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Title: Revelation Commentary
The 144,000 - Parts 7-9

Speaker: Larry Wilson

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Begin Text:

I'm going to do a quick review on the specifications of the 144,000 that we discussed last month:

1. The number, 144,000, is literal and the 12 tribes of Israel **are literal**.

There is a great misunderstanding about the 12 tribes of Israel. The problem stems from the fact that many Christians aren't aware that God redefined Israel at the cross. According to the New Covenant, the Israel of God is now made up of believers in Jesus Christ -- these are the heirs of Abraham! (Galatians 3:28,29) As far as God is concerned, the 12 tribes consist of people who have circumcised hearts. Physical circumcision means nothing after the cross. (Romans 2:28,29)

2. **Shortly before the commencement** of the Great Tribulation, God will thoroughly **test** and choose 144,000 people from all over the world to be His **prophets**.

3. These prophets will come from **every** language, religion, culture and nation. Jesus will hand-pick 144,000 **faith-full-honest-hearted** people from every walk of life to be His spokespersons during the Great Tribulation.

4. The sudden transformation of 144,000 **faith-full-honest-hearted** people into "believers in Christ" is necessary so that Jesus will have "**converted** brothers and sisters" speaking to their **own** "brothers and sisters." This simple arrangement will help to overcome the world's greatest problems: Religious arrogance and ignorance.

5. The 144,000 will be both men and women. The book of Revelation also says they will not be "defiled by women." The idea here is not one of virginity or celibacy. This language comes from the book of Ezra. Many of the Levite priests married "foreign" women during the Babylonian captivity. This union with non-believers defiled the priests because the laws of Moses commanded them to choose a wife from Israel. When temple services began functioning after the Babylonian captivity, this violation was discovered and the Levites were told they could not serve the Lord as priests unless they first abandoned their foreign wives. These priests were "defiled by women." The parallel is simple. When God selects the 144,000 to serve Him, their marriage (their spouse's views and attitudes) will not hold them back from the calling of the Lord. **As necessary, they will abandon their spouse to serve the Lord.**

6. For the most part, the 144,000 will be lowly people, humble people, not highly educated -- just ordinary people -- upon whom the extraordinary power and authority of the Holy Spirit will rest.

7. Few, if any, of the 144,000 will know each other, yet they will all say and do the same things.

8. Most, **if not all** of the 144,000 will die as martyrs during the Great Tribulation.

9. Recognizing the 144,000:

a. Because the 144,000 will be widely scattered and have diverse religious backgrounds,

b. Because the 144,000 will be very ordinary people,

c. Because the 144,000 will **not** be part of an organized religious body, a serious problem will arise:

How will billions of people be able to determine whether the 144,000 truly speak for God or whether they are just crazy people, perhaps demon possessed?

How does Jesus **prove** to a diverse world of many religions and cultures that the 144,000 really are His prophets, speaking His Words? The authenticity of God's servants will be **affirmed** by **God's two infallible witnesses**: The Bible will support everything they say and the Holy Spirit will give their words usual authority and power.

For **the honest in heart**, God's two witnesses will be sufficient. For the wicked, no evidence will be sufficient. Remember Pharaoh? He would not believe that Moses and Aaron spoke for God even after nine devastating plagues! The Bible and the power of the Holy Spirit will validate the message and the messengers. People with honest hearts will realize that the 144,000 speak for Jesus.

10. As **firstfruits** of the end-time harvest, the 144,000 will be **the first** to have their carnal natures removed. They will also be **the first** to be taken to Heaven. After the 144,000 receive the seal of God, they will have no predisposition or proclivity for sin as human beings currently do. After they are sealed, the 144,000 will be like Adam and Eve **before** the fall.

Thus, the 144,000 will be **living examples** of God's promise to **deliver anyone and everyone** from **the power** and **the penalty** of sin during the Great Tribulation. Their selfless behavior and love for God and man will be a powerful influence upon those who listen to them.

11. The 144,000 will present the gospel of Jesus Christ during the Great Tribulation. They will accomplish in a mere 1,260 days, more than all Christian missionaries have been able to accomplish in the past 2,000 years.

12. The 144,000 are not self-appointed. They will be called and "chosen" by Jesus. The conversion of the 144,000 will be similar to that of the apostle Paul. Jesus will reveal Himself to the people He chooses. He will speak with them and He will give them words to speak and miracle working powers so that their words will have weight.

13. The 144,000 will be resurrected and taken to Heaven on the 1,265th day of the Great Tribulation (a Sunday?). They will be presented to God as **firstfruits** (a sample) of the coming harvest of souls.

