
What Next?

The Tribulation ~ Part 3

Various Passages

W*HO ARE THE 144,000?* As with much of prophecy there are always people who will run with a statement and then jump the shark. Consider the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the following may not reflect recent changes. ...

"The Witnesses say these people represent the Church of Christ, the Israel of God, and this is a common view among Bible scholars, one that has had a long history in the interpretation of Revelation. The 144,000 are taken as a symbol of the Christian faithful. It is what Witnesses say next that is bizarre.

By the way I should note that to say the 144,000 represent the Christian faithful is just about as bizarre as what the Jehovah's Witnesses say but ...

Supposedly God began collecting the 144,000 at Pentecost in A.D. 33 but stopped collecting them in 1935, when the full number was reached. Some of the 144,000 are still living, and they are all Jehovah's Witnesses. As of 1986 there were only about 9,000 of the 144,000 left alive. Since the Jehovah's Witnesses are a larger group, possessing several million members, how are the rest of the Witnesses regarded? As non-members of the body of Christ. They will still be saved in the end, but they will not be part of the body and will not go to heaven. They are considered part of the "great crowd" mentioned in Revelation 7:9-10.

*In Jehovah's Witness "kingdom halls" (church buildings) only members of the 144,000 are allowed to receive communion when the Lord's Supper is celebrated (which is done infrequently). Sometimes kingdom halls celebrate the Lord's Supper and no one receives communion since none of the 144,000 are present."*¹

III The Tribulation

A. What is the Tribulation?

B. Who is involved?

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The Holy Spirit | 9. Three Evil Spirits |
| 2. The Devil | 10. Ruler From The North |
| 3. The Two Witnesses | 11. A Persecuted Woman |
| 4. The Antichrist | 12. A Harlot |
| 5. The False Prophet | 13. An Arrogant Queen |
| 6. Angels | 14. A Pure Bride |
| 7. The 144,000 | 15. A Mighty Warrior |
| 8. Demons | |

Introduction: So last time we began looking at the personalities who are involved in the Tribulation period. These were The Holy Spirit, the devil, the Two Witnesses and the one we gave the most attention to — The Anti-Christ.

¹ Catholic Answers Staff, "What is the significance of the number 144,000 to Jehovah's Witnesses?," Catholic.com, 2011.

Now as I noted last time Satan will be trying to create his own version of the Triunity. Of course he the imitation of God the Father. The Anti-Christ is the replacement for Christ. And as for the Holy Spirit we have ...

5. The False Prophet: The False Prophet is the one who will be working signs and wonders. There is no reason to think they weren't real. After all Pharaoh's magicians were able to perform some, some being the operative word, of the things Moses did. In fact Jesus noted that if it were possible, which means it isn't, he'll be capable of misleading the elect. (see Matthew 24:24).

“Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name” (Revelation 13:11–17 ESV).

Just as there have been many anti-Christ's there are even today many false prophets. It is some of these that have founded religions. But just as there is only one who is The Anti-Christ there is also The False Prophet. Pentecost summarizes what we learn of him from this passage in Revelation by stating ...

“ (1) This individual is evidently a Jew, since he arises out of the earth, or land, that is Palestine (13:11); (2) he is influential in religious affairs (13:11, “two horns like a lamb”); (3) he is motivated by Satan as the first beast is (13:11); (4) he has a delegated authority (13:12, “the power of the first beast”); (5) he promotes the worship of the first beast and compels the earth to worship the first beast as God (13:12); (6) his ministry is authenticated by the signs and miracles which he does, evidently proving that he is Elijah that was to come (13:13-14); (7) he is successful in deceiving the unbelieving world (13:14); (8) the worship promoted is an idolatrous worship (13:14-15); (9) he has the power of death to compel men to worship the beast (13:15); (10) he has authority in the economic realm to control all commerce (13:16-17); (11) he has a mark that will establish his identity for those who live in that day (13:18).”²

Okay now I want to take a moment to touch on the number 666. After all many people have been identified as the Anti-Christ and then their names a manipulated to add up to 666. Even otherwise rational believers are somewhat superstitious about the number. MacArthur notes:

“Perhaps no detail in Revelation has intrigued people more than this number. There has been no end to the speculation as to its significance and how to calculate it. In Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, letters had numerical equivalents, and a myriad of schemes to associate the names of historical individuals with

² Pentecost, J. Dwight, Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 2010.

*the number 666 have been put forth. Nero, Caligula, Domitian, Napoleon, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, and a host of others have been proposed, based on some sort of convoluted mathematical rendering of the letters in their name. All such speculation is futile; since the Antichrist is still to come, the number 666 cannot be associated with any historical individual. The church father Irenaeus cautioned against speculating about the identity of the person associated with the number 666 until that person arrives on the scene.”*³

Fruchtenbaum give one of the most terse and straightforward explanations of the number.

*“ In this passage [Rev 13:16-18] whatever the personal name of the Antichrist will be, if his name is spelled out in Hebrew characters, the numerical value of his name is 666. So this is the name that will be put on the worshippers of the Antichrist.”*⁴

6. Angels: These are directly involved as servants who are carrying out God’s work during the seven year period. They are the supernatural entities who carry out God’s judgment on the Gentile world. Here are examples from Revelation.⁵

a. Seven angels with seven trumpets:

“ Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.” (Revelation 8:2; see Revelation 8, 9, 11 ESV).

b. Seven angels with seven vials of wrath:

“ Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”” (Revelation 16:1 ESV).

c. An angel with the seal of the living God:

“ Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea” (Revelation 7:2 ESV).

d. An angel with golden censer:

“ And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne” (Revelation 8:3 ESV).

e. An angel with a little book and a measuring reed:

“ Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land,

Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there” (Revelation 10:1–2; 11:1 ESV).

