



Route 66, Revelation

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Revelation 7:1-3

"After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, restraining the four winds of the earth so that the wind might not blow upon the earth, or upon the sea, or against any tree. And I saw another angel going up from where the sun rises, with a seal which belonged to the living God, and he shouted with a great voice to the four angels to whom was given power to harm the earth and the sea: "Do not harm the earth and the sea or the trees until we seal the servants of our God upon their foreheads."

They believed the earth was square, flat; and at its four corners are four angels waiting to unleash the winds of destruction.

Isaiah speaks of gathering the outcasts of Judah from the four corners of the earth (Isaiah 11:12).

The end is come upon the four corners of the earth (Ezekiel 7:2).

It was the common belief that all the forces of nature were under the charge of angels. So we read of the angel of the fire (Revelation 14:18) and the angel of the waters (Revelation 16:5). These angels were called "The Angels of Service." They belonged to the very lowest order of angels, because they had to be continually on duty and, therefore, could not keep the Sabbath as a day of rest.

The angels are bidden to restrain the winds until the work of sealing the faithful should be completed. This idea has more than one echo in Jewish literature.

Enoch the angels of the waters are bidden by God to hold the waters in check until Noah had built the ark (Enoch 66: 1, 2).

2 Baruch the angels with the flaming torches are bidden to restrain their fire, when Jerusalem was sacked by the Babylonians, until the sacred vessels of the Temple could be hidden away and saved from the looting of the invaders (2 Baruch 6: 4).

More than once we see the angels restraining the forces of destruction until the safety of the faithful has been made secure.

Zechariah has the picture of the chariots of the winds, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth (Zechariah 6:1-5).

Nahum speaks of the Lord who has his way in the whirlwind (the Sirocco) and the storm (Nah. 1:3).

The Lord goes with the whirlwinds of the south (Zechariah 9:14). The winds are God's chariots (Jeremiah 4:13).

God comes with his chariots like a whirlwind (Isaiah 66:15).

The wind is the breath of God (Job 37:9-10).

The wind rends the mountains (1 Kings 19:11) and withers the grass (Isaiah 40:7; Isaiah 40:24) and dries up the stream, the river and the sea (Nah. 1:4; Psalm 18:15).

God's day would be the day of the whirlwind (Amos 1:14). The whirlwind of the Lord goes forth in its fury and falls on the head of the wicked (Jeremiah 23:19; Jeremiah 30:23). The wind of the Lord, the Sirocco, will come from the wilderness and destroy the fertility of the land (Hosea 13:15). God will send his four winds upon Elam and scatter the people (Jeremiah 49:36).

THE SEAL OF GOD

Revelation 7:4-8

"And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand were sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel. Of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Manasseh, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand."

- A) The seal - was connected in the church with baptism which was regularly described as sealing. It is as if, when a person was baptized, a mark was put upon him to show that he had become the property and the possession of God.
- B) and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The possession of the Holy Spirit is the sign that a man belongs to God. The real Christian is marked out by the seal of the Spirit which enables him to have the wisdom and the strength to cope with life in a way beyond the attainment of others.

THE NUMBER OF THE FAITHFUL

Revelation 7:4-8 (continued)

144,000 can't be the church they are raptured. It tells us they are Jews

"Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel," says Paul (Romans 9:6-7).

If a man is Christ's, then is he Abraham's seed and an heir according to the promise (Galatians 3:29).

It is the Church which is the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16).

It is Christians who are the real circumcision, those who worship God in the spirit, who rejoice in Christ Jesus and who have no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3).

Even if this passage is stated in terms of the twelve tribes of Israel, the reference is still to the Church of God, the new Israel, the Israel of God.

MARTYRS

Revelation 7:9-10

"After this I saw, and, behold, a great crowd, so great that none could count its number, drawn from every race and from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palms in their hands. And they shouted with a great voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated upon the throne and to the Lamb."

The number of the martyrs is beyond all counting - the promise that God made to Abraham was that his descendants would one day be as the number of the stars in the heavens (Genesis 15:5),

and as the sand of the seashore (Genesis 32:12); at the last the number of the true Israel will be beyond all reckoning.

