a minute that they would *be here* through all seven seals and all seven trumpets, you better believe they would start *revising* their whole view of the 144,000 very quickly!

Some of you may be saying to yourselves: “Brother Dan, what’s Dispensationalism got to do with me thinking these people are Jews? I believe they are Jews because John plainly said they would be from the tribes of Israel, not because I’m a Dispensationalist”. Well, my answer is: the *reason* you assume the tribes of Israel in that passage are Jews is *because* you are under the influence of Dispensationalism—and whenever you the term “Israel” you automatically think “Jew”. You never think “Church”. The fact is, the vast majority of today’s Christians still don’t understand that *we* are the “Israel of God”!

*For in Christ Jesus **neither circumcision [ie: being Jewish] availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision [ie: being Gentile], but a new creature.** And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and **upon the Israel of God.** From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*

*Galatians 6:15-18*

The Galatian assembly was a *Gentile* church. Paul tells these *Gentiles* that they are not to worry about who is a Jew (ie: circumcised) and who is a Gentile (ie: uncircumcised) by birth. The only thing that matters to God is if they are becoming a “new creature”. The new creature is *neither* Jew or Gentile, *neither* male

or female, *neither* slave or freeman. Then he says peace and mercy be upon “as many as walk according to this rule”. In other words; peace and mercy be upon those *in the Galatian assembly* (to whom he is now writing) who will keep this rule. Peace and mercy to the Galatians who will walk in this reality about the new creature being the only thing that matters. Then he says: “...*and upon the Israel of God*”. What he is saying is very simple. He is blessing those in the Galatian assembly first, and then all the rest of God’s people, who will walk in this truth. When he says “and upon the Israel of God”, he’s not blessing the *Jewish* nation. He’s blessing everyone who will walk in the reality of the truth he just laid down; and he calls all who *will* walk in that truth, “the Israel of God”.

You see, it’s hard (if not impossible) for most Christians to accept the fact that there is only one Israel, and right now, that Israel is the New Testament Church. Most Christians can’t walk in this reality because they have been taught error upon error regarding the identity of *God’s Israel* their whole lives. Either they have been taught that there is only one Israel and that Israel is the biological race of Jews; or they have been taught that there are *two* Israel’s—one natural (the Jews) and one spiritual (the Church). Unfortunately, both these doctrines are lies and stand in direct opposition to everything Paul taught.

There has *never* been two Israel’s and there never will be two Israel’s. There has only ever been one Israel, and *that* Israel consists of all those who walk by faith and serve God—whether Jew or Gentile, it makes no difference; whether an Old or New Testament saint, it makes no difference. The only reason there is such confusion among God’s people regarding the identity of Israel is because they are being taught lies and false doctrine. It should not be confusing because we have much the same situation with the term “Christian”. Not everyone who *says* they are a Christian is actually a Christian. Yet both the true and the false Christian wear the *same* title. Well, this is what Paul is talking about in the book of Romans, when he says “...*they are not all Israel who are of Israel*”.

*I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children [of the promise, children of God]: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.*

*Romans 9:1-7*

What Paul is saying is that not all “Israel” (ie: biological Jews) are part of “Israel” (ie: God’s Israel). God’s Israel has always been a *spiritual* entity, not a biological entity. If Paul were writing about the same situation in our day regarding Christians, he would say: “...not everyone who says they are a Christian are part of the body of Christ; neither because they go to church every week does that make them part of the body of Christ”. It’s the same thing regarding the biological Jew. Not every biological Jew who was part of the nation of Israel, was part of God’s Israel.

