Apocalypse Now (Revelation Revisited) Session 7/Wednesday

144,000 Spirit-filled Evangelists - Revelation 7

I sometimes hear - or read - about a "coming global revival" on this earth that will change the course of human history. Well, such a spiritual move is coming, but not in my lifetime. Indeed, it will occur AFTER the Rapture. Consider Jesus' prophecy regarding such a revival, Luke 18:8 Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? Our Lord intimated that the spiritual well-being of humanity at His return would so low as to be non-existent. So much for any predicted great global revival prior to the Rapture.

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Yet Revelation 7 informs us clearly that a great world-wide coming to salvation will take place. When and how and with whom?

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Rev. 7:1-17

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. [2] 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, [3] Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. [4] 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. [5] Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. [6] Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nepthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. [7] Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. [8] Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand. [9] After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; [10] And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. [11] And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

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[12] Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. [13] And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? [14] And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. [15] Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. [16] They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. [17] For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

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We need to know clearly who these 144,000 "sealed" or protected evangelists are. There have been several cults begun from Revelation 7 with quite ridiculous interpretations of the passage. One of the finest Bible expositors of the last century, Dr. Harry A. Ironside (who passed away about 1950) pointed out the heresies often generated from Chapter 7:

I am sure that many of my hearers have often been perplexed by conflicting theories regarding the 144,000. The way in which so many unscriptural and often positively heretical sects arrogate to themselves this title would be amusing if were not so sad. You are perhaps aware that the Seventh-Day Adventists apply it to the faithful of their communion, who will be found observing the Jewish Sabbath at the Lord's return. They suppose that these will be raptured when the Lord descends and judgment will be poured out upon the rest of the church. Then we have the followers of the late Pastor Russell (Jehovah's Witnesses) who teach that the 144,000 include only the 'overcomers' of their persuasion who continue faithful to the end, following the teaching of the system commonly called 'Millennial Dawnism.' That very absurd and weird cult known as 'The Flying Roll' makes claim to the same thing, only with them the 144,000 are those who will have their blood so cleansed that they cannot die, but will have immortal life on this earth. Besides these, there are many other sects, whose leaders consider their own peculiar followers will be the 144,000 sealed ones at the end time. All of these, however, overlook a very simple fact, which if observed would save them from their folly. the 144,000 are composed of 12,000 from each tribe of the children of Israel. There is not a Gentile among them. Whenever I meet people who tell me they belong to the 144,000 I always ask them, 'Which tribe please?' And they are invariably put to confusion for want of an answer. LECTURES IN REVELATION / IRONSIDE / LOIZEAUX BROTHERS

So it is very clear that the 144,000 are Jews (verse 4: "...from all the tribes of Israel." Some of today's critics of scripture ask, "Well, what do you suppose that means?" I would say it means ... 12,000 Jews from each tribe, just as Scripture says!

Note carefully also the word "servants" in verse 3. That word "servant" comes from the Greek word *doulos* which means bond servant (in our case) to the Lord Jesus Christ. So right away we become aware of the fact that there will be multitudes of followers of Jesus during the Tribulation - who may have missed the Rapture, but somehow have found salvation in Jesus during this perilous 7 year period. They are amazing Christians in that they are followers of Jesus in a period that could eventually cost them their very lives for we are not assured in Scripture that the "seal" or "protection" lasts the entire 7 years.

God's Seal On Their Foreheads

Rev. 7:3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. God's servants who will wreak destruction on the Earth soon are first commanded by God to "Hold off!" til the 144,000 are protected.

That verse tells us clearly that God intends to "hurt the earth" during the Tribulation time. But He will not allow the destruction to harm 144,000 Jews who will evangelize millions for Christs. They will be "sealed" or earmarked by some sort of sign in their foreheads. The followers of the Antichrist will also have a sign or emblem so placed: Rev. 13:14-18 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. [15] And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. [16] And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: [17] And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. [18] Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

It would seem that once a person takes this dreaded identification, it is permanent. There is no recourse. The persecution of those who become followers of Christ will be deadly as we learn from the fifth seal in Rev. 6:9-11: And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: [10] And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? [11] And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be

fulfilled.

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BUT....ISN'T THE HOLY SPIRIT GONE FROM THE EARTH FOLLOWING THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH?

2 Thes. 2:5-12

[5] Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? [6] And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. [7] For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. [8] And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: [9] Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, [10] And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. [11] And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: [12] That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit that will be taken is His RESTRAINING force on the Earth. His convicting presence will assuredly remain as lost people cry out for rocks and hills to fall upon them. It was this time, I believe, that Joel wrote about (a passage that we Pentecostals quote so often): Joel 2:28-32 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: [29] And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. (This section of the prophecy is being fulfilled in our lifetime - at least in part.) [30] And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. [31] The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. [32] And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord** shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.

