

A Happy Troop of Warriors

Revelation 7

If you enjoy reading novels, you know that a common writing technique is to bounce the readers around between competing storylines or vantage points and thus keep their interest. As effective as that is in keeping a reader engaged, God doesn't share the same concern in recording the scripture for us. Entertainment value is not His priority. Thus, when you have a situation in which He wants to communicate what's happening in say two events that are chronologically overlapping, He seems to simply put them in a sequence that shows the most obvious linkage between cause and effect of the events.

Such is the case, I believe, in considering chapters six and seven of Revelation. The first half or so of this chapter could have preceded chapter six in the scripture and indeed does so I think in actuality, but if it were presented that way, like a modern novel, it would be less likely to be understood as being tightly linked to the second half as a cause and effect. I'll try to explain and you can decide for yourself.

In the previous chapter, we witnessed the going forth of four riders on horses of four different colors – white, black, red and pale or grey. These four riders or messengers were given power to

bring forth the deception and destruction of the antichrist conquest of our planet. Just before that, in chapter four, we read of the rapture of the church and their consequent worship of the Lamb around the throne.

It is important to understand that when the church leaves this planet, God is still committed to providing a witness to the world of His truth. As long as there are those who He knows can be saved, He extends His hand to them, so to speak, in truth, grace and mercy. In fact, this is a principle you can follow throughout history from Adam to Abel to Seth to Enoch to Noah to Shem to Abraham to Isaac to Jacob... all the way to John the Baptist, then Jesus, then the church. God is faithful to provide a witness.

As we will see, this chapter wonderfully explains just how that witness will continue in absence of the mostly gentile church.

After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.

I am personally persuaded that the "four winds of the earth" here refer to the four horsemen of Revelation six after the pattern of Zechariah 6:1-8. In that passage, four chariots with horses of the same colors as in Revelation 6:1-8 go out to all the earth, and are called *the "four spirits of heaven"*. *Spirits* in that passage is the translation of the Hebrew word

ruach, which can also be translated *winds*.

Next, recall that in our studies of Daniel, we saw that the prophetic imagery of earth and sea can portray the land of Israel and the gentile nations. In addition, there are other scriptures which speak of trees as symbolic of men in general. So this blowing upon the earth, sea or any tree could very well point to the unleashing of the destructive powers of these antichrist messengers upon the whole world of men as well as nature. That is consistent with the situation in Revelation six.

Then 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 granted to harm the earth and the sea,...

This word for harm above means to do wickedly or sinfully to and comes from the word which means one who deals fraudulently with others, who is deceitful. This also, is consistent with the mission of the four riders/messengers of chapter six.

...saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed:

As for this sealing, all we have to do is look at John 6:27, Rom 4:11, 2 Cor 1:22, Eph 1:13 or Eph 4:30 to see that these servants are

being filled with the Holy Spirit – indeed, they are getting saved and filled for service to God Almighty. They are in no way related to any cult nor are they representative of the mostly gentile church. That is plain heresy and/or substitutionalism. Don't you believe it! They are who they are – from the tribes of Israel. Now, twelve thousand may be significant for when it is mentioned in other scriptures pertaining to men (see Num 31:5, Judges 21:10 or 2 Sam 17:1) it is speaking of men being sent to do battle.

*of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed;
of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed;
of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed;
of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed;
of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed;
of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed;
of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed;
of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed;
of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed;
of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed;
of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed;
of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.*

Now, there are many variations of the list of Jacob's children in the Bible, but I believe that every listing has its purpose. God simply

doesn't do things randomly or haphazardly -- your own DNA for example. We may not know enough to understand the purpose of each listing but in this case, I'll submit something for your consideration.

Dan and Ephraim are both missing from this list and it may have something to do with their tribal affiliation with idolatry in the past. In any event, the names as presented here, I think can be understood to give us a message about them and God's plan. Let's examine their names:

Name	Meaning
Judah	Praise
Reuben	Look at or perceive Son
Gad	Troop or army, from word for invade or attack
Asher	Happy or blessed, from word meaning to go on, advance, make progress
Naphtali	Wrestling or fighting
Manasseh	To forget or causing to forget
Simeon	Heard, from word meaning to hear, listen, obey
Levi	Joined to
Issachar	There is recompense, from word meaning to lift or carry
Zebulon	Exalted or honored
Joseph	Jehovah will add or increase
Benjamin	Son of/at right hand (like Jesus,

see Mat 25:34 and 26:64)

Admittedly, taking some modest liberty, I've strung these meanings together:

Praise God! They look at and perceive the Son. As a consequence, a troop or army is formed. Happy and blessed, they advance in order to wrestle with the enemy, to fight the 'good fight'. For God has caused them to forget their past and instead to hear Him, to listen and obey Him. They are no longer separated from Him by sin but joined to Him in faith. Their labor and warfare has recompense, that is, reward, and they will be carried to and honored in heaven for Jehovah will add, by them, sons at His right hand.

This message is completely consistent with the rest of scripture. The 144,000 saved and filled men of Israel will indeed go out like an army of evangelists, doing battle in the spirit and will lead an enormous number of people to Jesus Christ even as the antichrist is spewing forth his lies like a flood. Even as catastrophe after catastrophe is coming upon the world, these Hebrew 'Billy Grahams' will faithfully proclaim the gospel and thus be God's witness to the world.

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation

belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying:

"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom,

Thanksgiving and honor and power and might,

Be to our God forever and ever.

Amen." Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"

And I said to him, "Sir, you know."

So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

There you have it. As a direct result of the sealing of the 144,000, there appear in heaven an innumerable company of people from all the nations, tribes, peoples and tongues. All of them are in white robes which the Bible says, shows that they are righteous before God – they are saved by the blood of the Lamb during the great tribulation. This mighty harvest moves all the angels of heaven, the church and the four living creatures to fall and worship God intensely.

Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell

among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

As you can see, these redeemed are not treated like second class citizens of heaven. Father God Himself will dwell among them and Jesus will care for them, and as a result they will never hunger or thirst again nor suffer the intense heat of the sun as during the tribulation. They will be the privileged ones who serve the Lord in His dwelling place.

So what are these tears? They certainly are not tears of regret or condemnation. *This passage does not have the idea that in heaven, we will weep over our wasted life or unconfessed sin, ... That idea may be a powerful, guilt-inducing motivator, but it has nothing to do with the meaning of this verse. "The point is that the grief and tears of the past, speaking of their trials in the tribulation, will be over when they get to heaven . . . God will wipe away all tears resulting from their suffering on earth."* (Guzik/Walvoord)

And so, their suffering is over, the race is run, the prize is in hand, the future is beautiful and has no end, and it was all worth it!