³ MacArthur, John, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, “Revelation.”* Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 2009.

⁴ Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G., *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, Ariel Ministries Ariel Ministries, San Antonio, TX, 1982, p. 173.

⁵ Wilmington, H. L., *The King Is Coming*, Tyndal House Publishers, Wheaton IL, 1976.

f. An angel with the everlasting gospel:

“Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people” (Revelation 14:6 ESV).

This presents a truth that should be very encouraging in that even with the Two Witnesses and the 144,000 God even sends an angel to spread the Gospel worldwide.

g. An angel with a harvest sickle:

“So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God” (Revelation 14:19 ESV).

h. An angel with a message of doom:

***“After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory.
Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more” (Revelation 18:1, 21 ESV).***

i. An angel with a strange invitation:

“Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, “Come, gather for the great supper of God” (Revelation 19:17 ESV).

These birds are carrion eaters and are to gather to eat the bodies of the victims of the Battle of Armageddon.

j. An angel with a key and a great chain:

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain” (Revelation 20:1 ESV).

7. The 144,000: As I already noted in my introduction this group and how it is understood is a perfect example of just how far off base people can get when they don't take scripture at face value.

First we know who they aren't. They aren't the unique amongst the Jehovah's Witnesses. But they aren't Christians, members of the body of Christ because the Church isn't around so they can't belong to it. Revelation is so clear that the only way to come up with a speculative interpretation is to ignore the passage all together. John records ...

“After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” And I

heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

**12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed,
12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,
12,000 from the tribe of Gad,
12,000 from the tribe of Asher,
12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali,
12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,
12,000 from the tribe of Simeon,
12,000 from the tribe of Levi,
12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,
12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,
12,000 from the tribe of Joseph,
12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed” (Revelation 7:1–8 ESV)**

I don’t know what can be clearer than this. What we have are 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from the twelve tribes. I didn’t intend to address the issue of why the tribe list here is different than others found in scripture but MacArthur explains it pretty succinctly when he says ...

“ Although Reuben was the firstborn (Gen. 46:8), Judah is listed first. Reuben forfeited his birthright as punishment for his sexual misconduct with his father’s concubine (1 Chron. 5:1). The omission of the tribe of Dan in favor of the priestly tribe of Levi is also unusual. Dan was evidently omitted due to the tribe’s penchant for idolatry (cf. Deut. 29:18–21)—which was even worse than that of the rest of the nation (cf. Judg. 18; Amos 8:14). While Dan will share in the millennial blessings (Ezek. 48:1–2, 32) the tribe will not be selected for this duty nor protected during the Tribulation. Similarly, the name of Ephraim is omitted in favor of his father Joseph because Ephraim defected from the ruling house of Judah (Isa. 7:17). Also Ephraim, like Dan, was consumed with idolatry (Hos. 4:17). His brother Manasseh is included because he was the faithful son of Joseph.”⁶

But this group is sealed that is unlike any others who follow Christ they cannot be killed. These are Jewish believers. Some use the description of Christian in that they are followers of Christ. I tend to lean away from that because this aids in the confusion of these with believers in the Church.

Anyway, God has a very specific purpose for them. These are the first Jews who turn to Christ in what will be eventually a third of the nation who become believer. They are evangelists testifying to the truth of the Gospel message, hence the protection from God. What you have here is 144,000 Billy Grahams.

“ This critical passage reinforces the biblical truth that God is not through with the nation of Israel (cf. Rom. 9–11). Though Israel failed in its mission to be a witness nation in the Old Testament, that will not be the case in the future. From the Jewish people will come the greatest missionary force the world has ever known. The result of their effort will be a redeemed Israel, as promised by God, and innumerable redeemed Gentiles.”⁷

⁶ MacArthur

⁷ Ibid.

8. Demons: When God is acting Satan is acting. If he wants to be a stand in for God, creating a fake Triunity it isn't surprising that he also wants to have his demons be busy like God is doing with His angels.

a. An army of locust-like demons:

“Then ... came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth” (Revelation 9:3 ESV).

b. An army of horse-and-rider demons:

“Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number. And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound” (Revelation 9:14–19 ESV).

We know these beings are demons because it is only fallen angels who are bound.

“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—” (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6 ESV).

Again we see a truth that even when Satan is active, whether through the Anti-Christ, The False Prophet and demons, he is only able to do what God allows him to do. God is using these beings to bring judgment down on the lost world

9. Three Evil Spirits: Now while there are numerous demons, as we've just seen, Revelation identifies three specific Evil Spirits.

“And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty” (Revelation 16:13–14 ESV).

And so this seems a natural place to stop. Accordingly I hope to finish up looking at the rest of the personalities next time.

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Introduction:

5. The False Prophet:

(Revelation 13:11–17; see Matthew 24:24).

6. Angels:

- Seven angels with _____ :
(Revelation 8:2; see Revelation 8, 9, 11)
- Seven angels with _____ of _____ :
(Revelation 16:1)
- An angel with the _____ of the _____ God:
(Revelation 7:2)
- An angel with _____ :
(Revelation 8:3)

e. An angel with a _____ and a _____ :
(*Revelation 10:1-2; 11:1*)

f. An angel with the _____ :
(*Revelation 14:6*)

g. An angel with a _____ :
(*Revelation 14:19*)

h. An angel with a message of doom:
(*Revelation 18:1, 21*)

i. An angel with a strange invitation:
(*Revelation 19:17*)

j. An angel with a key and a great chain:
(*Revelation 20:1*)

7. The 144,000:
(*Revelation 7:1-8*)

8. Demons:

a. An _____ of _____ - _____ :
(Revelation 9:3)

b. An _____ of _____ -and- _____ :
(Revelation 9:14–19; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6)

9. Three Evil Spirits:
(Revelation 16:13–14)