14. Why did God limit the number of "last day" prophets to a mere 144,000

people? World Population: 7,000,000,000,000 God's servants: 144,000

That's 1 prophet per 48,611 people. There's an important object lesson in this number. It's another "Gideon's army."

Judges 7:12 The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.

You know the story.... A great victory followed Gideon's attack and 120,000 of Israel's enemies perished. But, the point here is that Gideon and his 300 men did not receive glory for this great victory over the Midianites. Everyone knew the odds. This victory [belonged to God](#).

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty!"
Zechariah 4:6

So it will be. The gospel commission will be accomplished by God because it is humanly impossible. Jesus is going to "leapfrog" all Christian organizations by doing something very simple. He will choose ordinary people from [every religion](#) to be His prophets -- His spokespersons for the end-time.

This simple plan of [converted](#) brothers and sisters speaking to their [fellow](#) brothers and sisters will produce a great harvest. God shows His love and compassion for us by selecting 144,000 ordinary men and women and empowering them to do the impossible...

He converts them,
He seals them,
He gives them words,
He gives them power,
To save a numberless multitude.

Thus, God circumvents some of the stubbornness and diversity of mankind for the sake of [the honest-in-heart in every religion](#). 144,000 people will speak to their own people during a period of 1,260 days. When the dust finally settles, [the harvest](#) resulting from the work of the 144,000 will be a [numberless](#) multitude that comes from every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

Using a [minimum](#) number of people, God will save a [maximum](#) number of people during the Great Tribulation!

What a merciful God!
What a God of love!

With these 14 specifications in mind, there are some "adjacent issues" concerning the 144,000 that we need to address today:

1. If you have watched earlier seminar segments, you know why I say "The seven angels that stand before God (Rev 8:2) were given the seven trumpets in the Spring of 1994." During the Spring of 1994, four of the seven angels (those having the first four trumpets) left God's throne room with power to hurt the Earth, the sea and the trees. Before they could execute the intended harm, they were told to [wait](#) until the 144,000 were sealed. (Rev 7:1-4)

[We are currently living in this delay.](#)

As you might expect, this [delay](#) will come to an end. This is declared in...

Rev 10:6: "And he [the angel] swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay!"

Right now, Jesus is waiting for the **appointed hour** to arrive to select and seal the 144,000. When the appointed hour arrives and the 144,000 are sealed, Jesus will release the four angels. God's wrath against this world will begin. Life as we know it will suddenly change.

2. The 144,000 will not speak their own words. They will be given words to speak. This fact explains something that bothers some people. They ask, "How can God use people that aren't Christians and well studied in the Bible to speak for Him during the Great Tribulation?" First, we know that there are "sheep" and "goats" in every religion. In other words, there are sincere, faithful, honest-hearted people in every religious system.

Jesus told His disciples in John 10:16: "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen **[religious body]**. I must bring them **[into my fold]** also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."

Second, Jesus knows everyone of us very well. When Jesus presents Himself to those whom He has chosen, they will become "believers" in Jesus on that same day! **(Just like the apostle Paul!)**

Third, the 144,000 won't be theologians. They won't be eloquent preachers or savvy businessmen and women. They will be common people, just like the uneducated fishermen that Jesus chose to be His apostles when He was on Earth.

Here's the point: The 144,000 do not need to be scholars or theologians. God knows there are enough of these people speaking their own minds already. What Jesus needs are "mouthpieces." People who will speak the words they are **given** to speak without regard for the consequences. Look at this text:

Rev 14:5 No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

Think about this: The 144,000 will not deviate from the words given them -- even though it will eventually cost them their lives. This is a crucial point because the 144,000 will speak **the testimony of Jesus**. Those who receive the testimony of Jesus will also suffer persecution:

Rev 12:17 Then the **dragon** was enraged at the **woman** and went off to make **war** against the rest **[last]** of her offspring -- those who obey God's commandments and hold to **the testimony of Jesus**."

The selection and empowerment of the 144,000 was presented to John as though he would be one of them. Notice how this prophecy unfolds in Rev 10:

Rev 10:1 Then I saw another **mighty** angel **[representing Jesus]** coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars.

Rev 10:2 He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He **planted** his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land **[denoting a position of authority over land and sea]**,

Rev 10:3 and he gave a **loud shout** like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders **spoke**.

Rev 10:4 And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write **[down the things I heard]**; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

Note: We know that John understood the seven thunderous voices because He was about to write down what he had heard but he was told not to. What are these seven thunderous voices?

They are seven announcements. Jesus will speak from Heaven seven times during the Great Tribulation. John was not permitted to write down each announcement because Jesus wants each saint to hear **His voice** with their own ears and understand each announcement as it occurs. Can you imagine actually hearing the voice of Jesus??? What joy for those who receive the testimony of Jesus!

