***Israel is Distinct from the Church

RV128-02***

We are studying Revelation 7:4-8, and our subject is the tribulation evangelists. God, we have seen, in the opening part of Revelation 7, is about to turn loose upon the earth, in the last three-and-a-half year period of the tribulation era, a series of natural disasters in the form of divine judgments upon the world of the antichrist. These disasters are withheld by four angels until a certain group of tribulation believers are given a protective seal on their foreheads. These are seen to have been born again in the tribulation following the rapture of the church. They are now identified to John as God's new corps of gospel witnesses.

**Sealed**

So, we begin in verse 4. John says, "I heard the number of them that we're sealed." The word heard looks like this in the Greek Bible: "akouo." It simply means sounds into the human organ of the ear. It is in the Greek aorist tense, which means that at a certain point, John hears an audible statement. It's active voice. He personally does hear this. What he says that he hears is a number. The Greek word is "arithmos," which means simply "number" in the Greek language. You can see that from "arithmos," we get the English word "arithmetic."

What he hears, he says, is "the number of those who were sealed here." Here we have our word for "sealing" again. This time, it is the verb form, which is "sphragizo". "'Sphragizo' those who have been sealed." And in the Greek Bible, this time, we have the perfect tense. The perfect tense tells us that this sealing took place at some time previous to what John is hearing, and that these people have now continued down in this sealed condition, which suggests to us that these people have been born again since the beginning of the tribulation, and that probably many of them received the mark of their sealing, namely the name of God upon their forehead, during the first three-and-a-half years. Now they have been preserved to come to the time when God is ready to put them into action.

**The 144,000 Jews**

John specifically tells us what the number is of these who were sealed, namely 144,000. So, we have 144,000 human beings who have a special seal. These people are said to be, "Of all the tribes," and the word "of" is actually the word "ek" in Greek, which means "from within." They are from within a specific group: the tribes, which is the Greek word "phule," which stands for a clan or a group of people of the tribes.

**12,000 from each Tribe**

It is not of the children. It actually says, "Of the sons of Israel." So, he tells us that there are 12 groups (12 clans) of people of Israel, so that the 12 groups number 144,000 people. Then he goes on through verse 5-8, and he names and enumerates these specific tribes. He indicates that from each one there will be 12,000.

**The Tribe of Dan**

Most Jews today of course do not know what tribe they belong to. Certain of them have names which sort of suggests where they came from. But in any case, they cannot identify themselves. But certainly God can. He is going to gather up 12,000 Jews from each of the tribes, as He is able to identify them for this special mission. As you go through this list, you will notice that one of the tribes that we are commonly acquainted with of the 12 of Israel is not here: Dan. I have no idea why not. It has been suggested that it may possibly be because it was not one of the better tribes of the 12. Dan was the first one that went into idolatry. It may actually then eventually be classified here with its close relative Naphtali. Naphtali and Dan had the same mother.

**The Tribe of Manasseh**

Manasseh is excluded from this list also, but Joseph, the father of Manasseh, is included. As you may remember, Joseph had the two sons: Ephraim; and, Vanessa. And these two tribes became actually half-tribes. Here, Dan is excluded; Ephraim is included; and, Joseph is included instead of Manasseh. The enumeration of these tribes, however, has this significance to us. They are very distinctly said to be Jews who are gathered together for this special mission.

**Israel**

Concerning the term "Israel" in the Bible, I want to remind you that every time you find this term in the New Testament, and when you find it in the Old Testament, "Israel" always refers to the Jewish people in the Bible. This was the name, as you know, which was given to Jacob by God. He was called "Israel," which means "the prince of God." It is not a reference to the church. The church is not the true Israel. The word "Israel" is never used of gentiles. There would be hardly any point in dividing the church (the body of Christ) up into 12 tribes in some way connected with the Jewish founding fathers of each of these tribes.

**Israel is *not* the Church**

So, that brings us to a very significant problem which exists to this day. As you know, you are the minority of Christians. All of the vast, big denominations believe that when you read these verses here, they are talking about the spiritual Israel, which they equate with the church. Of course, there's no such thing as a spiritual Israel being equated with the church in the Bible.

