

The People of the Apocalypse  
“The 144 Thousand/Twelve Tribes in The Last Days”

The twelve tribes of Israel as a group are listed in Genesis 49:1-28 when the patriarch Jacob prophesies to his twelve sons:

“And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.” (Genesis 49:1)

The significance of this list of the twelve sons or tribes of Jacob is that it appears to provide the basic structure for the list of the twelve tribes found in Revelation 7:4-8. The tribes are listed in Revelation 7 the last time in Scripture as the 144 Thousand are sealed for protection (Revelation 9:4) for their future Day of the Lord ministry.

Although there are changes in the order and the specific sons listed, the list in Revelation 7:4-8 has within it definite identifying features showing that this prophesy of Jacob found in Genesis 49:1-28 has the same basic structure as the list in Revelation 7:4-8, for the sons of Leah are first, then the sons of the two handmaids who are followed by the sons of Rachel which is the general structure for both lists.

In verse one of Genesis 49 Jacob indicates that what he is going to say will have its effect “*in the last days*” which points to the time of the end as the period when these prophesies will take place.

Therefore this prophetic section of the word of God provides definite insight for those who will be sealed during Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week, the last week of the seventy weeks which were determined upon Daniel’s people and their holy city Jerusalem:

*“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city” (Daniel 9:24).*

*“And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob, and hearken unto Israel your father.” (Genesis 49:1,2)*

Then Jacob addresses his firstborn son Reuben:

*“Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel, because thou went up to thy father’s bed; then defiled thou it: he went up to my couch.” (Genesis 49:3,4)*

Jacob is referring to the sex sin Reuben committed with Bilhah, Rachel’s handmaid, with whom Jacob fathered two sons, Dan and Naphtali. Reuben’s heinous sin cancelled his birthright, making him unstable, not having the ability to excel due to this defiling conduct which also removed the possibility of God’s blessing. Simeon and Levi, who are the next two sons born of Leah to Jacob were involved in the cruel sin of mass murder when they slaughtered the defenseless people in the town of Shechem (Genesis 34).

They also do not receive a blessing but instead Jacob pronounces a curse upon them:

*“Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.” (Genesis 49:7-9)*

The most significant section of Jacob’s prophecy comes in (v.8-12) when he speaks to his fourth son Judah:

*“Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies, thy father’s children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion’s whelp, from the prey, my son, thou art gone up, he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion, who shall rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart*

*from Judah, not a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk."* (Genesis 49:8-12)

The first two verses indicate the supremacy of Judah over his eleven brothers, his future military prowess and the position Judah would and will take in the order of the twelve tribes of Israel, for out of the loins of Judah kings would come forth (Genesis 49:10).

The focus here is upon the King of kings and Lord of lords the Savior of mankind, the Son of God and Jewish Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, God Incarnate! For the Lord Jesus Christ descended from the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14). This is the reason, Judah is mentioned first in order in the last days tribal list of Revelation 7:4-8.

Judah, being placed in the first position of the sons of Jacob, began in the book of Numbers where he is listed as the first of the standard bearers *"toward the rising of the sun"* (Numbers 2:3), the first tribe to give an offering (Numbers 7:12) and the first place went the standard of the camp of Judah according to their armies.

The Lord Jesus Christ is called *"Shiloh"* in (Genesis 49:10) meaning *"The Peaceful Ruler"* showing the promise of the Ruler Who would come *"in the last days"* when *"unto Him shall the gathering of the people be"* referring to that future time when the twelve tribes will gather unto Him which is fulfilled in Revelation 14:1 when the 144 Thousand are seen with *"the Lamb"* on *"mount Zion"*.

The 144 Thousand will gather unto the Lord Jesus along with those Israelites who will be redeemed at the end of the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel (Isaiah 59:20; Romans 11:25,26). *"The woman"* of (Revelation 12), who represents the 70<sup>th</sup> Week faithful of Israel, will also be present at this great gathering of God's earthly people as indicated by the prophet Micah:

*"Therefore will He [Messiah] give them [Israel] up until the time [End of the 70<sup>th</sup> Week/End of The Time of Jacob's Trouble] that she [Israel] which travails has brought forth [All Israel saved]: then the remnant [remainder/rest] of His brethren [the woman/fairful of Israel] shall return unto the children [sons] of Israel [the 144 Thousand]."* (Micah 5:3)

These three distinct groups of the children of Israel will gather to their Messiah (Psalm 102:21,22; Hosea 1:11,3:5), the Lord Jesus Christ, at the end of the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel eventually populating the land of Israel during the Millennium (Revelation 20:1-6) when the Lord Jesus will physically rule on earth with a *"rod of iron"* (Psalm 2:9; Revelation 19:15) upon the throne of His father David (Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:32).

