

08a REV

This is the 30th of September, 2005. We continue tonight our study in the Book of Revelation. Let's take a moment to go before the Lord in prayer, to flesh out our pieces of the puzzle that we have right here.

We have sealed Rachel bore Benjamin, and the 12,000, 12 times 12, speaks of a completion or culmination of that particular figure. Think about the number 7 and the principle of the Sabbath. What is the culmination and the completion of the whole Sabbath idea? It's 7 times 7 or 49.

You have the 490 years, 7 times 70. It's appointed for the fulfilling of all things related to Daniel's people over in Daniel 9. You have the year of Jubilee, 7 times 7 is 49. And then the following year is a Jubilee where all things are restored and a cycle is completed.

So when you have 12 times 12, once again you figure this is speaking of the fulfillment or the culmination or the completion of some thing, some phase. And we're going to see tonight that this is really true with regard to the 144,000. These are seen by John first.

Sequence in the Book of Revelation is often important. You can't decide that the sequence begins in chapter 4 verse 1 and then continues in an unbroken way through the book. But the scenes within a scene, within a chapter, within a pericope or whatever you want to call it, a section in the book, going from beginning to end, that sequence is significant and the sequence is meaningful and the sequence is in fact predictive.

These things will happen before these things. So in chapter 7, which is a good place for a chapter break, it says, after these things. That's a natural narrative marker here.

You have the four angels standing there. They're getting ready to loose these winds that will blow on the earth and the sea and the trees in some sort of damaging way. But they're told to hold up until these 144,000 are sealed.

And the servants of God are manifestly on the earth because this is where the winds blow, this is where the trees are. Each of these represents different things. The earth, this is where you have your established and fixed manifestations of civilization.

Governments and cities and thrones are established on earth. So these winds are about to blow on the earth and disrupt all of those. It says that the wind is about to blow on the sea.

The sea is the chaotic, uncontrollable forces of random evil and whatnot and the sea is going to blow on those. You have the trees, which represent that which is noble and lofty and the grandeur of trees. You see this, we've seen it in the parables in the Old Testament.

Ezekiel talking about the tree with a branch up at the top. This is typically the representative of royalty, of rulership. The prince, which tree is going to rule over us, has the idea of the principles of government, the beauty of order and establishment in the earth.

So the wind is about to blow and disrupt all of these things and they're all related to life on this earth, life in temporal terms. Before that, these servants need to be sealed. And so we don't see the servants, we just hear the order that they are about to be sealed and then this judgment will be unleashed.

How come we don't see them? Where is John? For one, come up here. He's got the heavenly perspective. The 144,000 are down on the earth.

So, they are mentioned first. Then you have John saying in verse 9, Then after these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, all nations, tribes, peoples, and so on. Just as it is in history, just as it is in the word of God, where you see Israel first and then the church, this is the order in this section of Revelation.

You see Israel first and then the church. This is Israel, temporal Israel, actually living, breathing. These are the representative Israelites of the 144,000, 12,000 from each tribe.

After this, you see the great multitude from every tribe, kindred, and so forth. Now, we saw the 24 elders with their thrones and their crowns and their robes. And we said this represents the church because that's who has thrones and robes and crowns.

And 24, the number of the courses in the priesthood and the Melchizedekian priesthood. So, how can you have two different elements? Because the 24 elders come and go in the description throughout Revelation, don't they? We see them, they do some stuff, and then you see something else happen, and then we're back to the 24 elders again. And then you have this multitude.

So, if the multitude is a separate symbolic element from the 24 elders, then how can they both be the church? I would submit to you that there are two kinds of church age believers. There are overcomers and there are non-overcomers. Just as in Israel, you have those who are wise virgins, and you have those who are foolish virgins.

You have those who are faithful servants, and you have those who are unfaithful servants. You have those who have the wedding garment and come in to the feast. You have those who do not have the wedding garment and are bound hand and foot, cut in two, and are given their allotment with the hypocrites.