No unbelieving person, be they Jew or Gentile, has *ever* been part of *God's* Israel. By the same token, every believing person, be they Jew or Gentile, is part of God's Israel. You become a part of God's Israel the same way you become part of the Olive Tree—by faith. This is why Paul could say:

*For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if **the uncircumcision** (the Gentiles) keep **the righteousness of the law**, shall not his uncircumcision **be counted for circumcision**? And shall not **uncircumcision** (the Gentiles) which is by nature, **if it fulfil the law**, judge thee [Jews], who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For **he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly**; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But **he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.***

*Romans 2:24-29*

This passage is very important because Paul removes once and forever, the idea that only a biological descendant of Abraham can call himself or herself a “Jew”. He says very clearly that *anyone* who is circumcised in heart, who fulfills the righteousness of the Law, who serves God according to the spirit and not the letter, and whose praise is of God and not of men, is a Jew. Do you want to take a guess as to how many Christians *actually* believe what Paul said here? My guess is it's a very small percentage. Lets see what percentage of those in this room believe it. Those of you who can say, without flinching, without hesitation, that you know beyond a shadow of a doubt you *are* a “Jew”—give me a #1.

If you hesitated, or if you are not sure, or if you don't really believe you are a “Jew”, it's because you are still under the influence of Dispensationalism—which says only a *biological* Hebrew can be a “Jew”. To the Dispensationalist, Gentiles saying they are *Jews* is blasphemy.

Now I know most people aren't the least bit interested in “theology”, but if you ever want to really understand who “Israel” is, you need to get free from all the Dispensational nonsense you have been exposed to your whole Christian life—and you'll never get free from that garbage as long as you are ignorant of it. So I am going to give you the “*Dispensationalism 101*” course (ie: the basics). Dispensationalism is a *system* of interpretation. It's chief inventor was John Nelson Darby, a Plymouth Brethren minister in the early 1800's; but others helped to complete and perfect that system. The system is this: every verse of Scripture is to be interpreted *always* and *only* in it's most narrow and literal sense. The only exception to this rule would be verses which clearly should not be taken literally, such as where we are told to cut off our hand and pluck out our eyes if they cause us to sin (*Matt.5:29-30*).

In other words, Darby did not go to God's Word, seeking to be directed of the Holy Spirit when forming his theology. He went to the Bible with a *method of interpretation* and he applied that method to *every* single verse of Scripture. When this method of interpretation is applied to the term “Israel”, there can be only *one* outcome. Israel becomes racial, geo-political entity that remains separate from the rest of God's people. Israel is viewed as comprising *only* the biological offspring of Abraham. Under this method of

interpretation, Israel has always been, continues to be, and shall *forever* remain, a distinctly separate, race of people which must remain *on earth* in order to have the *literal* promises of God fulfilled to them. Under this system, Israel has nothing whatsoever to do with the New Testament Church. Israel and the Church are two completely different entities with two completely different *eternal* destinies.

“What’s wrong with interpreting the Bible literally? The answer is, nothing. That’s not the fundamental error of this system. The error is Dispensationalism’s claim that literal interpretation is the *only valid* interpretation. It claims that exclusively literal interpretation of the Bible is the only *safe* way to interpret it because once you start “spiritualizing” verses of Scripture, there is no telling where it will lead you. In the minds of those who invented Dispensationalism, there had to be a *system* which would stop people from inventing wild interpretations of the Bible which would destroy the faith. The system they invented and have placed their trust in is “*literal/historical/grammatical*” interpretation.

This method of Biblical interpretation was explained by Dr. Charles Ryrie, author of the Ryrie Study Bible, in a book he wrote called: “*Dispensationalism*”. In that book, he discusses the defining characteristics of Dispensationalism and asks what makes a person a Dispensationalist? He says: “*What is the sine qua non (the absolutely indispensable part) of the system?*” His answer is:

A Dispensationalist keeps Israel and the Church distinct. This **distinction** between Israel and the Church **is born out of a system of hermeneutics** (interpretation) that is usually called literal interpretation. To be sure, literal/historical/grammatical interpretation is not the sole possession or practice of Dispensationalists, but **the consistent use of it in all areas of biblical interpretation is.**”

Pp. 38 & 40 (Emphasis mine)

Here is *the* definition of a Dispensationalist, as given by one of today’s most well-known Dispensational theologians. A Dispensationalist is one who “keeps Israel and the Church distinct”. He says this *separation* of Israel and the Church is born out of a system of hermeneutics, called literal interpretation. In other words, the separation of Israel and the Church is the result of a method of Bible interpretation. He says that although this kind of interpretation is not unique to Dispensationalism, its application and (mis) use of it is unique because *only* Dispensationalism uniformly applies a literal/historical/grammatical meaning to the *whole* of Scripture. So we are talking about a method of interpretation that results in a certain outcome every time. This is the opposite of being enlightened by the Spirit when you read the Word.