Think of it this way. If you hear a thunderous voice from Heaven and understand the words spoken, you have been sealed! The seven thunders are seven messages of assurance, hope and encouragement which **sealed saints** will hear and rejoice! These seven thunders are for **the benefit** of those who have been **thoroughly tested** and proven **faith-full**. All who pass the test of faith will receive the seal of God just like the 144,000 received the seal of God.

Spiritually speaking, **hearing** is man's first obligation toward God:

Rev 2:7 He who has an **ear**, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

. . .

Jesus often told the disciples "..... 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear.'" (Mark 4:9)

On another occasion, Jesus said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you **[my disciples]**, but to others I speak in parables, so that, "though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.'" (Luke 8:10)

So, those who have **ears to hear**, will hear and **understand** the seven thunders. Jesus will speak and His children will be encouraged to faithfully press on. Remember this incident in the temple?

John 12:26 "Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

John 12:27 "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.

John 12:28 Father, glorify your name!" **Then a voice came from heaven**, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again."

John 12:29 The crowd that was there and heard it said it had **thundered**; others said an angel had spoken to him.

John 12:30 Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine."

Parallel: Some people in the temple that day understood the thunderous voice from Heaven (e.g., the disciples understood), others like the Pharisees heard thunder, but they did not understand the noise.

John 10:16 "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them **[into my pen]** also. They too will **listen to my voice**, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."

One of God's purposes for the Great Tribulation is the separation of sheep from goats. Sheep listen. Goats don't. The seven thunders will be a source of great encouragement to the saints. The seven thunders will also reveal who has been sealed and who has not!

I believe the seven thunders will occur at seven crucial stages during the Great Tribulation. I cannot say with a high degree of certainty **when** Jesus will speak these announcements because the Bible doesn't reveal the timing of the seven thunders. So, here's my best guess on the timing of the seven thunders:

- Thunder #1. "No more delay." Censer cast down. The 144,000 hear and understand this one....
- Thunder #2. During the first angel's message (during the first four trumpets?)
- Thunder #3. During second angel's message (sometime between 4th and 5th trumpet -- ~800 days?)
- Thunder #4. During third angel's message (fifth trumpet?)
- Thunder #5. During the martyrdom of the saints (fifth seal/sixth trumpet?)
- Thunder #6. At the close of mercy (7th trumpet?)
- Thunder #7. Just before the Second Coming (7th bowl?)

The seven thunders will heard simultaneously all over the world -- so keep your ears open!

3. So what is the essential purpose of the 144,000? The revealing of Jesus. Will they be successful? Yes! The Bible indicates the 144,000 will gather up a numberless multitude of people:

Rev 7:9 "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. . .

Rev 7:13 Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes -- who are they, and where did they come from?"

Rev 7:14 I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

This numberless multitude will be made up of people who lived during the great tribulation. In other words, Revelation 7:9 is not concerned with the redeemed of all ages. Rather, this verse is focused on the numberless multitude who are saved during Earth's last days.

The numberless multitude in Revelation 7 stands in contrast with the numbered multitude, that is, the 144,000. Notice these contrasts:

Small	Big
Numbered	/ Numberless
144,000	/ Hundreds of millions
Uniform	/ Diverse
in message	in religion

3. Now, let's examine the experience that each of 144,000 will have when they are selected and sealed.

Rev 10:5 Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven.

Rev 10:6 And he swore [he made a solemn promise before God] by him who lives for ever and ever [the Father], who [commissioned] created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay..."

Rev 10:7 But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God [the sealing] will be accomplished, just as he

announced to his [144,000] servants the prophets."

Why do these words require a solemn oath? With these words Jesus makes a solemn promise to faithfully carry out the plans of the Father. What are the plans of the Father? Jesus promises to faithfully administer God's wrath upon this Earth and accomplish the sealing of the faithful without any deviation from the plan. In other words, when Jesus declares there is no more delay, He is then required to impose the sequence of seven trumpets and seven bowls upon mankind.

This is not an easy or pleasant task for our Creator. It crushes the heart of Jesus to do what He has to do. Imposing God's wrath upon Earth will be as difficult for Jesus as going to Calvary. Why does Jesus make a solemn promise to do everything that the Father demands?

Consider this Parallel:

When our newly elected president raises his right hand and takes "the oath of office" on inauguration day, the president promises at any and all costs to uphold and defend the constitution of the United States -- our highest law.

This oath is given at a public gathering. The citizens of the United States, including those who elected Him and those who voted against him, are assured by the president's oath that he will uphold the law of the land and govern honorably. This means, the president solemnly promises before God and citizens that he will not deviate from the constitution no matter what!