You have in Daniel chapter 12 those who awake to a resurrection of life, and you have those who awake to a resurrection of shame and contempt. Romans chapter 2 says a very similar thing about the church. Those who by faithful continuance and well-doing,

seeking for glory and honor and immortality, God gives them eternal life.

We know eternal life. We know what that phrase means. This isn't, I'm not going to hell, I'm going to heaven.

This is the reward, blessing, opportunity, sitting on the throne, wearing a crown, functioning as a Melchizedekian priest, eternal life. Those who are reprobate, those who are disinterested, apathetic, unfaithful, don't lay up for themselves treasure in heaven, there will be wrath, there will be contempt, there will be shame, there will be weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth. We see clearly in scripture two groups in Israel and two groups in the church among the redeemed.

So it should not surprise us that in Revelation, looking at the culmination of all things, we are going to see the 24 elders representing the overcomers who have the privilege. This is an opportunity for you and me. We have the opportunity, if we live a life of faith and obedience, if we walk the narrow road through the straight gate, we will belong to and function in the heavenly priesthood.

It will be like being a Levite in Israel. It will be like being a patriarch in the pre-Moses days, where you have the privilege of actually implementing the worship of the Lord God, reflecting His glory, being near His throne. It's unimaginably exciting to me to think that this is available.

It's not preordained, it isn't a matter of birth or station or gender or any of the things that limited people from priesthood in any time past. Any one of us who loves God enough to keep His Word and to have His Son come and dwell in us has access to this eternal privilege. Those are the 24 elders.

Everybody else will stand there in the grand choir, waving a palm branch and crying out with a loud voice with the praise of God. Not a bad thing. A whole lot better than some of the alternatives.

Nevertheless, why fall short? Why not avail ourselves of the grace of God through Christ? Most of us, I think, would agree that if you're going to do something, let's do it with gusto. Let's shoot for the target. Same thing with Israel.

If our understanding is correct, we have a pretty clear picture of the two facets of the one bride, the church that belongs to the Lord Jesus. Those who are in places of rulership, these 24 elders in many ways reflect what Jesus says to the overcomers. Sit with me on my throne, white stone, new name, crown, hidden manna, and so on.

The multitude out here is not pictured in terms of reward. It is an innumerable multitude. You're a face in the crowd.

You have a palm branch. You have a robe. You are redeemed and praising God for that

fact.

Well, what about Israel? We would expect that there might be two manifestations, particularly during the time when there are still living, breathing Israelites on planet Earth during this 70th week. So, these individuals are represented by the 144,000. The question comes up, well, is this all there is? Are there no other Jews on the planet? And I would submit to you that, of course, there are.

These are the saved. These are those who have expressed, being Jewish gets you nothing in any dispensation without faith. Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

Your race can be beloved for the sake of the fathers. Your nation can be blessed for the sake of the patriarchs, for the sake of the fathers, for the sake of the covenant. For God's own sake, I will glorify my name among the heathen by preserving your sorry nation in spite of your disobedience and apathy and so on.

God says many places in the Old Testament. But, no one is saved without faith. No one is sealed without faith.

So, what about the 144,001 Jewish person on planet earth? He is 12,001 out of the tribe of Reuben. And he doesn't get the seal. Why would this be? Just think about it.

God says, well, I'm only going to preserve 12,000. You're 12,001, so, sorry, you don't get the seal. You're going to get the chop.

You're going to be torn asunder by the forces of the Antichrist. This makes no sense. This isn't God's pattern that there are faithful believers looking unto him that he just leaves to the vagaries of chance.

The 144,000 are saved. Any other Jewish people on the planet are lost. Any other non-Jewish people are lost.

It doesn't really matter. So, this comprises all of the saved. If you're not in this group, you're not saved.

If you are saved, you're in this group. And I'm talking about saved in the sense of somebody that has an eternal future other than the lake of fire. This sealing takes place early in the week.