J. N. Darby, the father of Dispensationalism, once wrote that: “...*the nation of Israel shall never enter the Church*”. Ever since he wrote those words, they have been the defining mark of a Dispensationalist. The idea that the Church and Israel have always been, and will forever remain, distinctly separate entities with separate destinies is the very foundation of the whole Dispensational/prophetic view. In Darby’s original doctrine, the separation between Israel and the Church was total and complete. According to him, the promises God made to the Church are spiritual and heavenly. But the promises He made to the Jews are natural and earthly. Prophecies about the Great Tribulation and the Millennium do not concern the Church because they are *earthly* and the Church will *not* be on earth during this time. For many years, this was the uniform view of *all* Dispensational scholars, like A. C. Gaebelein, Clarence Larkin, Cyrus Scofield and Lewis Chafer. Gaebelein, whose commentary on Matthew was published in 1910, wrote that the promises to Israel are “all earthly”. Then he said:

"The church, however, is **something entirely different**. The hope of the church, the place of the church, the calling of the church, the destiny of the church, the reigning and the ruling of the church is not earthly, **but it is heavenly.**" 1

In 1920 Clarence Larkin wrote:

"...the 'wife' (Israel) is to reside in **the earthly Jerusalem** during the Millennium, while the 'Bride' (the Church) will reside **in the New Jerusalem.**" 2

C. I. Scofield—whose annotated Bible influenced so many people—made this same distinction. He said repeatedly that God's goal was earthly for Israel and spiritual for the Church. The New Scofield Reference Bible is not as clear in its statements, though it still implies an earthly destiny for Israel.

Lewis Chafer, a founding father and first president of Dallas Theological Seminary, was infected with this same leaven and has in turn infected *millions* of today's Christian leaders with it. His view of the separation between Israel and the Church reflected Darby's view perfectly because Darby said Israel would *never* enter the Church. Most Dispensational teachers at that time only talked about Israel's distinction during the next age. Few of them came right out and said what they believed—which is that Israel will *never* be part of the Church. To his credit, Chafer told the truth about what he believed. He said:

"The particular point in view here is the fact that all her [National Israel's] blessings, her riches both temporal and spiritual, become her portion when she enters the land. This is the heart of Old Testament prediction. Israel can never be blessed apart from her land...Every covenant, promise and provision for Israel **is earthly, and they continue as a nation with the earth when it is created new**. Every covenant or promise for the Church **is for a heavenly reality, and she continues in heavenly citizenship when the heavens are recreated.**" 3

In other words, even *after* the Millennium, when we go into the eternal age of the New Heavens and the New Earth, the Jewish people will remain separate from the Church. They will remain a separate race of people who will dwell on the New Earth, not in the New Jerusalem. For over a hundred years, this was the standard view. However, during the 1960's things began to change. Modern Dispensational scholars began to *revise* the original doctrine with regards to the *degree* of separation that is to exist between Israel and the Church. As one writer puts it:

"It is amazing that in the writings of Walvoord, Pentecost, Ryrie and McClain, published in the 1950's and 1960's, the heavenly/earthly dualistic language is gone. **A distinction between Israel and the church is vigorously asserted and all the theological structures of distinction are present except that the eternal destinies of the two peoples share the same sphere.** Consequently the heavenly/earthly descriptions are dropped. Thus has begun a slow movement away from the scholastic, classic, absolute distinction found from Darby to Chafer." 4

Since there are now various views within the Dispensational camp regarding the degree of separation that will exist between Israel and the Church in the future, I'm not going to lump them all together and paint them all with the same brush. However, *all* Dispensational scholars would agree that if the distinction between Israel and the Church ever gets so blurred it no longer exists, Dispensationalism is finished. It would become as extinct as the Dodo bird because that separation is the *key* to the whole system. Maintaining that distinction is *the* thing that makes a person a Dispensationalist.

