

TEXT - Revelation 7:1-8

## REVIEW

Are the 144,000 from 12 tribes a reference to people ethnically Israelite, believing in Christ? Or are they a picture representing something else? Neither of those interpretations is obviously right or wrong. Lots of Bible scholars disagree on what to think about it.

So, this is going to take some work: some reading of the Bible and some thinking this over.

But whatever you end up thinking about that point of interpretation, we are most concerned to take the warning and the comfort that comes with knowing that Jesus Christ knows who truly trusts in him and serves him, and he will guard us from the wrath of God coming on the wicked.

One reason you might interpret the 144,000 sealed as actually Israelites is the apostle's doctrine that God's promises to Israel are fulfilled in how he is saving a remnant of Israel, as he did in the time of Elijah, with Paul as an example.

Another reason, which we considered last time, is that our Lord Jesus and His apostles spoke of Israel as still consisting of twelve tribes in their days. This is consistent with the OT history, which records at least three different episodes in which devout Israelites from the northern tribes came to live with the tribe of Judah in the south, and so were not deported by the Assyrians when the northern kingdom was conquered.

## LESSON

This evening we look at another reason from the scriptures why you might interpret the sealed 144,000 from the twelve tribes as being literally Israelites.

The history of the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as found in the book of Acts, always shows that whereas most of the Jews at that time did not believe in Jesus, some did almost everywhere the gospel went.

Acts 13:14 But when they departed from **Perga**, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

Acts 13:43-48 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. 44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. 45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. 46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. 48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

Acts 14:1-5 And it came to pass in **Iconium**, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. 2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. 3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. 4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. 5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,

Acts 17:1-5 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to **Thessalonica**, where was a synagogue of the Jews: 2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. 4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. 5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

Acts 17:10-12 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto **Berea**: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

Acts 18:1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to **Corinth**;  
Acts 18:4-8 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. 5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. 6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. 7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. 8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

Acts 28:16-24 And when we came to **Rome**, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him. 17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. 18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. 19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. 20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. 21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee. 22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. 23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. 24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

## CONCLUSION

There are some things in the scriptures that give us reason to take seriously the interpretation of the 144,000 from 12 tribes actually being people who are ethnically Israelite, who believe in Jesus Christ, even as most of their nation refuses to believe in him. We have seen this evening that one of those things is the history in Acts, of how the Jews in general rejected Jesus Christ, but almost everywhere the gospel went, some Jews believed and so were saved.

But whatever you end up thinking about that point of interpretation, we are most concerned to take the warning and the comfort that comes with knowing that Jesus Christ knows who truly trusts in him and serves him, and he will guard us from the wrath of God coming on the wicked.