This is before there are martyrs. Now, some of these people are going to be martyred even though they have the seal of God in their forehead. And these are going to be those who speak from under the altar, oddly enough, at the opening of the 5th seal because this is not sequential.

After the opening of the 6th seal, remember we have a rewind. We're going to go back and take another look, just as we will at the blowing of the 6th trumpet. After the 6th

seal is open and you have these cosmic disturbances and you have the earthquake, singular, the big earthquake with a capital E, then we have chapter 7. After these things, that vision, that set piece of the first 6 seals is put on hold and you rewind and you go back and you have this scene before the judgment where the winds are being held back.

Remember now, all of the things that have happened with the four horsemen, with the martyrdoms and with the great natural disasters represented in those first 6 seals can be seen in the release of those winds at the beginning of chapter 7. What do the winds attack? Things on the earth, establishment, structure, order, civilization, striking the sea, chaotic forces. We've had two hurricanes in the last month and a half and we know that man is completely unable to cope with forces beyond his own control. It's by definition, right? And then you have the striking the trees and this is the representation as in the Old Testament, as I mentioned before, of order and beauty, aesthetics, the princely, the noble, whatsoever things are pure and so on.

Trees, I think that I shall never see a poem as lovely as a tree, etc. I don't remember who said that. It wasn't the same one as the guy that said I never saw a purple cow, was it? Wasn't that Joyce? I never saw a purple cow, I never hoped to see one, something like that.

I think it was a different guy that said a poem as lovely as a tree. But the tree represents aesthetic beauty, represents that which is noblest and best, the princely concept. The wind is going to blow all of this away.

The earth, the sea, the trees, everything that's worth looking at, the winds. And these winds, the four winds, represent the events of those six seals. So we've rewound, we're back before those winds are released.

Hold them back, no judgment hits anything yet until we seal the 144,000. Once they are sealed, this is not a get out of martyrdom free card. This is the mark of God's ownership.

This is basically God saying I know who belongs to me. They've got the mark of my ownership. It is not a bulletproof vest.

It is not an iron collar so that you can't be beheaded. So oddly enough, I would suggest to you that the martyred souls under the altar in the fifth seal are standing before us in the next chapter, in chapter 7, before their martyrdom because that sealing takes place at the beginning. So this is the group who, like the two witnesses that we'll see a little bit later, are pre-positioned by God in history.

God obviously has the power to compose the constituency of a given generation. God can decide where and when people will be born. When he does that, he can stack a generation with people.

He can arrange for an individual to be present within that generation so that you have an

Exodus generation and you have a Moses. You have a first century church generation and you have an Apostle Paul. And God doesn't have to go in and tweak their volition to demonstrate his point in history.

Well, say all of that to say this. What about these 144,000? What else do we know about them? We're going to actually do the same thing Revelation does and we're going to do something out of sequence. We're going to go to Revelation chapter 14 because this is the continuation.

This is another look at the 144,000. Normally we would just wait and take it in the sequence that it is written, but it's important for us, without the Jewish background that the first century church had, without the understanding that the original recipients of this letter would have had, and without the background that the future recipients and the future readers of this book are going to have in the tribulation. We have to take some extra measures to be sure that we can understand it because we're looking at it one step removed.

Chapter 14 of Revelation, Then I looked, and behold, a lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 having his father's name written on their foreheads. How did that come about? That was the ceiling. So these are manifestly the same people.

I looked, and behold, a lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 having his father's name written on their foreheads. Where is the lamb? Standing on Mount Zion. Now, in Revelation 14, in the grand sweep of the book, has Jesus come back yet? He has not.

The first place he's going to stand is the Mount of Olives, right? He's going to split, Armageddon, way of escape, slaying all these, blood runs as high as the horses' bridles, etc. Then he is going to come and follow a very familiar path for himself down the slope of the Mount of Olives, across the Kidron, through the Eastern Gate, right in to where the temple is, and where the ancient site of the glory of God was when it departed that we saw in Ezekiel. So this, we have jumped forward in Revelation 14, and we're looking at a future scene.