Now, what I'm saying to you tonight is that this whole theology is a monumental lie which stands in direct opposition to everything the New Testament teaches regarding Israel and the Church. Moreover, you will never be able to understand the Bible the way God intends for you to understand it, and especially the book of Revelation, until your minds are *completely purged* of all this garbage.

The Church is *the continuation of God's Israel*. God's Israel was the Old Testament Church and it's the New Testament Church as well. Israel and the Church are not separate entities; they are both the "ekklesia"—the congregation of the Lord. That's why the King James translators translated the term ekklesia as "church" in Acts, when Stephen is recounting the history of National Israel:

*This is that Moses, which said unto **the children of Israel**, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. This is he, that was **in the church in the wilderness** with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:*

*Acts 7:37-38*

The children of Israel were the Church of the Old Testament, just as today's Christians are the Israel of the New Testament. There is only one congregation (ekklesia) of the Lord; only one people of God; only one wife of the Lamb; only one Royal Priesthood; only one new man. There is only one Church and one Israel. All these designations and titles are synonymous. They are just different names and descriptions of those who walk by faith and obey God.

Some of you may be asking yourselves right about now if brother Daniel is teaching some kind of "Replacement Theology"—and the answer is, No. If I'm not teaching Replacement Theology, then what do I do call the Jews of today? The unbelieving Jews of today are *not* the Israel of God. They are "*Israel after the flesh*". Listen again to what Paul says about the biological seed of Abraham in his day. He says the Jewish race, the nation of Israelites, are actually divided into two groups—the children of God and the children of the flesh.

*Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For **they are not all Israel, which are of Israel**: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children [of God; the ekklesia]: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are **the children of the flesh**, these **are not the children of God**: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*

*Romans 9:6-8*

Biological Hebrews who walk by faith are the “children of God”. They are part of the ekklesia—the congregation of the Lord. They are “*the Israel of God*”. Biological Hebrews who walk according to the flesh are the “children of the flesh”. They are not part of the ekklesia—the congregation of the Lord. They are “*Israel after the flesh*”.

It’s the same regarding the Jews of today. They are “*Israel after the flesh*”. They are not part of the ekklesia at this time, and they would not have been part of the ekklesia under the Old Covenant. They would have been Israel after the flesh *then*, just as they are Israel after the flesh *now* because they walk in unbelief. They are not the “Israel of God” now; they would not have been the “Israel of God” four thousand years ago; and they will never be the “Israel of God” *unless* they repent and accept the their Messiah. The Israel of God is the New Testament Church. It’s the continuation of the “Israel of God” that existed in the Old Testament.

*I say then, Have **they** [Israel after the flesh] stumbled that they should fall [permanently]? God forbid: but rather **through their fall** salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke **them** to jealousy. Now if the fall of **them** be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of **them** the riches of the Gentiles; how much more **their fulness**?*

*Romans 11:11-12*

Here Paul talks about the fall and eventual restoration of Israel. But he is not talking about *all* of National Israel because not *all* of National Israel fell. Many of those who were part of National Israel were *also* part of *God’s* Israel. Paul is talking about “Israel after the flesh”. He’s talking about those who were part of National Israel, but who were *not* part of *God’s* Israel. These are the ones who fell; these are the ones who were cut out of the Olive Tree; and these are the ones God is going to deal with at the end of this age. “Israel after the flesh” will go through a time called “Jacob’s trouble” and it will cause many of them to repent and believe. As a result, they will be brought back into “*the Israel of God*”.

