

Sunday December 14th 2014
From Here To Eternity
Part Eleven

1). *Re 6:9 ¶ When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*

a). We will remember from our previous studies that events seen through the opening of the fifth seal on the 7 sealed scroll drop back to give us commentary on all that has taken place with the opening of the previous 4 seals – and we will remember that the events seen through the opening of the first 4 seals provide us with a complete overview of all that takes place during the full 7 years of the Tribulation.

b). That which we see here with the opening of the 5th seal has its focus in the heavens – the scene is the heavens and present in this scene, described as souls under the altar, are ‘those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held’.

c). Because of the allusion here to the brazen altar at the door of the Tabernacle of meeting where the blood of the sacrificial animals was poured out under the altar, we realize that the individuals seen here have made a sacrificial death. In other words they have been killed because of the word of God they had received and the events to which the word of God gives testimony – therefore making them martyrs - after a similar fashion to the martyrs seen in the first century ‘Church’ - *Re 2:13 "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*

d). Further detail is then provided for us about this group in the Chapter which follows, Chapter 7 – *Re 7:9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white*

robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" 11 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen." 13 ¶ Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" 14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

e). We would know we are dealing with the same group of individuals here because we see them 'arrayed in white robes', the white robes we see given to them in Chapter 6, which we cannot help but want to equate with the fine linen clean and bright made up of the righteous acts of the saints from Revelation Chapter 19 – we must be careful though not to confuse the white robes given to the martyrs with the wedding garment of the Bride of Christ – these martyrs are not and cannot be a part of Christ's Bride, but will have positions with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom.

f). Here in Chapter 7 then we now get extra detail about them – we see that they are now 'a great multitude which no one could number' and that they have come from 'all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues' and that they have 'come out of the Great tribulation' – showing us very clearly that they have all been martyred during the final 3 ½ years of the Tribulation from the Gentile nations.

g). Then if we return to the way they are described in v9, 'all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues' we will hopefully be reminded of the place where we have seen this phrasing before - *Re 14:6 ¶ Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth--to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—*

This same phrasing then is used in Revelation Chapter 14 in connection with 'the everlasting gospel', which we know, by comparing scripture with scripture, is 'this gospel of the Kingdom' spoken of by the Lord in - *Mt 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

h). So then, again by comparing scripture with scripture, we can readily conclude that 'this gospel of the Kingdom' is the word of God that those seen through the souls under the altar have received, and it is 'this gospel of the kingdom' that has been given to them, giving testimony to the Lord Jesus

Christ and the coming of His Kingdom and it is then because of their faith with respect to this that they have been martyred.

i). And we will also remember that the preaching of the 'everlasting gospel', 'this gospel of the Kingdom' had been entrusted to the 144000 Jewish evangelists.

j). To bring all this together then – as a result of the ministry of the 144000 Jewish evangelists preaching the gospel of the Kingdom to 'all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues', a great multitude from the Gentile nations have believed and have subsequently been martyred for their belief – all of which takes place during the 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation.

k). In Revelation Chapter 6 we see the souls under the altar being told, *that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.* Showing us that martyrs are being made throughout the entire 3 ½ years of the Tribulation and then in Chapter 7 we see this same group now described as, 'a great multitude', suggesting that their number has now been completed, bringing us to the Tribulation's end.

2). Now I am hoping that as we read Revelation 7:9 - *After these things I looked.....*

That someone would ask the question, 'What things?' – What things have taken place before we encounter the great multitude which has come out of the Great Tribulation? Even if we don't know, I am sure what we find will be no surprise - *Re 7:2 Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, 3 saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."..... 8 of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed. 9 After these things.....*

a). So then these verses show us the things that v9 comes after and in v3 we see that the earth cannot be harmed – which would take us to immediately prior to the mid-point in the Tribulation, anticipating the harm that will come to the earth during the 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation – until 'the servants of our God' are sealed. And these of course are the 144000, 12000 from each of the 12 tribes.

b). Then immediately 'after these things', the introduction of the 144000, the great multitude of Tribulation martyrs is seen in the verses that follow.

c). Here in Chapter 7 we see the 144000 in connection with the Tribulation martyrs and in Chapter 14 we see the same 144000 in connection with the 'everlasting gospel' – and so, by putting all this together and by comparing scripture with scripture we must again come to the conclusion that the Tribulation martyrs are the product of the ministry of the 144000 to the Gentile nations during the final 3 ½ years of the Tribulation.

3). One final thing to note about the description of the Tribulation martyrs from Revelation Chapter 7 v9 - *After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands*

a). No doubt the thought of palm branches will take us back to that day we call 'Palm Sunday', which marks the Lord's entrance into Jerusalem in the week prior to His crucifixion – and with this in mind let's remember what the cry in Jerusalem was that day - *Joh 12:12 ¶ The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!" 14 Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: 15 "Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey's colt."*

b). The cry in the streets of Jerusalem that day was Messianic, proclaiming the Christ and His Kingdom with the scene itself fulfilling the prophecy found in Zechariah Chapter 9. And the particular symbolism of the palm branches finds its significance in the role palm branches have in the Feast of Tabernacles, as we see here from - *Ne 8:14 And they found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, 15 and that they should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written."*

And it is not insignificant that we find this detail given to us in the Book of Nehemiah, a Book that deals with the return of the Jewish captives to

Jerusalem, the reintroduction of the Law of Moses and the renewal of the covenant.

c). Although the great multitude of martyrs are not Jewish, their possession of palm branches symbolizes the return of captive Israel and a new covenant and the establishment of Christ's Millennial Kingdom, which is itself the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles, the 7th of the 7 prophetic feasts given to Israel.