Furthermore, they say that these 144,000 are actually simply Christians (church people) who have been born again and who have a special mission. You can see that it takes a lot of mental gymnastics to be reading this passage, and saying that this all refers to gentiles, and that this all refers to the church age.

Furthermore, the amillennialists who hold this position will also tell you that it is not really 144,000. 12,000 does not mean 12,000. 144,000 does not mean 144,000. You may say, "What does it mean?" They say, "Oh, it just means a big number." The basis for that decision is just something that you pick out of the air. Why do you pick out of the air your resistance to saying that God is going to bring together, at a certain point in history, a special group of Jews who will be His core of evangelists? Well, just because it doesn't fit your theology. You must see what's happening here. The millennialist says that God is through with the Jew. God has washed his hand of the Jew. He has no further program for the Jewish people.

Now, how can you say that and treat the book of the Revelation as it obviously is – a book describing future events, and still come up with Jews who are called "Jews;" who are related to Israel; and, who are out there in the future still playing a significant role in the program of God. It just doesn't make any sense at all. So, you have to spiritualized this, and wipe it out of existence to get rid of the concept that there are any Jews out there yet in the future that God is going to deal with.

**Amillennialism**

Amillennialism is the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Middle Ages. Here is one of the places that the Protestant reformers never got with it. They did not get into the study of the Word of God relative to future things, nor to the distinctions that characterize the body of Christ (the church). Therefore, they died before they ever got around to being able to do the biblical research to find out what the Bible taught on this subject, as they had previously done such a tremendous job on what the Bible taught about salvation, and what the Bible taught about its own inerrancy; its authority; and, who spoke for God.

Consequently, most of the Protestant denominations, when they came out of the Reformation, simply picked up the Roman Catholic idea that the church is now the fruition of Israel – that Israel was the stock, but the church is the blossom of the plant, and that the two are connected. I hope that you now clearly understand that there is no connection between Israel under Judaism and the church under Christianity. They are two entirely different programs of God.

**Church**

So, let's take a look at that. If we're going to be a minority, and if we're going to be so way out of what church people and church leaders think everywhere, it behooves us to stop and ask ourselves where we get these ideas. To begin with, we have to start with the word "church." That in itself tells us a great deal. The word "church" in the Greek Bible looks like this: "ekklesia." The word "ekklesia" is made up of two words. The word "ek" is a preposition which means "from" or "out of." The last part of the word, "klesia" comes from the verb "kaleo," which means "to call." So, you put these words together, and it simply means "the called out ones." It is referring to a special assembly of people who are called out of the mass of humanity.

In the Greek world, before the New Testament Scriptures were written, this word "ekklesia" was a common word, and it referred then to a political assembly of some kind. The Jews also had a Hebrew equivalent for this word, and for them it referred to a gathering at the door of the tabernacle, called there when the trumpets blew. It was a group of people called out of the whole camp to meet together. So, always there is behind this word the concept of a specialized called-out group. To the gentiles (the Greeks), the word meant a self-governing democratic body. To the Jews, it meant a representation of a theocratic society who were subject to their Heavenly King.

Now, God the Holy Spirit took this word, common in the New Testament Greek language, and He combined these two basic meanings – that this was a group of people called out from the mass of humanity, both from Jews and gentiles, who would form a new and separate body. They were not a Greek civic assembly, nor were they a Jewish congregation or a synagogue. They were actually a combination of the two – a theocratic democracy, so to speak. The word that best translates the word "ekklesia" is "assembly." It means "assembly." When we use the word "church," we talk about assembly. It would not be wrong for you to call your local church "the assembly," because that's what it is, and that's what it means.