However, the redemption of “*Israel after the flesh*” isn’t going happen the way Dispensational teachers say it will, and the *result* of that redemption isn’t going to be to be what they teach either because their whole view of that redemption and it’s result is based on a monumental the lie that “Israel shall never enter the Church”. If you want to see just how blind and arrogant this whole theology is, just read the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of Revelation and see what is said of the New Jerusalem, which is specifically described as the Lamb’s wife—the glorified Church of Jesus Christ.

*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for **the first heaven and the first earth were passed away**; and there was no more sea. And I John saw **the holy city, new Jerusalem**, coming down from God **out of heaven**, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. . . And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee **the bride, the Lamb's wife**. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me **that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of***

***heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.***

*Revelation 21:1-2 & 9-14*

Excuse me, but what are the names of the “*twelve tribes of the children of Israel*” doing on the GATES of the New Jerusalem? Isn’t the New Jerusalem the glorified Church? What does Israel have to do with the glorified Church? Did you notice that John said the wall of the New Jerusalem has twelve foundations and in those twelve foundations are the names of the *twelve apostles of the Lamb*? So the city rests on *the names* of the apostles, and the way into the city is through *the names* of the tribes. Isn’t it interesting that everyone who enters the New Jerusalem, the glorified Church, has to come through one of the TRIBES of Israel? Is the light going on yet? Israel is part of the Church. How could it be otherwise? We are *all* the people of God! We are *all* part of the ekklesia—the congregation of the Lord!

Israel after the flesh will never be part of anything that has to do with God or His ekklesia. Israel after the flesh has been *perishing* from the days of Moses, and it will continue to perish until the last biological child of Abraham comes into the New Covenant. God has been *separating* Israel after the flesh from the Israel of God ever since He brought them out of Egypt, thousands of years ago. Israel after the flesh has NEVER been part of *God’s* Israel. However, those Jews who walked by faith *were* part of God’s Israel, and they are an integral part of the New Jerusalem, which is the Church of Jesus Christ.

God’s Israel never has been, is not now, and never will be, divided into Jewish and Gentile camps. Either you are part of God’s Israel by faith or you aren’t. It doesn’t matter what dispensation you lived in; it doesn’t matter type of blood you have; it doesn’t matter what Covenant you walked under. If you walk by faith and serve the God of Israel, then you are part of the God’s Israel, it’s that simple. There’s only one Israel and there is only one *destiny* for Israel—and you’re looking at in Revelation chapter 21. The Church is Israel and Israel is the Church. They are one congregation.

When you read the book of Revelation, you have to understand that it is filled with allusions to the things God gave National Israel under the Old Covenant. Everything in that book is the *heavenly reality* of the earthly types and shadows you see in the Old Testament. The earthly types and shadows were given to a Jewish nation, so they are always equated with Jews. But the heavenly realities are *neither* Jewish or Gentile. They are part of the *new creation*. They existed long before the Jewish race was established, and they will exist long after the Jewish race is extinct.

So when you see things in Revelation that are linked to the Jewish race under the Old Testament, you have to remember that you are seeing the heavenly reality, not the *Jewish shadow* of that reality. The things you see in Revelation are *heavenly things*, not “Jewish” things. For instance, the literal city of Jerusalem in the Old Testament, and also the one which now exists in the Middle East, is only a representation or a picture of the *real* Jerusalem, which is the *heavenly* Jerusalem.

*Mt. Zion*, in the fourteenth chapter of Revelation, is the spiritual counterpart of natural Zion. In the letters to the Churches in Revelation, Jesus references Old Testament, Jewish images like eating “manna” (*Rev* 2:17), or becoming a “pillar” in the temple of God (*Rev* 3:12). Also, in Revelation chapter one, you have the Old Testament picture of Jewish “kings and priests” being applied to New Testament believers:

*And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that **loved us**, [Christians] and **washed us** from our sins in his own blood, And hath **made us kings and priests** unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