Zebulun, the tenth son born to Jacob, is listed next in order that all the sons of Leah, Jacob's lawful wife, would come first for she bore six of his sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. Jacob who is now on his deathbed shows his recognition of God's sovereign plan in selecting the Godly Leah who gave him half of his twelve sons. Leah also was buried in the cave of Machpelah with Jacob, in the family burial place where the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and their wives were laid to rest (Genesis 49:31). Zebulun's blessing would come through him being *"a haven of ships"* as *"his border shall be unto Zidon"* which is located on the northern coasts of the promised land on the Mediterranean Sea.

Issachar, is the last of Leah's sons:

*"Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: And he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute."* (Genesis 49:14,15)

Issachar is a bearer of burdens acknowledging the value of rest and the pleasantness of the promised land in that future day which is now taking place as prophesied here for it is evident that Israel has been transformed from a literal desert to a fruitful and productive land during this last half century [1948-2006] following the Jews return to their homeland.

After the sons of Leah are complete Jacob speaks to his son Dan:

*“Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that bites the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. I have waited for Thy salvation O Lord.”* (Genesis 49:16-18)

Dan whose name literally means “He judged” is the firstborn of Bilhah, Rachel’s handmaid. Although Dan is not one of the tribes sealed in the end times list of Revelation 7:4-8 he will be present then to perform the act of judging his people which may include pleading their cause or contending for his brethren as this word “*Shall judge*” also means: To avenge, plead the cause, or contend for.

Dan’s serpent-like description vividly illustrates the characteristics of a small subtle entity having the physical ability to bring down the high and mighty warrior mounted upon a horse alluding to the likely defeat of a military foe.

These actions along with contending for his brethren during the last days fits with prophecies of wars being frequent in the land of Israel during that time (Joel 2; Ezekiel 38,39). Dan will wait for the Lord to provide salvation/deliverance from these his enemies in that day.

*“Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.”* (Genesis 49:19)

The next son of Jacob is Gad, Leah’s handmaid Zilpah’s firstborn. He replaces Levi in the tribal lists found in the book of Numbers for Levi, the priestly tribe, is God’s portion and was no longer included in most of the lists of the sons of Jacob.

Gad’s future in the last days is also framed with a military tone as he is overcome at the first by a troop but in the end is victorious which could point to the possibility of an early defeat at the hands of the Antichrist when he initially invades the land after the mid-point of the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel when he:

*“Shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces...when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces”* (Daniel 7:23; Micah 5:5a)

This mighty crusade of the Antichrist is further described:

*“And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people [Israelites].”*

(Daniel 8:24)

*“And he shall enter also into the glorious land [Israel]...And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain [Mount Zion].”* (Daniel 11:41, 45).

But, in the end Gad and his brethren of the other tribes of Israel will come forth as gold when they go to battle along “*with the Lamb*” (Revelation 17:14) the Lord Jesus Christ at “*the battle of that great day of God*” (Revelation 16:14) the battle of Armageddon which is described in Revelation 19:11-21.

*“Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.”* (Genesis 49:20)

Asher, who is the last son born of Zilpah, will experience the blessings of having richness by experiencing bountiful plenty during the time of the end in the promised land. So rich in fact that it is here described as delicacies of royal quality. This supply of food will likely be brought forth and shared with all of the other tribes

by the people of the tribe of Asher whose name literally means “happy”.

*“Naphtali is a hind let loose: he gives goodly words.” (Genesis 49:20)*

The last son born of Bilhah, is described as a female deer that is set free or sent forth. This new-found liberty of Naphtali produces good and pleasant speech or communication during the last days.

The land of southern Galilee where the Lord Jesus ministered and spoke most of His parables and performed the majority of His miracles was occupied by the tribe of Naphtali.

*“Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall:*

*The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel:) Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, Who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lie under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.” (Genesis 49:22-26)*

Joseph, Rachel’s firstborn, receives the longest and most extensive blessing from the lips of his father Jacob. Although the royal tribe of Judah has the Messianic pre-eminence, inheriting the position of firstborn of Jacob, Joseph’s rich blessing reveals his great love for the firstborn son of his beloved wife Rachel.

He bestows upon him the blessing of overflowing fruitfulness having overcome the afflictions of the archers bow and the separation from his brethren. Jacob details Joseph’s present (v.22) his past (v.23,24) and his future blessings (v.25,26) laying full emphasis upon the help and supernatural power of God Almighty.

He utilizes the following five titles for God in an effort to emphasize the full reality of exactly Who is responsible for these miraculous future blessings which he pronounced upon his eleventh son Joseph:

1. The Mighty God of Jacob
2. The Shepherd
3. The Stone [Rock] of Israel
4. The God of thy father
5. The Almighty

Joseph will of a certainty receive the bountiful blessings of heaven, the unfathomable blessings of the deep, and the fruitful multiplication of his tribe through the matriarchal blessings of breast and womb. Jacob summarizes this magnificent bounty of God’s goodness in (v.26) by revealing that his blessing will prevail even above the blessings of Abraham and Isaac the patriarchs that came before him and these blessings bestowed upon Joseph and his last days descendants will reach unto the farthest known boundary of the everlasting hills.