The Bible makes it very clear that there are three groups of humanity with which God deals. 1 Corinthians 10:32 enunciates all three, where the apostle Paul admonishes believers to: "Give no offense" to whom? "Neither to the Jews, nor to the Greeks (or the gentiles), nor to the church of God (the Christians). You would not believe how many times I have pointed out this verse to amillennialists, and the ridiculous, insane, inane, mental gymnastics they go through to say, "No, that does not mean three different groups of people." Now, what does language mean if it means anything at all in this verse when the apostle Paul says, "I'm giving you an admonition: you are to so live as Christians such that you do not produce an offense to Jews; to gentiles; nor, to Christians?" Nothing could be clearer that those are three distinct groups, which indeed they are.

**Altars**

The problem is that we live in a day when, because of the error brought down through the church system from the Reformation, there is a transfer of the elements from Judaism to Christianity. So, the religious practices that were characteristic of the Jewish system are imposed upon Christianity where they do not belong. So, you walk into churches, and up at the front, what do you find? An altar. Now, what in the world do we need an altar for today? An altar is a place for sacrifices. But if we no longer have any need to make sacrifices, which we do not, this side of the cross, the final sacrifice having been made by our Savior, an altar is no longer needed. So, when you walk into a church and you see an altar, it is an insult to the God who has finished the work of salvation. It is an insult, if not a blasphemy, against the Savior who used His last ounce of energy and of breath to shout out the happy statement, "It is finished." And what He meant by that was that there are no more sacrifices. There are no more symbolical sacrifices with animals, and no more actual sacrifice in the person of a sinless Lamb of God to pay for the sins of the world. It is finished.

If you wonder why we have altars in churches, it is because, back in history, they brought over Judaism and attached it to Christianity. The average person who attends such a church doesn't have the foggiest notion why in the world there's an altar up front. But because that's what he's been reared in, he believes that it's necessary.

**Rituals**

Furthermore, consider the rituals. Why do you go to churches and find rituals – a liturgical service (a ceremony) where people recite certain things; they go through certain forms; they go through certain burning of candles; they go through the burning of incense; they go through certain maneuvers which are done; and, they go through certain hand motions, all of which are carefully brought together and organized in a so-called worship service. Well, it's because that's what they did in the Old Testament. That's how the priests in the Old Testament functioned in the tabernacle and in the temple. They went through ceremonies. These ceremonies, of course, all symbolize a spiritual reality, every one of which now has been fulfilled. Therefore, you don't need the symbol anymore.

**Symbolic Pictures**

When you have someone who is dear to you, who is away from you at a distance, then you like to put his picture up where you can see it, and look at it, and remind yourself of this person. But once he walks through the door and comes home, you don't need the picture anymore.

**Holy Days**

This is where the holy day concept comes. There are people, of course, who believe that certain days of the year are holy. Christmas is one of them. Easter is one of them. There are some people who believe that so firmly, that no matter that they never show up in church the rest of the year, you can count on them being there at Christmastime and at Easter time. But this is the concept that certain days are special and holy with God. And if you attend church on those days, you're going to get some value from God.

**Priests as Mediators**

This is where we get the idea of priests as mediators – a specialized priesthood. What an insult that is to the Savior who finished it all – a specialized priesthood. Why do we have priests walking around in their robes and in their vestments? Because that's how they did it in the Old Testament Jewish system, and the thing has been amalgamated with Christianity.

**Roman Catholicism**

Nowhere is that more evident than in the bestial, hybrid, mongrel system known as Roman Catholicism. You have it there in full-blown evidence: the priests with their rituals and their garments; and, all of these concepts of gaining merit with God in some way in something you do (a legalistic system). The whole thing has indeed been put aside. It is a thing of the past. It is not something that is in effect anymore. The church is a distinct body, and a distinct production from God.

**The Origin of the Church**

Now, where did the church actually originate? To clarify the relationship, and its distinction from Judaism, and why these 144,000 evangelists are not part of the church and they are not Christians, but they are distinctly something different, we have to go back and say: where did the church actually come from? Well, the church had a separate beginning from Judaism. It began on the day of Pentecost. Israel had been offered its kingdom. That's what Jesus Christ came for first. His mission was to fulfill the promise to bring an earthly kingdom as the final descendant of the line of David.