It is not a deliverance which saves a man from trouble but one which brings him triumphantly through trouble. It does not make life easy, but it makes life great. It is not part of the Christian hope to look for a life in which a man is saved from all trouble and distress; the Christian hope is that a man in Christ can endure any kind of trouble and distress, and remain erect all through them, and come out to glory on the other side.

THE PRAISE OF THE ANGELS

Revelation 7:11-12

"And all the angels stood in a circle round the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell upon their faces before the throne, and worshipped God, saying:

"So let it be. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength belong to our God for ever and for ever. Amen."

The picture is of a series of great concentric circles of the inhabitants of heaven.

The outer ring stand all the angels.

Nearer the throne are the twenty-four elders;

Next are the four living creatures;

Before the throne are the white-robed martyrs. The martyrs have just sung their shout of praise to God and the angels take that song of praise and make it their own. "So let it be," say the angels; they say "Amen" to the martyrs' praises. Then they sing their own song of praise and every word in it is meaningful.

WASHING FROM SIN

Revelation 7:13-14

"And one of the elders said to me: "Do you know who these are who are clothed in white robes and where they came from?" I said to him: "Sir, you know." He said to me: "These are they who are coming out of the great tribulation, and who have washed their robes, and have made them white through the power of the blood of the Lamb."

The Psalmist prays to God to wash him thoroughly from his iniquity, to purge him with hyssop, to wash him until he is whiter than snow (Psalm 51:1-7)

the sins which are as scarlet will be as white as snow and those that were red like crimson will be as wool (Isaiah 1:18)

they have been washed and sanctified (I Corinthians)

THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation 7:13-14 (continued)

To us blood indicates death, and certainly the blood of Jesus Christ speaks of his death.

But to the Hebrews the blood stood for the life. That was why the orthodox Jew never would--and still will not--eat anything which had blood in it (Genesis 9:4). The blood is the life and the life belongs to God; and the blood must always be sacrificed to him.

It is the blood of Jesus Christ which is cleansing us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

It is the blood of Jesus Christ which makes expiation for us (Romans 3:25),

It is through his blood that we are justified (Romans 5:9).

It is through his blood that we have redemption (Ephesians 1:7),

We are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:19).

It is through his blood that we have peace with God (Colossians 1:20).

His blood purges our conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14).

THE SERVICE IN THE GLORY

Revelation 7:15

"That is why they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits upon the throne will spread the covering of his glory over them."

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

Here is a picture of heaven with the barriers down. Distinctions of race and of status exist no more; the way into the presence of God is open to every faithful soul.

When the Ten Commandments were given, "the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days.... And the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain" (Exodus 24:16-18). It was the same with the Tabernacle. The cloud covered the tent of the congregation and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter into the Tabernacle because of the glory of the Lord.

This was the cloud which guided the Israelites by day and the fire that guided them by night (Exodus 40:34-38).

At the dedication of Solomon's temple the glory of the Lord filled it so that the priests could not enter (2 Chronicles 7:1-3).

THE BLESSED

Revelation 7:16-17

"They will not hunger any more, nor will they thirst any more; the sun will not fall on them, nor any heat; because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and will lead them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6).

Jesus said: "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger; and he who believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

"Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14).

Jesus said: "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink" (John 7:37).

"They shall not hunger or thirst; neither scorching wind nor sun shall smite them; for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will lead them" (Isaiah 49:10).

THE DIVINE SHEPHERD

Revelation 7:16-17 (continued)

"The Lord is my shepherd," begins the best loved of all the psalms (Psalm 23:1).

"O Shepherd of Israel," begins another (Psalm 80:1).

Isaiah pictures God feeding his flock like a shepherd, holding the lambs in his arms and carrying them in his bosom (Isaiah 40:11).

The greatest title that the prophet can give to the Messianic king is shepherd of his people (Ezekiel 34:23; Ezekiel 37:24).

"I am the good shepherd," (John 10:11,14).

Peter calls Jesus the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (1 Peter 2:25),

Hebrews speaks of him as that great shepherd of the sheep (Hebrews 13:20).