Some of these 144,000, many of them got martyred, and were under the altar in the fifth seal, but now they're all restored, they're all standing there, and they are with the lamb. This scene is reminiscent of the 24 elders who surround the throne of the Father. These are your overcomers.

And they are representative not only of the overcomers in the tribulation period, but all of the overcomers of the age of Israel, just as the 24 elders are not just on the scene because the book of Revelation is being written, they represent the faithful throughout the church age. So there is a division of all Israel, if you will, that is saved, saved Israel, and 144,000 who represent overcomers in the same way that you have the blood-

washed multitude with the palm branches, and you have the 24 elders who represent the overcomers of that same larger group. Now, the seventh word here is lamb.

Then I looked, and behold, a lamb. I got to thinking about this because Jesus has a lot of different titles in Scripture, doesn't he? Have you seen these posters, and I've seen T-shirts, and mugs, and different things that have, you know, Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God, Son of David, Son of Jesse, Son of Man, endless variations of the names of Jesus Christ. And one of them, of course, is the lamb.

What does that name represent? Each of Jesus' names emphasizes some aspect of his identity, his role, his office, his function, and the person of Christ in some fashion is emphasized by that name. So, what do you think the lamb represents? Obviously, the first thing that comes to your mind is sacrifice. The first sacrifice on the planet that we know anything about was Abel sacrificing the lamb.

We don't know exactly which animal it was that God slaughtered in the garden to provide the skins for Adam and Eve. But we do know that Abel brought a lamb from the flock. So, sacrifice.

Now, who does sacrifice? What priesthods were involved in animal sacrifice, specifically of lambs? Well, let's see. Abel, of course, you have the patriarchal period. Certainly, the Levites, they did away with an awful lot of lambs in their day.

No Chisodecan priesthood. We don't have any lamb type of thing. And interestingly, it turns out that, as you know, this is sort of one of my peeves, that we want to be correct in using terminology.

And I have some trouble with Christians making a big deal out of constantly calling Jesus the king. The king is coming. Come thou almighty king.

There's nothing wrong with it. It's technically correct. But he is not our king.

The Bible never says that Jesus Christ is king for the church. Who is Jesus the king of? What do the wise men say when they see Jerusalem? Where is he that is born what? King of the Jews. And if you're a sloppy thinker, and you just say, well, I'm a servant of the king.

What are you really saying? Besides, I haven't thought through my statement very well. A lot of people in the service of the king, they'll sign a letter, sign an email in the service of the king. Well, do you really understand what you're saying? And God bless them.

I'm not trying to pick on anybody. But to be technically correct, to be pedantic about it, Jesus is the king of Israel. He is king by virtue of his descendancy from his father David.

He is the king of Israel. He's not my king, per se. Now, I'm sorry, I don't mean to hurt

anybody's feelings, but that's just the fact.

Well, let's talk about the lamb. What kind of a title for Jesus is that word? New Testament or Old Testament? How many times, let me put it another way, do you think the term lamb is applied to Jesus in the church portion of the New Testament? Notice how carefully I worded that. In the church portion of the New Testament, how many times do you think Jesus is called the lamb? In the church part.

Dozens upon dozens, overwhelmingly, you find the word lamb, the term lamb in the Old Testament in terms of sacrifice. In the New Testament, the book of John, John the Baptist, says twice, in chapter 1, Behold the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Who is he talking to? When is he talking? He is the last of the Old Testament prophets, and he is talking to Israel about the coming king.

Behold the redeemer king. Behold the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. I'll tell you the answer.

Twice. And it's not a title, it's a description, or an Old Testament quote. Once in Acts chapter 8, Acts 8.32, the place in the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearers is silent, he opened not his mouth.