In Romans 15:8, we read, "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers. These promises went all the way back to the Abrahamic Covenant – the promise that God made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. The Jews, however, rejected this Messiah Savior, and in killing Him, they also laid the groundwork for paying for the sins of the world. And at that point, God turn from dealing with the Jewish people, and brought into existence something that was brand new, in the form of the church, which had never been revealed before.

**Matthew 16:18**

Now, the Lord Jesus, in the latter part of His ministry, alluded to the fact that the church was coming, and that the church was on the horizon. At one time, He was out of Israel, out of Jewish territory, in a place called Caesarea Philippi. And in Matthew 16:18, we have an important statement which He made: "And I say also unto you (speaking to Simon Peter) that you are Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Now, here's a statement that the Roman Catholic Church has distorted into the basis for a pope, who is the representative on this earth. That is because they say, "You see, here was the first pope, Peter, and the Lord Jesus explicitly said that He would build his church on Peter."

So, again we need to look at what these words mean. You can't get it from the English Bible. To begin with, in Matthew 16:18, He said, "You are Peter, upon this rock." The Greek word here is "petra." "This rock" in the Greek language ("petra") means "a big boulder." It is a mass. It is a heavy structure. In 1 Corinthians 10:4, Jesus Christ is described as this rock: "And did all drink that same spiritual drink: for the drink of that spiritual rock that followed them: and that rock was Christ," describing Israel in the wilderness. So, this connotes a hard, solid, massive foundation.

Here, it refers to something that is a hard, solid, massive foundation in the immediate context, and that is Matthew 16:16, where Peter makes a statement summarizing the position of the 12, when Jesus inquires of them, "'Whom do you think I am?' He said, 'You are Christ, the son of the living God.' And Jesus answered and said unto him, 'Blessed are you Simon BarJonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed it until you, but My Father, who is in heaven.'" Jesus said, "You have a bit of important divine viewpoint truth: I am Son of God. I am the God-man. I am the one sent to be the Savior of the world, and the Messiah King of Israel.

Then He goes on, having said that, and Jesus says, "I say unto you, Peter, that upon this rock;" and He is referring back to verse 16, to the rock of Peter's confession – this basic foundational truth that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of the living God, upon which the church is going to be built. In other words, it's built on the person of Jesus Christ.

Peter, as you may suspect, is related to this word for "rock." Indeed, that's what Peter means: "rock." But Peter's name is not "petra." Peter's name is "petros." You might ask, "Well, how do we know that he wasn't referring actually to Peter, because Peter's name is "petros?" Well, "petros" means a totally different kind of rock than "petra" does. "Petros" is what a kid picks up off the ground and pitches at a lamppost to see if he can hit it. It's a small rock. It's a small pebble that you can throw, whereas "petra" was something you could not lift. It was a massive foundation.

So, the Greek language makes it very clear that Peter was a chip off the big rock Jesus Christ. In 1 Peter 2:5, Peter understood this very well, because he pointed out that every Christian is a living stone (a living small pebble) in the church (in the body of Christ). Peter understood that he was not the rock upon which the Lord was building this church. 1 Peter 2:4-9 make that clear. Peter was just one of the living stones along with all the rest of us.

However, the last part of Matthew 16:18 gives us some additional significant information concerning the church that shows us that it's distinct from Israel. And that is that Jesus says, "I will build." First of all, the word "I" indicates who is going to be the one who builds this church. It is not Peter, but Jesus Christ. Secondly, it says, "I *will* build it." And all of us know that that's the future tense, which indeed it is. It's something that, at this point in time, did not exist. It was a statement made on gentile ground, because gentiles were going to be the prominent racial group in this new thing that God was going to bring into existence as the Jews were the predominant racial group in the Old Testament Judaism.