d). Then in addition to this we also find reference to palms in the description given of Solomon's Temple - *1Ki 6:29 Then he carved all the walls of the temple all around, both the inner and outer sanctuaries, with carved figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers.*

And we will remember that Solomon's kingdom and temple foreshadow the Millennial Kingdom and Millennial Temple of Christ.

e). Palm trees are a detail replicated in the description of the Millennial Temple found in Ezekiel - *Eze 40:31 Its archways faced the outer court, palm trees were on its gateposts, and going up to it were eight steps.*

f). And so, to bring all of this together, seeing the great multitude which no one could number, those who had come out of the Great Tribulation having been martyred, all carrying palm branches declares the certainty and the imminence of the establishment of Christ's Kingdom, which will fulfill the Feast of Tabernacles, and the building of the Millennial Temple with a redeemed and restored Israel in place as we see the events of the final 3 ½ years draw to their conclusion.

g). This scene also pictures for us the extent of the success of the ministry of the 144000 and provides us with a tantalizing glimpse of what will happen when fully redeemed Israel, as a nation no longer in rebellion, take God's Word to the Gentile nations during the course of the Millennial Kingdom, thereby fulfilling God's purpose for the nation and bringing to fulfillment the promise given to Abraham and reiterated through Jacob - *Ge 28:14b.....and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*

Zec 8:23 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'"

h). We will come back to this at a later point in our study, but for now let's just keep in mind that through the ministry of the 144000 there will be not only the martyrs seen in the heavens, but also eternally saved Gentiles still alive on the earth at the end of the Tribulation and it will be these eternally

saved Gentiles, who are still alive, who will be brought to that which we know as 'the sheep and goats judgment' as we see recorded here in –

Mt 25:31 ¶ "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 "And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world....."

4). Now let's deal with the context in which these Tribulation martyrs receive their death – we know that their martyrdom happens during the final 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation and we know that they are brought to faith through the ministry of the 144000, but we can add some more detail to this by following Antichrist's actions beyond the mid-point in the Tribulation.

a). I am sure we will remember this from a previous week's study –
Re 13:11 ¶ Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. 12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. 14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. 15 He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. 16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, 17 and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is six hundred and sixty-six.

b). We will remember 2 important things from these verses – the false prophet institutes worship of the beast, the Antichrist, through the worship of the image of the beast and we are told that *as many as would not worship the image of the beast...[would]... be killed*. And in conjunction with this we see that he 'causes all' to receive the mark of the beast, which is either his name or number, without which 'no one may buy or sell'.

c). The focus then is worship and control, worship of the one and control through the one who is the complete antithesis of the Christ; the final desperate attempt of Satan to accomplish through his son his purpose from ages past - *Isa 14:13 For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'*

d). To 'be like the Most High' is not just about replacing God but particularly about receiving that which belongs to God only - worship and rulership - *Ex 34:14 '(for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),*

e). It is then self-exaltation and worship that have always been at the heart of Satan's rebellion - things that are clearly seen in the types.

f). We can see this, beginning with the actions of Nimrod, recorded in - *Ge 11:4 And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."*

g). And seen again through Haman, who himself is a type of the Antichrist - *Es 3:2 And all the king's servants who were within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage.*

g). It is the very thing we see in Satan's encounter with the Lord recorded in - *Mt 4:8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."*

h). And the same thing we see pictured through Nebuchadnezzar's construction of an image of gold, which foreshadows the image of the beast that we see in Revelation Chapter 13 - *Da 3:1 ¶ Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. 2 And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 3 So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 4*

Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, 5 "that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; 6 "and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

The image that Nebuchadnezzar sets up in the plain of Dura is to be worshipped by all those in his kingdom under pain of death, both Jews and Gentiles alike and such is exactly what we see with respect to the image of the beast - *15 He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.*

This is the picture given with regards to the worldwide Babylonian empire at the beginning of the times of the Gentiles and it is not surprising that we should see that foreshadowed at the beginning being fulfilled in the final phase of this same empire, as the times of the Gentiles come to their completion.

i). Consequently worship of the image of the beast will be enforced throughout Antichrist's worldwide empire, the final phase of that which was begun by Nebuchadnezzar, and it is easy to see how those from every nation, tribe, tongue and people who will receive the gospel of the Kingdom from the 144000 Jewish evangelists, who will now be looking for the return of Christ the King and who will choose to worship God alone, protecting and sheltering these same Jews and refusing to bow their knee to the arch deceiver will be 'cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace', will be killed 'for the Word of God and the testimony which they held' – Satan's wrath having no bounds against those who refuse to give him what he wants having embraced his age old enemy instead.

j). And finally a word about the number of the great multitude which no one could number – we are obviously dealing a vast group of martyrs here – now such a very large group may appear strange at first, but not when we place them within the context of the death toll upon the earth during the years of the Great Tribulation.

k). Let's remember what is recorded in connection with the opening of the 4th seal on the 7 sealed scroll - *Re 6:8 So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.*

l). By the end of the Tribulation 'a fourth' of all people on the earth will have been killed, which we will remember will probably equate to around 1 billion people.

m). And even if the martyrs only accounted for a fourth of this number we would still be looking at a great multitude.

5). *Re 6:12 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. 13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. 14 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. 15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"*

a). As with the opening of the 5th seal, the opening of the 6th seal provides us with additional detail and commentary on the events seen through the opening of the first 4 seals – and whereas the 5th seal took us to the heavens so the 6th seal has its focus upon the events on the earth.

b). But this will have to wait until next time – if the Lord is willing.