And the other is 1 Peter 1.19. You are redeemed not with gold and silver and corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Comparing the blood of Christ. Who is Peter writing to in 1 Peter? If you know my peeves about the mistranslation of 1 Peter chapter 1, you know the answer to this already.

To the Jews who are dispersed in Asia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, etc. It's all about the Jews. The title lamb is all about Israel.

Every time you find it applied to Jesus in the scripture, it is with Israel in view. Never the church. Paul does not once refer to Jesus as the lamb.

Nowhere else. So, with that observation, if we go back to Revelation chapter 14, Then I looked, and behold, a lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000, having his father's name written on their foreheads. I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder.

And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang, as it were, a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures and the elders, and no one could learn that song, except the 144,000 who were redeemed from the earth. Now we're going to get a description of the 144,000.

It's very fascinating. What does it say in verse 4 of chapter 14? These 144,000 are the

ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. Now, symbolic language, not to say they're not actually virgins in the physical sense, but what does it mean? Why would that be significant? What's the import of 144,000 people being virgins? Haven't defiled themselves, here it says, with women, which makes the assumption that they're all male.

Will there be no female believers in the tribulation? It's a defensible hypothesis. I think it's an unlikely one, but it's defensible. But what does it mean they have not defiled themselves with women? Remember now, this is a symbolic picture.

They don't have to be male to be represented by males here. What does it mean that they are virgins? A term normally applied to women, and yet here it says these have not defiled themselves with women. Virgins have no offspring.

They're a dead end as long as they remain a virgin. With the exception of the Virgin Mary, if you're a virgin, you have no offspring. You're the last in a line.

And you are pictured as not only not reproducing, but as chaste. You're a combination of two things. You are viewed as an entity unto yourself.

There's no emphasis on your antecedents. There's no emphasis on your descendants, because they're not in view, and the descendants aren't even possible. And when people talk about virgins, you tend to think that this is someone who has kept themselves pure.

And so you have this two-fold connotation of purity and of no posterity. Both of which are true, particularly of the overcomers during the 70th week. What is the advice given? When Paul talks to people who are thinking the end is near, he says, if you think the end is near, you better not be getting married.

You're wasting your time. You need to be thinking about the kingdom if it's that close. And the idea here is these 144,000 are pure, and they're sort of a special case.

They don't seem to have antecedents, and they don't seem to have posterity. And that's exactly what you would expect when you have sort of a reactivated generation of Israelites during the 70th week that are sealed 12,000 out of each tribe. How do you know what tribe they came from? Well, God knows.

God sort of invents them into tribes, if you will. Whether they're literally from those tribes, it's possible. But it just says they are from these tribes.

But it doesn't say so-and-so, the son of so-and-so, the son of so-and-so. None of these people, I think, is going to have a pedigree chart going all the way back to Abraham or back to Jacob. Right? They come from nowhere, and they go to nowhere.

And it's interesting because what does the Scripture say about Melchizedek? We know

Melchizedek actually had a mommy and daddy, but Scripture says he is presented as having no father and no mother. He just appears without antecedents and without subsequent offspring. And it is the Melchizedekian priesthood to which we belong, of which Jesus is High Priest.

Here, you have the 144,000, and they are virgins. They are without antecedents. They are without posterity.

And what do they do? Look at verse 4. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. Now, this is a big problem.

This is a big problem. How can the 144,000 sealed in the 70th week of Daniel be the firstfruits of anything? I thought the New Testament said that we were a kind of firstfruits. I thought the New Testament said that Jesus is the firstfruits of them that are raised from the dead.

So, in what sense, and this is the proper way to phrase the question, in what sense are these 144,000 firstfruits? Well, we're going to pause here and take our break. To be sure, you come back. And when we come back, we'll take a look at this very interesting statement that is made.

These virginal individuals who follow the Lamb wherever He goes are firstfruits. So, we'll puzzle on that until we come back.