With this oath, every president confesses that (a) the law is supreme (b) the law has greater authority than he does and (c) he agrees to uphold the intent and demands of the law at all costs.

In a similar way, Jesus raises His right hand and makes an oath to the Father and the angelic host including the 24 elders. He makes a promise to fulfill the will of the Father -- regardless of the horrors that will follow.

4. Now, we want to consider the authority given to the 144,000:

Rev 10:8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."

Rev 10:9 So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey."

Rev 10:10 I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour.

Rev 10:11 Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about [before] many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

Look at Ezekiel's parallel experience:

When God called Ezekiel to speak for Him, Ezekiel didn't have anything to say. He didn't know what to say. In fact, we know that Ezekiel was very timid. He didn't find speaking easy or desirable.

Ezek 2:7 You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious.

Ezek 2:8 But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like

that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you."

Ezek 2:9 Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll,

Ezek 2:10 which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe.

Ezek 3:1 And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll [digest these words]; then go and speak to the house of Israel."

Ezek 3:2 So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat.

Ezek 3:3 Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth [the Word of God is so wonderful to understand!].

Ezek 3:4 He then said to me: "Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak my words to them."

Ezek 3:5 You are not being sent to a people of obscure speech and difficult language, but to the house of Israel--

Ezek 3:6 not to many peoples of obscure speech and difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely if I had sent you to them, they would have listened to you.

Ezek 3:7 But the house of Israel is not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for the whole house of Israel is hardened and obstinate.

Ezek 3:8 But I will make you as unyielding and hardened as they are.

Ezek 3:9 I will make your forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house."

Ezek 3:14 The Spirit then lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness [sour stomach] and in the anger of my spirit, with the strong hand of the Lord upon me.

The "eat and speak" parallel is easy to understand!

We often associate the expression of eating and books as it is used in Ezekiel and Revelation. If we say, "Bill eats up everything he can find on fishing...." You know what that means... So, the 144,000 will be given the words of Jesus to speak.

Rev 10:11 Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about [or before, KJV] many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

This command is given to the 144,000 for a simple reason. This command gives the 144,000 the authority to speak on God's behalf. "You must prophesy again about [or before, KJV] many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

The idea of prophesying (or preaching) "again" presumes an earlier installment of authority. This is the case:

Mat 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Mat 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in

the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Mat 28:20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The gospel commission given in Rev 10:11 redefines the gospel commission given in Matthew 28:19,20. In other words, none but the 144,000 will be speaking for God during the Great Tribulation.

Theologians, scholars, pastors, teachers, etc. will not be speaking for God. None have the testimony of Jesus but the 144,000!

Rev 11:1 I was given a reed like a measuring rod [a yardstick] and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. [In other words, speak the words I have given you. I will see who measures up. I will measure the hearts of those who claim to love God.]

Rev 11:2 But exclude the outer court; do not measure it [Do not count those who do not measure up], because it has been given to the Gentiles [those who do not know me]. They will trample on the holy city [my people] for 42 months.

Rev 11:3 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy [through you] for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth [a time of distress]."

Let's examine these three verses more closely:

First, notice that the temple is divided.... There is an "inner court and altar" and there is an "outer court."

Two facts: This vision was given to John around A.D. 95. Second, Jerusalem and the temple had been destroyed in A.D. 70.

So, John received this vision about 25 years after Jerusalem and the temple were burned to the ground. Prior to A.D. 70, when John lived in Jerusalem, the temple had two courts. "Pure Jews" could enter the inner court and Gentile converts "impure Jews" had to stay in the outer court.

This practice arose from the distorted idea that God wanted a pure race [instead of pure hearts]. The laws of Moses were maligned to justify this practice:

Deu 23:7 Do not abhor an Edomite [the descendants of Esau], for he is your brother. Do not abhor an Egyptian, because you lived as an alien in his country.

Deu 23:8 The third generation of children born to them may enter the assembly of the Lord.

Deu 23:2 No one born of a forbidden marriage nor any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, even down to the tenth generation.

Deu 23:3 No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, even down to the tenth generation.

In other words, ancient Jews, and some orthodox Jews today, take these and other Scriptures from the laws of Moses to separate themselves from pagan "Gentiles" so they won't become contaminated by them. Some orthodox Jews will not speak to a Gentile for fear of contamination!

Lev 15:31 "'You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them.'"

So, the temple in John's day was divided into two courts.

John was given a "yard stick" and told to count the inner court, but he is to exclude the outer court. The profound point here is that outer court is never counted!

End Text: