

# Bible Answers to Bible Questions

& Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God

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Issue 7

## *From the President's Desk,*

As president of *Berean Bible Institute*, one of my responsibilities is to travel and share what God is doing through our ministry. Over the past two months, I have been blessed with the privilege of representing BBI in Mobile Alabama; Gillsville and Thomson, Georgia; Mineral Wells, Texas; and Beloit, Wisconsin. In each setting, I met with brothers and sisters in Christ who are very interested in what God is doing through the ministry of *Berean Bible Institute*. It is such a blessing to be able to share our mission to train pastors, missionaries, and Christian leaders for the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the proclamation of the gospel of the Grace of God given to and through the Apostle Paul with so many and to see such interest and support for our mission.

We are currently in the second half of our Fall Term of Online Instructor-led classes, and we praise the Lord for those who have recently signed up to pursue their biblical and ministry training through *Berean Bible Institute*. As you know, each Fall semester consists of two eight-week terms. With each new term, we are blessed to see returning students and meet new students who are eager to learn. Our new Fall second-term courses are Basic Bible Doctrines II, Apologetics, Youth Ministry, Dispensational Hermeneutics, and Cross-Cultural Studies.

Most of you know that BBI will be hosting a trip to Israel from May 15th through May 25th. If this is something you are interested in learning more about, I would encourage you to go to our website ([www.bereanbibleinstitute.org/israel](http://www.bereanbibleinstitute.org/israel)), where you can find a link to all of the information about the trip. You may also call us here at BBI (262-644-5504), and we would be happy to answer any questions you may have about this wonderful opportunity. Don't

forget that there is limited space and the deadline for your deposit and registration is January 24th.

Finally, please keep us in your prayers as we have recently learned that our Administrative Specialist, Kayla Traxler, will be leaving BBI to move back to her hometown of Baraboo, Wisconsin. Kayla has been such a blessing to us at BBI, and we are thankful for her time with us. With that said, we are starting the process to find a replacement for her position. Please keep us in your prayers, that God would bring us His choice to join our team.

Thank you for your support and prayers,

Dr. Robert E. Nix  
President, *Berean Bible Institute*

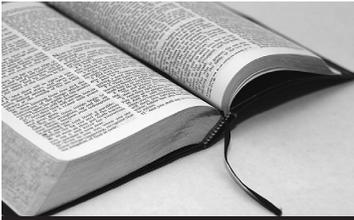
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## **QUESTION: Who are the 144,000?**

**ANSWER:** The answer to this question is simple and straightforward, as long as people are willing to allow the Scriptures to say exactly what they say. Unfortunately, Christendom is not known for allowing the Scriptures to state what God intended to convey, tending to interpret Scriptures through their church beliefs and a desire for every verse to be about them directly. Because of this, there are many erroneous teachings regarding the identity of the 144,000 mentioned in the Book of Revelation. One religious leader claimed that the identity of the 144,000 were the people that would convert to his teaching of the Kingdom on Earth. Others teach that the tribes mentioned aren't literal but describe the contemporary nations that have replaced the sons of Jacob. This is a sad example of mankind twisting the

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*"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." II Timothy 3:16*



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Scriptures for his own gain and also the dangers of allegorizing vs. a normal interpretation.

When, as a ten-year old, I heard a pastor speak of Israel being God's chosen people during the Tribulation, I didn't think it was fair. Why did Israel get a second chance and other people did not? I was not given a satisfactory answer to my conflict until I learned of the Mystery revealed through the Apostle Paul. Now I recognize that it is *this* age that is unique, not the Tribulation period. The time in which we are living is an interruption in the continuity of the Prophetic Program. Today, I realize it is the underserving Gentile nations that are getting their undeserved second chance in this unprophesied Age of Grace. The answer ultimately is to recognize Paul's unique message in the Bible so that we understand the Book of Revelation is not written with us in mind. The Body of Christ will be delivered to Heaven BEFORE the Tribulation begins. Actually, without Pauline dispensationalism, you are left to explain why Jesus proclaimed the "*Kingdom is at hand*" (Mk. 1:15) 2,000 years ago but it isn't here yet.

The Disciples in Matthew 24:3 privately asked Jesus regarding the signs of His (second) coming and about the events during the end of the world (Tribulation). His answer pointed to the events that would have taken place if God had not paused His Prophetic Program to reveal a Secret Program to Paul. The events Jesus described (vv. 6-9) will take place in the Tribulation and correlate with the Book of Revelation. The instruction for salvation is different (v. 13) and the gospel for the time is different than today (v. 14). The focus during this end-time will be on the nation of Israel.