So, here Jesus says, "I'm going to do the building and I haven't done it yet. It doesn't exist yet. It's something that I'm going to do in the future." You can see why people hate to have you put up on an overhead projector in church, things that point out to you such a thing as a tense – whether it's present; whether it's something done in the past; or, whether it's future. They hate it, because it immediately gives them a problem with the theology they want to believe, that they inherited from the Reformation era, which was all confused on the church. And they can't fit it in if you're going to talk about Jesus doing something in the future. They want to say, "This already existed. He's already talking about Judaism in a new form."

Furthermore, he uses the word build, which indicates that this is something that's going to come into being as a gradual process. Judaism was already in full operation and in full existence, but the church is something that is going to be built over a period of time. Ephesians 2:20-22 indicate this, where we read, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, which is what he told Peter – he was going to build it on Himself, and the fact that He was: "The living Son of God, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, grows unto a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together for inhabitation of God through the Spirit."

So, the church is built believer-by-believer and convert-by-convert, as a temple being erected. This is why the individual Christian, as we learned in the previous session, has to be equipped by the local church ministry in the capacity to do the work of spiritual warfare. So, he may be out there building up the body of Christ as the result of the preparation that he received in that local assembly. Every time a believer is brought into the body of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:13 tells us, he is baptized by God the Holy Spirit, and he is then placed into the body of Christ immediately at that point in time.

Matthew 16:19 says, "And I will give unto you keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, that whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Later on, the Lord Jesus repeated this to all the disciples, because this, of course, is an authority that we all possess. When you need an unsaved person, you have the key that will unlock heaven to him. You have, by your knowledge of the Word of God, the capacity to tell him what he must do to enter heaven, and what he must, at all costs, not try to do if he wants to get into heaven. You have to tell them both. You have to tell them what he must do in terms of believing the gospel. You must tell him what he must not do in terms of trying to add some human merit; some human ritual; or, some human ceremony of his own.

The church is totally distinct from the Old Testament Judaism. The church began on the day of Pentecost. On that day, there were 120 believers gathered in that upper room. They were all Jews. In a moment of time, God the Holy Spirit came, and He fused them together into a new body called the church, the body of Christ. This, of course, is the church universal. It's a church that includes all believers. It cuts across all denominational lines. So, the church began at a certain place in the city of Jerusalem, and with these believers came the new era of church relationships.

**The Origin of Judaism**

In contrast to all this, Judaism also had a distinctive origin, totally different from the church. We ought to look at that for a moment. It's in Genesis 12:1-3.

**The Abrahamic Covenant**

We call it the agreement that God made with Abraham: the Abrahamic Covenant. I want you to notice three distinct things that God promised to Abraham and his descendants: "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, 'Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you." Here is a man called Abram at this time. He is living in a very sophisticated culture, in Ur of Chaldees on the Euphrates River, but it is a pagan culture. Somehow this man, when he comes to God-consciousness goes positive, and God comes to him with the information that brings him salvation. And Abraham believes what God says. Then God calls upon him to move out of that pagan culture, and to follow the divine leading to a land that God will give, which we know is the land of Israel, the land of Palestine today.

**The Palestinian Covenant**

Verse 2 says, "And I will make of you a great nation. I will bless and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I'll bless them that bless you; curse them that curse you; and, indeed all the families of the earth shall be blessed." In verse 1, he says, "Unto a land that I will show you."

So, the first thing that God promised to the Jewish people was a land. A nation must have a territory to inhabit. In the case of the Jews, it was the land of Palestine. Later we had the Palestinian Covenant. You may read a summary of that in Deuteronomy 30:1-8, which reiterates the promise made to Abraham that he and his descendants would forever be given a land, and this land would stretch from the Euphrates River on the north and would go all the way down to the Nile River on the south. It would move from the Arabian Desert on the east, and go all the way to the Mediterranean Sea on the west.

I can tell you that to this day, God has not kept this promise. To this day, the Jew has never possessed that extensive area of territory. Under Solomon, they came to the peak of their possession, but even then they did not possess all this territory, and much of what they possess, they did not actually occupy. They did not actually live in it. It was just under Solomon's control, and he got tribute (taxes) from the people who did live there who were not Jews.