*Revelation 1:5-6*

The term “priests”—which is now spoken in the context of the Christian faith—recalls the picture of Levites doing their ministry in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. Indeed, the whole concept of God *dwelling* with mankind is bound up in the word “Tabernacle” and it was given to the Jews under the first Covenant. God dwelt *among* His people *through* the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, and later through the more permanent Temples. Under the type and shadow, this whole concept is a Jewish thing. But when it comes to the reality, it’s not a *racial* (ie: Jewish) thing; it’s a heavenly thing. That’s why the New Jerusalem is not only called the Holy City and the Wife of the Lamb, but also “*the tabernacle*”:

*And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, **the tabernacle of God** is with men, and **he will dwell with them**, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

*Revelation 21:3*

Even the priestly garments of the Old Testament are seen in Revelation. Most people don’t notice this but the angels who are given the bowls of wrath are dressed in pure and white linen, and over their chests they wore “golden girdles” (*Rev*. 15:5-6). These ministers or angels are the spiritual reality of what the Levitical priests, under the High Priest, only pictured. The Jewish priests wore the same type of clothing. As a matter of fact, the heavenly Tabernacle, of which the earthly Tabernacle in the Wilderness was just a picture, can be seen throughout the entire book of Revelation.

The **Tabernacle** (or the Temple) is mentioned in Revelation 14:17; 15:6; 15:8; 16:1; and 16:17.

The **Door** is mentioned in Revelation 4:1.

The **Outer Court** is mentioned in Revelation 11:2.

The **Brazen Altar** is mentioned in Revelation 6:9-11.

The **Brazen Laver** (which is also called “the molten sea” in I. Kings 7:23 & Jeremiah 52:17) can be seen in Revelation 15:2-3.

The **Golden Candlestick** is mentioned in Revelation 1:12-13 & 4:4-5.

The **Table of Shewbread** is mentioned in Revelation 2:17 & 2:7.

The **Altar of Incense** is mentioned in Revelation 8:3 & 11:1.

The **Ark of the Covenant** is mentioned in Revelation 11:19.

I mentioned this in one of my other studies on the Tabernacle, but I would like to mention it again because it gives you a sense of *the reality* I'm talking about. The construction and service of the Old Testament Tabernacle is not just a quaint little story about an ancient people. It's as relevant as today's news paper. There's a very real connection between that literal Tent, which was a type and shadow of the true Tabernacle in heaven, which was built 4000 years ago, and the heavenly realities of the days we are about to enter. Consider the following scene which John sees in Revelations chapter eight:

*And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and **stood at the altar, having a golden censer**; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon **the golden altar** which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.*

*Revelation 8:1-4*

Thousands of years ago, in the middle of the wilderness, inside an earthly sanctuary that consisted of a wood-framed Tent, a priest stood at a *literal* Golden Altar and burned incense while the children of Israel stood outside that Tent, praying. Together, the prayers of Israel and the burning incense from the priest, ascended beyond a *literal* linen veil, into the Shekinah presence of God. Today, the same thing is happening—only it's taking place in the *true* Tabernacle. Spiritual incense from off the *true* Golden Altar of Incense is being mixed with the prayers of New Testament believers, and they are both ascending into the presence of God in the *heavenly* sanctuary.

Is anyone getting the picture yet?

When you read the book of Revelation, and you see all these things which pertained to the Jews under the Old Testament, you should not interpret them in their most narrow and literalistic (ie: Old Testament) sense. These word pictures represent *heavenly* realities; they represent New Testament (ie: *Christian*) realities. They don't represent earthly realities; they don't represent Old Testament (ie: *Jewish*) realities.

It's the mind that's under the influence of Darby's *literal/historical/grammatical* interpretation that automatically views all these things in a *Jewish* theological framework—and this is also true when it comes to the 144,000. The term, "all the tribes of Israel" represents the entire ekklesia in the last days. John is *not* talking about biological Jews—though I'm sure there will be believing Jews who are part of that group. He's talking about a faithful remnant of New Testament saints. You know it's a remnant of the Church and not the whole church because he says 12,000 are taken from *out of* each tribe. Also, the very next thing you see is a "great multitude" of believers who *die* during the great tribulation.