I finally call your attention to Revelation chapter 7, where we read of the 144,000. Remember, the Church, the Body of Christ, has been raptured away (I Thess. 5:1-11) by this time; Israel is the focus of this future prophecy. After an unprophesied Program of God's Grace toward all nations, God is getting back to fulfilling His promises to Israel in prophecy. So, as we come to Revelation 7, there are two parts: an earthly vision (vv. 1-8) and a heavenly vision (vv. 9-17). This chapter is the response to the question posed in Revelation 6:17 where the seal judgments

have fallen upon earth. The question: Who will withstand this? Chapter 7 presents the answer to this question.

Notice the names of the tribes. There are twelve names from the nation of Israel. There is nothing in the Scriptures that would lead us to believe that these people are any less than actual descendants from the twelve names mentioned in Revelation 7:1-8. These are not code names of spiritual individuals or replacement nations; they are actually people from the line of Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Levi, Gad, Naphtali, Asher, Benjamin, Joseph, and Manasseh. Twelve is the number for the nation of Israel; for example, there were twelve sons of Jacob, twelve tribes of Israel, twelve apostles, twelve thrones, etc. The focus on the number twelve is not surprising, for Revelation is a book detailing the fulfilling of God's promise to the nation of Israel. During the (future) time of the events of Revelation, Israel will once again be the focus.

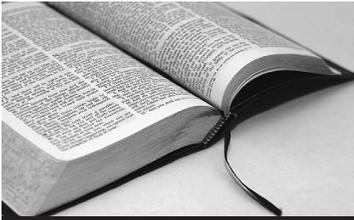
The student of the Scriptures will note there are some discrepancies between the names mentioned here in Revelation 7:1-8 and the names given in Ezekiel 48:1-7. See the lists below.

## Ezekiel 48:1-7

- Reuben
- Simeon
- Judah
- Zebulun
- Issachar
- Dan
- Gad
- Naphtali
- Asher
- Benjamin
- Ephraim
- Manasseh

## Revelation 7:1-8

- Reuben
- Simeon
- Juda
- Zabulon
- Issachar
- Levi
- Gad
- Nephalim
- Aser
- Benjamin
- Joseph
- Manasses



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After we account for the spelling differences due to differing languages used in the Old and New Testament books, we are left with a seeming contrast of Dan/Levi and Ephraim/Joseph. The contradiction goes away when we realize that Ezekiel is speaking of inheritance in the (future) land, while Revelation details those who will enjoy God's divine protection during the Great Tribulation. Concerning the discrepancy between Ephraim/Joseph, both Manasseh and Ephraim were Joseph's sons. The Lord, wishing Joseph to receive a double blessing, allowed the names of his two sons to stand for Joseph, giving him two inheritances in the land (Gen. 48:20-22). Levi's sons were not counted for a land inheritance, for their responsibility as priests required them to be located throughout the entire land. Therefore, Levites were given inheritance cities within each of the tribes (Josh. 21; I Chron. 6:54-81). Also, it is mentioned that the Lord and His work are the Levites inheritance (Josh. 13:14, 33; 18:7).

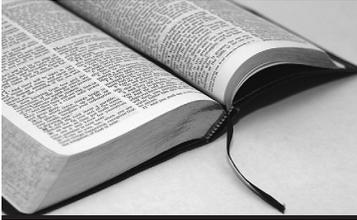
So, why are Dan and Ephraim not mentioned in Revelation 7, leaving them unprotected during the time of Great Tribulation? It seems to have to do with their disobedience. The Lord warned the people that those who persisted in disobeying God would be under His judgment, even having his name blotted out of the book (Deut. 29:18-21). This is especially true of the sin of idolatry (Deut. 29:24-26). When the Israelite kingdom split into two, the northern kingdom set up their own centers of worship to idols. This was true of the tribe of Dan who had worshiped idols from their origin until the day they were taken into captivity (Judg. 18:30-31). For this reason, they are left without God's protection during the Tribulation. It is said of Ephraim in Hosea 4:17, "*Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.*" This denotes a separation, which describes why some of Ephraim may be sealed under the name of Joseph, but Ephraim does not get the honor of being named.

Revelation 7:1-8 tells us that 144,000 from 12 of the families of Israel (12,000 from each family) will be sealed. Sealing was a divine protection and responsibility. It was visible and displayed their faith (cf. 9:4 where locusts are directed to harm only those who do not have seal in forehead). This also

stands in direct contrast to the seal, or mark, of the Beast (13:1,16-18) that will be required to buy and sell during the Tribulation. Those who take the Beast's mark will have their choice sealed, just as those who belong to the Lord will have their future sealed with Him. Revelation 14:1-5 describes this same number having received this seal due to their stand against the anti-Christ. They are pictured in Revelation 14 as standing with the Lamb on heavenly Mount Zion after being martyred for their faithfulness to the Messiah.