The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh are represented under the name of their father Joseph as Manasseh’s name appears in the Revelation 7:4-8 list and Ephraim’s descendants are those sealed under the name of Joseph for Ephraim and Manasseh were Joseph’s only sons.

*“Benjamin shall ravine as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.” (Genesis 49:27)*

The last, the least, and the littlest, is this much loved tribe of Benjamin whose name means “son of my old age”. He was specifically given this name by his father Jacob (Genesis 35:18). He is the twelfth son of Jacob and the last son born of Rachel who died during his birth.

Benjamin is described as eating voraciously just as a wolf in the wild when it devours and consumes it’s prey.

This brings to mind the picture of the might and strength of a warrior who has the power to fully overcome the enemy in the heat of battle and later divides the spoils of his overwhelming victory among his fellow soldiers.

Matthew Henry commenting on this verse said the tribe of Benjamin shall be “Warlike, strong and daring, enriching themselves with the spoils of their enemies.” Some of the most notable Bible characters from the tribe of Benjamin are:

1. King Saul
2. Jonathan, son of Saul
3. Jeremiah the prophet
4. Mordecai
5. Esther
6. Saul of Tarsus/The Apostle Paul

The common characteristics this group manifests in Scripture portray a clear picture of those future Benjamites clearly prophesied by Jacob and pointed out by Matthew Henry. This small but significant tribe will continue to display these most descriptive warlike attributes during “*the last days*” as foretold by Jacob when there shall be “*wars and rumors of wars*” (*Matthew 24:6*) during which time the twelve tribes including this last little tribe of Benjamin will take a most significant and victorious role.

While Jacob’s first three sons, Reuben, Simeon and Levi, receive a negative prophecy, of the remaining nine, five will have success against their foes:

1. Judah’s hand shall be in the neck of his enemies (v.8)
2. Dan shall be a serpent that causes the rider to fall (v.17)
3. Gad shall overcome a troop (v.19)
4. Joseph’s bow abode in strength (v.24)
5. Benjamin shall devour his prey and divide the spoil (v.27)

This military might has been evident down through Israel’s history and will continue to be prevalent during the time of the end when the twelve tribes will band together once again to defeat their enemies under the leadership of their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ (*Micah 5:4-8*; *Revelation 17:14, 19:11-21*). Since the 144 Thousand will definitely come from “*the twelve tribes of Israel*” (*Revelation 7:3-8*) it is necessary to briefly review the history of these tribes.

When Jacob took his family into Egypt they numbered “*threescore and ten*” (*Genesis 46:27*), but when Moses brought Jacob’s family out of Egypt a little over four centuries later it is estimated that they had grown to over 1.5 million! After the division of the land by Joshua the tribes took up permanent residence in the land of Canaan and lived together as a unit until the kingdom was divided after the death of King Solomon.

These ten tribes made up the northern kingdom:

1.Reuben 2.Simeon 3.Issachar 4.Zebulon 5.Dan 6.Gad 7.Asher 8.Naphtali 9.Manasseh 10.Ephraim

Judah and Benjamin are the two tribes that made up the southern kingdom. They controlled Jerusalem where the tribe of Levi continued to serve the Lord in the temple built by Solomon although many Levites also lived among the ten tribes of the northern kingdom.

In 722 B.C. the ten northern tribes were defeated and taken into captivity and dispersed abroad by Sennacherib the Assyrian king. He made an attempt to do the same to the two southern tribes but was unsuccessful due to the miraculous intervention of God (*II Kings 19:15-37*).

In 586 B.C. the two southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin, along with the remaining Levites were defeated by

Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed the city of Jerusalem and Solomon's temple. The two southern tribes were taken captive and moved to Babylon. After 70 years approximately 50,000 of the Babylonian captives from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi returned to the land of Israel to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:5).

Approximately 80 years later Ezra the priest/scribe returned to Jerusalem from Babylon to bring revival to those already in the land of Israel (Ezra 7-10). The Levites, Nethinims [Temple servants] and people of Israel from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin who came with Ezra totaled about 1800.

Nehemiah, returned to the promised land from Babylon about 14 years later and rebuilt the wall around the city of Jerusalem along with members of the tribes of Levi, Judah, and Benjamin who were already in the land.