That multitude are the ones who were *not ready* to be sealed. They were genuine believers, but they had not given every area of their lives over to God. They loved God and served God, but they *refused* to let some area of their lives go—some desire; some relationship; some goal; some possession; their reputation, and so on—and only the *suffering* of the Great Tribulation will cause them to let those things go.

The great multitude may also include those who were not saved, but who came to salvation in the midst of their suffering; but I believe first and foremost, they are *believers* who did not allow God to complete the work He wanted to do in them before the day of His wrath. It will be the suffering that makes them get serious about the areas in their lives where they are compromising, where they have allowed their garments to be spotted. It will be the suffering that will cause them to truly repent and turn *everything* over to God, and wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

You may still be asking: “*But why are all the different tribes listed*”? My answer is two-fold. First, I believe John lists the tribes in order to make us search out the meaning of those names. The name of the tribe reveals its nature or characteristic. These will be the characteristics that are found in this group of faithful saints.

Tribe of Judah = *praise*

Tribe of Rueban = *behold a son*

Tribe of Gad = *troop or great company*

Tribe of Aser = *happy/blessed*

Tribe of Nepthalim = *wrestling/struggling*

Tribe of Manasses = *forget*

Tribe of Simeon = *hearing*

Tribe of Levi = *joined*

Tribe of Issachar = *price was paid*

Tribe of Zabulon = *dwellth/dwelling*

Tribe of Joseph = *fruitful/bountiful*

Tribe of Benjamin = *son of my joy/son of my right hand*

I'm not going to take the time in this study to apply all these meanings to the various characteristics of New Testament saints, but I believe that's what they are. They give you a composite picture of this group. They are the *spiritual qualities* that will be found in that sealed remnant.

Secondly, I believe the tribes are listed to bring out the truth that this is in fact a *military roll call*, just like you see in chapter one of the book of Numbers. There, God numbers the Israelites who were ready for battle.

*And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, **Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel**, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; **From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war** in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies. . .As the LORD commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai. And **the children of Reuben**, Israel's eldest son, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, by their polls, every male from twenty years old and upward, **all that were able to go forth to war**;*

*Numbers 1:1-3 & 19-20*

The writer of Numbers goes through all the tribes, counting the number of the children of Israel who were able to go to war. This is one of the things this group of 144,000 will do—they will ride into battle with Messiah on the *day* of battle. What you have in that passage is a picture of God selecting out *His army* from the rest of the congregation (ie: tribes) of Israel. The seal not only protects them during the wrath, it marks them out as *the warriors* who will ride into battle with Messiah against the Beast.

What does a person have to do in order to be sealed? Well, I think that's the purpose of the *second* vision John was given of these people, in Revelation chapter fourteen, which we have already looked at. The ones who will be sealed will be those who have not allowed themselves to be defiled spiritually; and who are willing to follow the Lamb *wherever* He goes. That means, they will hold *nothing* back from Him. They will follow Him into suffering, into separation from friends and loved ones, into loneliness, the loss of their career; the loss of their *reputation*; the loss of their property, etc. They will follow the Lamb where ever He leads them—no questions asked.

How you view this *sealed remnant* will affect you in more ways than you can imagine in the coming days. So I urge you to seek the Lord carefully on this matter. Don't just forget about it or blow it off. God wants you to know that *all of us* are candidates for that sealing, if we are walking in radical obedience and keeping ourselves spiritually clean. He wants you to know that He's getting ready to *seal* a remnant of the Church—and I pray that *everyone* who hears my voice will be part of that remnant!

**NOTES:**

1. A.C. Gaebelein, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Wheaton: Van Kampen Press, n.d.) 1:11
2. Clarence Larkin, *Dispensational Truth or God's Plan and Purpose in the Ages* (Philadelphia: Clarence Larkin Est., 1920), p. 76
3. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4 Vols. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948).
4. Craig A. Blaising, *Development of Dispensationalism by Contemporary Dispensationalists*, Bibliotheca Sacra (July 1988).