Revelation 7 seems to skip from their sealing (vv. 1-8) to their deliverance (vv. 9-17). What were they doing during their time on earth before they were martyred? It would seem that they were God's protected witnesses to proclaim the Gospel of Kingdom throughout the earth (Mt. 24:14), imploring people to remain patient, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus (Rev. 14:12). Remember, the determining faith for these people will be faithfulness to the Messiah (cf. letters to the churches in Revelation 2-3). Since God has never left Himself without a witness, these 144,000 Israelites seem to be his witness for this time. **These 144,000 are physical descendants from the nation of Israel.**

Remembering that chapter 7 is answering 6:17, as Revelation chapter 7 moves forward to a date in the future and switches the location of the vision from earth to Heaven, we see that these 144,000 from Israel have remained faithful to the Lord throughout the Tribulation (7:9-12). We go to, what I believe to be, the end of the Tribulation and see the effect these 144,000 had during their ministry. Because of them "*a great multitude*" will be saved (v. 9). Though a great number will be saved, I believe it is still a small percentage of the population. I also think we must be very careful not to become complacent in our witnessing today because we assume "*they will get a second chance.*" We are told by the Apostle Paul that those who reject the truth today will believe the lie and delusion (II Thes. 2:10-12). It is so important that TODAY you know you are ready and prepared to be delivered from this time of Tribulation. You can be assured that we will be taken to Heaven before God pours out His wrath on earth during the Tribulation by trusting that Jesus Christ died for your sins, was



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buried, and rose again. The Tribulation is a time of God's wrath; accept His grace through Christ today.

**QUESTION: What place does America play in prophecy?**

**ANSWER:** We Americans are very proud of our country. We consider ourselves, like some from other countries do, citizens of the best country in the world. Unfortunately, many Americans carry that thinking into matters of the eternal future. While the question has to do with prophecy, let me at least say that the Body of Christ has no Jew or Gentile (British, Australian, Mexican, Philippino, African, or American). Your nationality is not going to get you a better spot in Heaven.

Now, on to the question. It may shock some to learn that there is little or no mention of America in prophecy. There is no direct mention of the United States. Despite American theologians wanting to put our powerful nation in the pages of prophecy somehow through replacement or symbolism, we are just not there. We are not mentioned in the twelve churches of Revelation (Ch. 2-3). We are not a nation mentioned with Israel's future (Isa. 19:23-25).

Despite the (alleged) importance we play in the present, it seems as if America is of secondary importance in the things to come after the Rapture. Is America even still a nation in the future? Has the population of the country been wiped out? Have we fallen so far into godlessness after the Rapture (or before) that we are nonessential to God's eternal plan? If the country IS still chugging along (remember, the Body of Christ is not here; prayerfully you have trusted in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ so that you will not take part of the fulfillment of Israel's promises), America has to be thrown in with *"the nations"* (i.e., Rev. 10:11). America becomes just one of the many nations, not the preeminent role we assume we hold today.

It may also work out to be that America is one of the *"islands"* mentioned in Scripture. If so, it may not bode well for America (Rev. 16:17-21). Then again, perhaps America is one of the *"isles afar off"* mentioned in Jeremiah 31:10 or *"multitude of isles"* in Psalm 97:1.

So, what part does America play in prophecy after the Rapture? Very little to none, depending on what God decides to do. Anyone who places America in a place of prominence in future prophetic events is not following the cardinal Scriptural rule to allow the verses to say what God intended them to say. Any Americans existing in the post-Rapture future will be judged according to how they treated the faithful remnant of Israel (Mt. 25:31-46).

## INTERESTING BIBLE FACTS

*(Short and Random)*

- Malachi is the last book in our Old Testament Bible, but Chronicles rounds out the Jewish Bible.
- The English Bibles we use group the books of the Bible by type of literature. So in the Old Testament, you have the Pentateuch, History, Poeticals, Major and Minor Prophets. In Judaism's Tanakh (the Old Testament), the books of law come first (the Torah), followed by the former and latter prophets (a blend of prophets and history), followed by *"the writings"* (a blend of poetry, history, and prophetic books). Not only is the placement of the books different but the grouping of the books differ.
- The shortest verse in the Old Testament is Exodus 20:13 (*"Thou shalt not kill"*). Followed closely by Exodus 20:15. The longest verse in the Old Testament is Esther 8:9, and Revelation 20:4, holds the distinction as the longest verse of the New Testament.

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