While there were only three tribes involved in these returns from Babylon, after the temple was rebuilt and Jerusalem was once again inhabited it is likely that many Jews from the other tribes made the pilgrimage to their holy city as evidenced by the gathering recorded four centuries later on the day of Pentecost in A.D.33:

*“And there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.” (Acts 2:5, 7-10)*

This multi-national gathering of Jews from all parts of the Roman empire may well have in its makeup members from the northern ten tribes for some of these Jews came from as far as the city of Rome. This passage reveals that in the centuries since their captivity the Jews had migrated to the farthest reaches of the Roman Empire.

While the ten tribes are called “The ten lost tribes” by some in the present day indicating that it is not known where or whether they still exist, they are definitely not lost in the eyes and heart of almighty God.

About 40 years after this day of Pentecost, in 70 A.D., the Roman armies of Titus completely destroyed Jerusalem and the rebuilt temple which was prophesied by the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:2). Most of the Israelites were either killed or were scattered at that time although there was an uprising of Jews called the Bar-Kochba rebellion a little over six decades later [A.D.130-135].

This last attempt by the Jews to free themselves was summarily and brutally crushed by the army of the Roman emperor Hadrian. During the centuries that have passed since this final purge of the Jews the promised land has been controlled by various kings and rulers.

But, the Lord in His plan for the time of the end has brought His earthly people back into the land once again and they now occupy their holy city Jerusalem which are two definite pre-requisites for the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel (Daniel 9:24).

Therefore, the twelve tribes listed in Revelation 7:4-8 may already be represented in the land of Israel. However, the great number [144 Thousand] of young men that will be sealed in that future day indicates the likely possibility that many of these men will still be scattered throughout the world.

They definitely will all be in the land at the end of the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel (Revelation 14:1) when they appear in Jerusalem with the Lord on Mt. Zion. However, it is not necessary for them to be in the land of Israel when they are sealed just prior to the beginning of the Day of the Lord.

Until recently the United States of America was the home of the largest Jewish population, but the land of Israel (Approx. 7 Million) is now the largest with the U.S.A. (Approx. 6 Million) in second place and Europe (Approx. 1.5 Million) in third.

The region formerly called the U.S.S.R., although rapidly dwindling in Jewish population due to the Jews return to the land of Israel, still has approximately 435 Thousand professing Jews making it the fourth largest area.

Therefore, the focus of evangelism for the church in these last days should be centered upon the Jew with emphasis upon these areas of the world where the majority of the twelve tribes of Israel now reside.

Even though Paul was unmercifully persecuted and soundly rejected by the great majority of the Jews during his ministry, he continued to go to their synagogues in each city attempting to win them to Christ as revealed in these texts (Acts 9:20, 13:5, 14:1, 17:1, 18:4, 19).

He was simply following his heart (Romans 1:15,16, 10:1) and the method that His Lord used during His ministry. For, at the end of the Lord Jesus Christ's first coming He gave this brief description of His public ministry:

*"I spoke openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing."* (John 18:20)

In God's purpose there is coming a day, during the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel, when *"The veil shall be taken away"* (II Corinthians 3:16b) from the spiritual eyes of His earthly people the Jews when their *"Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord"* (Isaiah 59:20)

*"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob"* (Romans 11:26).

But, at the present hour *"the veil is upon their heart"* (II Corinthians 3:15) and the age old methods used by the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul are still the best ways to reach the Jews. They utilized Old Testament Messianic preaching (Luke 4:15-21; Acts 13:16-39, 17:1-3, 18:28) and Holy Spirit-led confrontational one on one evangelism (John 3:1-21, 4:1-26; Acts 16:31, 18:4, 19:8).

Therefore, in the purpose of God, it is the duty of the church of Jesus Christ to pray for the Lord to send forth laborers into His harvest, laborers who will focus their Holy Spirit filled soul-winning expertise upon the earthly people of God, the Jews, wherever they may be found as we close in on the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ!

For, the time is drawing near when these young men (Psalm 110:3), the 144 Thousand, will be called, prepared and later sealed for their Day of the Lord service to God. This great conversion of the earthly people of God may well take place during the powerful preaching ministry of Elijah whom God will send to His people.

He will of necessity follow the pattern of his two predecessors, Elijah and John the Baptist, by preaching repentance and revival, *"Turning hearts...Restoring all things"* (Malachi 4:5,6; Matthew 17:11) in the process.

It is likely that the Lord will use this mighty prophet to bring revival to the church of Jesus Christ and spearhead the mass evangelization of His people, the Jews, including the 144 Thousand. For, the 144 Thousand are given a unique title that points to this very possibility:

*"These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."*  
(Revelation 14:4c)

These young men will be the first Jews to be redeemed during the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel which is the last week of

the: “*Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and thy holy city.*” (Daniel 9:24) There will be many more Jews redeemed later during this restored “*holy covenant*” (Daniel 11:28-32) Jewish dispensation when God will surely bring to pass His great and precious promises to His earthly people (Isaiah 59:20; Zechariah 13:8,9; Romans 11:25,26) the Jews.