So, point number one: God says, "I'm going to give you a special people who will have a special land. How can you join this to Christianity? How can you attach this to the era of the church? There is no way. Yet, I've had millennialist look right at me straight in the eye and say, "Listen, don't you think God gave us the United States in North America as a wonderful country to live in? That's the fulfillment of this promise." I need not tell you how much mental gymnastics that takes, when God specifically identifies the land in terms of Palestine and the rivers that will mark its boundaries, and then you shifted over here to the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Number two: verse 2 says, "And I will make of you a very a great nation, and I'll give you a great name." How can Abraham be made a great nation and have a great name except that he have a great posterity? So, God promised him not only a land, but seed to occupy that land – descendants to occupy that land. This is why, a little later, God changed his name from "Abram" to "Abraham," which means "the father of many nations." Of course, that's exactly what God did. In Genesis 17:1-6, you can read about that further.

**The Davidic Covenant**

Also, this seed, and being a great nation, was specifically amplified in what we call the Davidic Covenant. 2 Samuel 7:12-16 will describe that, where David was told how he would always have a man to sit upon his throne. There would always be a Davidic dynasty, and, of course, Jesus Christ was the last in that line.

**The New Covenant**

So, the land was promised. The Palestinian covenant later confirmed that. A progeny was promised, and later, the Davidic covenant confirmed that. Furthermore, when we are told here in Genesis 12 to that Abraham would be a blessing, and that he would be a blessing to all nations, it is referring to the fact that through Abraham and his descendants would come the blessing of the Savior to the whole world. In Jeremiah 31:31-34, what we call the New Covenant to Israel is confirmed. There was promised to them that there would be a new covenant in which the old covenant of Moses, which never worked, would be wiped out. Their heart of stone would be removed, and they'd be given a living heart. That is the way of describing that they'd have regeneration, and then they would accept the provision for eternal life that God had given.

So, these three verses are pivotal verses on which rests all the remainder of Scripture. If you get these wrong, you're going to have a lot of nonsense. I want to point out to you that, as you read those verses, Genesis 12:1-3, you do not see the word "if" once. If you do not see the word "if," it's an unconditional promise. It's an unconditional covenant. It means that God is going to do it no matter what Abraham did. Once he accepted it, it was secure. It was on its way.

In contrast, when you go back and you read about the Mosaic Covenant, and that agreement that God made with the Exodus generation, the word "if" is in there all the time. It was a conditional covenant. Abraham's response, of course, was to believe this, and to accept it. He was called, consequently, a friend of God. He moved out, and he headed for that Promised Land.

So, there was a distinct beginning for Israel with distinct promises that simply do not apply to the church. Of course, you realize that, here again, the millennialist comes in and says, "Well, that throne of David that was promised – that was Jesus Christ. He's king of the church." No, he isn't. He's Lord of the church. He's king of Israel, but he's Lord of the church. And that's how He is described, because they're distinct entities. So, again, you have this confusion. Even when Jesus was born, it was made clear that He was coming to rule upon His father David's throne.

So, the purpose of the church is not to fulfill the promises that God has made to the Jewish people which have not been fulfilled. They are not in their land; they do not possess all this land; they are not an independent nation; they do not rule the world; their king is not here ruling from Jerusalem; and, they are not the head of all the nations to whom everybody looks for spiritual information. As a matter of fact, most of them haven't even accepted their Savior (their Messiah) yet. So, all of these promises of a land, and a seed, and a new covenant have not been fulfilled. That is still later. But when Jesus Christ came, he came to make the offer. They rejected it, and consequently, He turned to produce a new thing.

We cannot take time to pursue it now, but in Romans 16:25-26, we have features that are characteristic of the church that are referred to as "a mystery." The Greek word is "musterion." "Musterion" is not something scary. In the Bible, a mystery refers to something that was a secret in the past. That's what "mystery" means. It means "a secret." But, in time, God then revealed the church. So, the features of the church, and the church itself, were never revealed in the Old Testament. You cannot find it anywhere.

