

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The 144,000 of Israel Sealed for the Lord

Revelation 7:1-8

1. _____
The Lord promised that the entire world would be blessed through the seed of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) and He also promised that the descendants of Abraham would be a great nation inherit the land where he sojourned (Gen 17:7-8). While the promise of blessing for all the nations is realized in Jesus Christ for all who have the faith of Abraham (Gen. 15:6; Gal 3:7-9; cf. Hab 2:4), the inheritance of the land is yet to be fulfilled for the physical descendants of Abraham. And while the church is made up of Jews and gentiles (Gal 3:26-29), the church is not Israel.
2. _____
The nation of Israel has always been divided up by tribes according to the sons of Jacob (Gen 35:23-29). The counting becomes difficult when Jacob gave to his favorite son a double portion of his inheritance (Gen. 48:1-6). Furthermore the fact that Levi is not given land as an inheritance (Num 18:20-21; Deut. 10:8-9) and that the tribe of Manasseh is split into two parts by the Jordan river (Josh 22:7; 1 Chron 12:31,37; 27:20-21) can complicate the counting of the 12 tribes of Israel.
3. _____
The 12,000 who are sealed from every one of the 12 tribes of Israel (vs.4-8) are set apart from the great innumerable multitude of believers from the rest of the world's population (v.9). The 144,000 who are sealed are alive (v.3) whereas the multitude have already come out from the time of tribulation (v.14) and now continually minister before God (v.15). The possible reference to Ephraim and the absolute omission of Dan is an added difficulty in interpreting this section. There will be 144,000 male descendants (cf. Matt 14:21; 15:38; Rev 14:4) who will be sealed with the protection of God for a special mission during a portion of the Great Tribulation. These men will be spread out among every tribe of Israel, with the possible exception of the tribe of Dan (cf. Deut 33:6-25; 1 Chron 27:16-24). But all of the tribes of Israel, including Dan (Ezek 48:1-2, 32) will be represented by their descendants in the division of the land (Ezek. 48:1-9, 23-29) and in the gates of the city of New Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ (Ezek 48:30-35; cf. Rev. 21:12-13, 21).