**Revelation 7: Equipping the Saints**

\*The 144,000 is the church militant. This number represents all of God’s people on earth ready to carry out God’s orders, i.e. Matthew 28:18-20. 144,000 = 12 x 12 x 1000. This is the whole church; all the elect.

12 = church (12 tribes of Israel; 12 Apostles). 1000 = a long, but completed and determined time/quantity. We will revisit the number 1000 when we come to Rev. 20 and discuss the millennium (mille = 1000).

1. The Church militant (first scene): vv1-8
   1. The four angels holding back the four winds (v1)
      1. The four corners refers to the entire earth.
         1. The four angels stand across the whole earth.
      2. The four winds are associated with the four horsemen from Rev. 6.
         1. They represent destruction and suffering.
            1. Zechariah 6:1-8
            2. Daniel 7:2-3
         2. Tribulations and suffering takes place all over the earth under the permissive will of God.
   2. The fifth angel and the work of sealing the saints (vv2,3)
      1. God seals those who belong to Him.
         1. Destruction is restrained so that the sealing of God’s people may be accomplished.
            1. They are held back until each Christian has been fortified in the Spirit for sacrificial service to God.
         2. What is the seal?
            1. 2 Timothy 2:19
         3. How is it accomplished?
            1. God does use visible signs in this sealing

Preaching (Acts 2:14-35)

Baptizing (Acts 2:38, 41)

Lord’s Supper (Acts 2:42)

* + - * 1. Through these signs, the Spirit works according to the words and promises of God. The Spirit seals and confirms that they are indeed His people.

In Revelation 9:1-6 we see a seal upon the forehead of God’s people. We should know that God will defend and protect us from the attacks of the Devil and demons.

The seal is greater than the mark of the beast.

* + - * 1. Here in Revelation 7 we should not the sealing refers to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian’s life.
  1. The 144,000 from the 12 Tribes: (v4)
     1. This number represents the whole body of Christians, Jews and Gentiles, on earth during the time period covered in Revelation.
        1. The context of verses 1-3 which takes place here on earth leads one to say this is the church militant.
           1. 144,000 is only mentioned here and in Revelation 14:1,3.

The number must not be taken literally. In Rev. 14:1,3 we see that 144,000 are depicted as male virgins.

This number suggest total completeness of God’s people. God’s Israel, all believers in Christ, is a perfect and complete army, equipped and ready for God’s work.

* + - 1. The 144,000 are described in OT terms, 12 tribes of Israel.
         1. In the New Testament we do see that church of Jesus Christ, both Jews and Gentiles, is referred to in OT language.

Jesus says the disciples will “sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28; Lk. 22:28-30).

Paul says believers in Jesus, both Jews and Gentiles, are the true Israel of God and the sons of Abraham.

Romans 4:1-12; 9:6-8; 11:11-27; Galatians 3:26-29

* + - * 1. In Christ, the 12 tribes are fully restored.

Israel was scattered as a result of the civil war under Rehoboam. The 10 tribes that made up the Northern Kingdom of Israel were scattered under the Assyrian rule.

* 1. The Twelve Tribes: (vv5-8)
     1. The ordering
        1. The list is not according to birth order, or mother, nor according to the allotment of land.
           1. OT references according to birth order:

Gen. 46:8-25; 49:1-27; Exodus 1:1-6; Deut. 27:11-13.

* + - * 1. OT references according to land allotment:

Num. 13:1-16; 34:1, 19-29

Joseph’s two sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) take the place of Joseph and Levi in the allotment of the Promised Land.

* + - 1. Judah is probably mentioned first (4th in birth order) because Jesus came from this line. Dan is probably missing because it was in this tribe graven images were made (Judg. 18:1-31; Gen. 49:17). This tribe was associated with idolatry. Ephraim was tied to Dan in this regard (Judge 17:1-13).
      2. This list (Tribes=the Church) has been cleansed from apostasy and idolatry. Emphasis is on faithfulness to God.