** It these tribulation saints who refuse to take the Antichrist"s (beast's) mark.

Can you even begin to imagine living in a major American city devoid of any law enforcement? No police? No sheriff? No state patrol? It would be an evil madhouse. Thus it will be during the Tribulation for the RESTRAINING INFLUENCE of the Holy Spirit is no longer here.

The combination of the anointed ministry of the 144,000 sealed Jewish witnesses in this awful time of Antichrist's brutality will result in a major harvest of souls for Christ: Rev. 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms (branches) in their hands;

Dr. Tim LaHaye observes: It is exciting to think that more people will be saved during that time than responded under the preaching of the apostles, the early church fathers, the Reformation preachers, modern missions, fragmented denominationalism, radio and television preaching and even the present day when Bible teaching local churches seem to be gathering in such large numbers of souls.

REVELATION UNVEILED / LAHAYE / ZONDERVAN / PAGE 153

The ministry of the 144,000 will be against the backdrop of chaos around the world - earthquakes, famine, war, catastrophic floods, and other such horrors. We have never seen anything of this horrific magnitude in all human history! Oh, my friend - you do not want to miss the Rapture and be "left behind" in this maelstrom.

It is interesting to note that today there are somewhere around 25,000 to 30,000 active full-time missionaries in the world today (sent from all Bible-believing churches). Compare that to 144,000 Holy Spirit anointed and God-protected Jewish "missionaries" in the Tribulation!

THE TRIBULATION SAINTS WILL RECEIVE FABULOUS REWARDS IN HEAVEN

1. Rev. 7:15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

I cannot find any distinction of rewards in Heaven for those who were raptured and those who became Tribulation saints. We are all found gathered around that magnificent throne of God so clearly described in chapter 4 of Revelation.

2. They will receive from God everything they ever need. Rev. 7:16-17 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. [17] For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

3. Here is a fascinating point: (From verse 17) "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." What does that mean? It is my own opinion that God will erase from our memories all the sorrows of earth. I don't believe we will recall much, if anything, of our lives now. Such would lessen the glory of being in God's presence.

YOU MUST CHOOSE CHRIST OR REJECT HIM

Whether you are a follower of Christ in this life now - or are saved during the Tribulation - you must make the decision. No one can make it for you. Regardless of the time in which you live, your eternal destiny is your choice and no one else's.

THE SEVENTH SEAL AND THE TRUMPET JUDGMENTS

Revelation chapter 6 listed the first six seals of the Scroll of Divine Judgement. Then in chapter 7 we had a "parenthesis", so to speak, as we learned of the 144,000 sealed Jewish witnesses. So - what happened to the 7th seal?

Rev. 8:1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

Can you recall 9/11? When the planes hit the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and another was brought down in Pennsylvania, everyone's eyes, it seemed, were glued to the TV sets. Everything else was set aside and the attention of the masses was on the tragedy of that awful day. So it would seem to be in Heaven. All of a sudden, the worship stops! The singing is replaced by silence. Why? BECAUSE WE LEARN NOW FROM CHRIST HIMSELF WHAT IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN ON EARTH WITH THE TRUMPET JUDGMENTS WHICH WILL MAKE 9/11 SEEM LIKE A PICNIC.

The horrors about to be inflicted on this planet - by God Himself - are so bone-chilling that even the angels stand breathless before the throne.

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Rev. 8:2-13

And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. [3] 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. [4] And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. [5] And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. [6] And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

[7] The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. [8] And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; [9] And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. [10] And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; [11] And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. [12] And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

[13] And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

The subject of angels would make a great series. They come in different forms and ministries. Seven of them now stand before God's throne. It is possible that one of these 7 is Gabriel for we read in Luke 1:19: And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. But this time around....there will not be "glad tidings."

What Happens To Our Prayers That Seem Unanswered?
THE FIRST TRUMPET - GOD ANSWERS PRAYERS OF THOSE PRAYING
FOR RELIEF FROM PERSECUTION

A headline on today's Internet was headlined: IRAN'S SECRET CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT GROWS. It continued: The number of Muslim converts who are risking prison or death by secretly worshiping as Christian in Iran's house church movement has grown to as many as 1 million people, according to watchdog groups.