**Gaps in the Old Testament**

But I will tell you this: many times in the Old Testament Scriptures there are sudden gaps. Events are separated, not the least of which is describing the Savior as the Lamb of God, suffering, and that same Savior as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah ruling. Peter tells us that the prophets used to read that after God revealed it to them; and they would shake their heads and say, "This doesn't make any sense at all. How can our coming Messiah Savior be described as a suffering lamb who is to be bruised and to die, and be the line of the tribe of Judah who is to rule with supreme power? The two pictures are contradictory. What they did not realize was that first He would come as the Lamb of God and die upon the cross; then, there would be a vast expanse of time in which the church age was inserted and the body of Christ (a distinctive group of Jews and gentiles) were brought together who would be His bride, and ruling with him in this Jewish kingdom. Later, when that church was completed, then God would turn back to dealing with the Jew, and indeed He would come back as the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

So, many times these gaps were left. And one of the greatest is in Isaiah 61:1-2, where the Lord Jesus is reading on one occasion in Nazareth, his hometown. He is reading the Scriptures: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted; proclaim liberty to the captives; and, the opening of the prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord," comma. Bingo! He stops. "And the day of the vengeance of our God to comfort all that mourn."

If you go back to Luke 4:19, which records His reading of this, you'll see that He stops right in the middle of that verse 2, because the vengeance part came later. And He refers to the acceptable year of the Lord, which deals with His first advent. Then, the next phrase refers to the day of vengeance. And suddenly, right in the middle of a sentence, at a comma in the Hebrew text, he stops reading. You don't stop reading in the middle of a sentence. But what Jesus did was, when He got to the phrase "the acceptable year of the Lord," He stopped reading, because the rest of the verse was going to deal with the day of the vengeance of our God. And He came first as the Lamb of God, the acceptable year of the Lord. For Him to run to the rest of the sentence would have been false, because when He put the book down, He said, "This Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing this day." What could he have meant by that? He could not have said that if He had read the whole sentence, because the whole thing was not fulfilled. Only the first part was going to be fulfilled, and then later the rest of it. That's what happens in the tribulation.

**Israel is Distinct from the Church**

The church is very distinct in several respects. I know you're acquainted with this. Let me just briefly mention them. This is one of the reasons we know that Israel and the church are two different things. And this is why we know that these evangelists are not part of the church; but, they are indeed part of Israel. "Israel" never means "the church."

**The Union of All Believers in Christ**

First of all, there's the union of all believers in Christ. All Christians have been put together in positional sanctification in Christ. It was never true of the Jew that he was in Christ.

**The Indwelling of Jesus Christ**

Furthermore, every believers in dwelt by Jesus Christ. It is never true of the Jew that he was in dwelt by Jesus Christ.

**The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit**

Further, every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It was never true of the Jew that he was permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It was true on certain occasions only.

**A Universal Priesthood of the Believer**

Furthermore, the church has a universal priesthood of the believer. Every one of you sitting out there, men and women, young people alike, are priests of God. You're your own priests. There is no longer the specialized Levitical priesthood of the Aaronic family. That's different.

**Ambassadors of Jesus Christ**

Furthermore, there is the fact that every Christian is an ambassador for Jesus Christ, not just a select company.

**A Completed Canon of Scripture**

Furthermore, we have a completed Scripture. We have an Old and New Testament. The canon is completed. They did not have that in the Old Testament.

**Christians are Called to Live a Supernatural Life**

Furthermore, Christians are called to live a supernatural way of life. The Jew was never asked to live a supernatural level of life. Why not? Because he did not have the indwelling Holy Spirit to enable him to do that.

So, there is no ground for saying, as is so commonly said, that these 144,000 Jewish evangelists which God raises up to be a witness in the tribulation, are not really Jews. They do not really come from these tribes, but they are simply Christians who have been raised and who are in an era when they are special evangelists. But you have to ignore every word that's in these verses to be able to come out with a view like this.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1984

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