The London-based Pars Theological Center is training as least 200 Iranian Christians to become the next generation of Iran's church leaders (the Christian Post reported). The persecution of Christians has persisted in Iran since the 1979 rise of the country's theocratic Shiite Muslim government with Christians facing the threat of death, lashing and torture. About 100 Christians currently remain imprisoned under Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's rule. In 2010 Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the country's underground house churches "threaten the Islamic faith and deceive young Muslims." Despite the crackdown, there is now a growing movement of Christians in the Islamic Republic.

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This article is germane, I believe, to the prayers mentioned in this passage of Revelation 8. These are perhaps the prayers of suffering saints through the centuries that seem to have been unanswered, those who have petitioned God in their prayers to avenge Himself on those who have persecuted believers and blasphemed the Creator. Note that the censer is filled with fire which is about to be cast on the earth.

In Rev. 8:4 we read of the smoke of the incense. This incense, our prayers, are always before the Lord. Have you ever felt that your prayers don't get much higher than the light fixture on your ceiling? But the truth is our prayers are always on God's mind and heart and will one day be fulfilled to His pleasure.

THE SECOND TRUMPET

Verses 8 and 9 describe the judgement heralded by the blowing of the second trumpet. Something like a huge mountain, on fire, is thrown into the sea. This likely is the Mediterranean Sea and the "mountain" is possibly a massive meteor. It must be incredibly large for it kills a third of the fish in the sea and perhaps because of a resulting tsunami destroys a third of the ships at sea (our U.S. Sixth Fleet is located there). As a result of so much death and destruction, there is blood in the water which becomes toxic.

THE THIRD TRUMPET

This trumpet sounds and another meteor (the great star - Wormwood, scripture calls it) blazing like a torch) falls from heaven falls into the water sources. It pollutes one-third of the world's rivers. Water is always a critical issue, especially in the Middle East.

THE FOURTH TRUMPET

The book of Genesis reports that on the first day of creation God said, "Let there be light and there was light." (He is the source of light - Genesis 1:3). On the fourth creation day God torches the sun that still blazes today. Now God reverses the issue and the light

is reduced by a third. From that time on there will be more darkness on the earth than light.

Now - as bad as the first four trumpets are - see what happens next with the warning angel who hovers in the air and calls out:

Rev. 8:13 Woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

The tribulation woes now increase dramatically. This is the introduction to the fifth, sixth and seventh trumpet judgments. You have heard the saying, "Hell on earth!" It would seem that way when those trumpets are blown.

THE FIFTH TRUMPET

When this trump is heard, a personage from eternity opens the key to the "great abyss," where the fallen angels have been kept ever since their attempted coup of God in the very beginning of time. While many demons have been allowed to roam the earth and wreak destruction on humanity, even more of them have been locked up all this time. Now they will be unleashed on the earth. 2 Peter 2:4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; Their anger and desire for vengeance will be fierce. Here is the biblical account of their fall:

Ezekiel 28:11-19 Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, [12] Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. [13] Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. [14] Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. [15] Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. [16] By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. [17] Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. [18] Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy

traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. [19] All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.

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You will find another part of the story in Isaiah 14. Let it be said clearly again that those who live for Jesus and have accepted Him as Lord have the living Christ dwelling in their mortal bodies and need not fear demon possession. But oh the horror of being on this earth in the Tribulation period when these creatures are unleashed.

THE FIRST WOE: Rev. 9:2-3 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. [3] 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.

This reminds me of being at Carlsbad Caverns in early evening when multitudes of bats come flying out of the cave for their nocturnal hunts. It seems that the sky becomes black with them. This is a microcosm of what it would be like possibly when eternity's "cave," the abyss, is opened and the fallen angels are released.

These creatures will have a leader called Apollyon, which means destroyer. Rev. 9:11 And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.

For five months these creatures will "sting" human beings still on earth. Verse 6 speaks of intense pain but not something fatal.

THE SIXTH TRUMPET

Rev. 9:13-15 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, [14] Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. [15] And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

Four horrible evil angels are released on earth who will kill one-third of human beings on earth. They apparently come from the Middle East (Euphrates). They bring with them a massive army: Rev. 9:16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. Are they human? Or inhuman? There is a big difference of opinion about that issue; however, one thing is

sure: they kill a lot of people. Already in our study of the Tribulation, 25% of the population was killed early by the fourth horseman of the Apocalypse. So by the time the followers of Apollyon's army get done, a total of one half of the world's population - THREE BILLION - will have died.

Now between the sixth and seventh trumpet, we have yet another "parenthesis." And w will study that issue NEXT WEEK.