**THE LAST GREAT REVIVAL**

**REVELATION CHAPTER 7**

How many of you would like to see a revival break out in this country? We all do! Well, I have some good news and some bad news for you. Let me give you the good news first. The greatest revival ever known to mankind is yet to come. The bad news is that when it does come it will be the world’s last revival and it will occur during the Tribulation. At some point during all the awful events we previewed last week in Ch 6, revival breaks out.

As we look at Ch 7 this morning – the last great revival – I’ll be making two assumptions based on how I read Revelation: (1) The church has been taken out and (2) the antichrist has made his appearance.

Between Chaps 6 and 8, between the opening of the 6th and 7th seals, there is this brief interlude. It is a delay of God’s wrath, a demonstration of His grace. For now, God’s judgment has ceased, but it is going to continue. So, while God is in the process of pouring out His wrath on a sinful world, He allows a great worldwide revival to take place. That’s what we’ll see in today’s lesson.

Observation: God has always used revival to draw people to Himself. Examples: (1) Exo Ch 19 – God brought revival to the children of Israel at the foot of Mt. Sinai after years in Egyptian bondage; (2) Josh Ch 4 – God brought revival to the wilderness generation right after they crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land; (3) 1 Kings Ch 8 – We see revival break out at the dedication of Solomon’s temple; (4) Ezra Ch 10 – We see revival again in Jerusalem after 70 years in Babylonian captivity. (5) Revival broke out even in pagan Nineveh when a Jewish preacher named Jonah delivered God’s message to them. (6) We see revival in the N.T. at Pentecost and in the days immediately following thousands are saved. Periodically throughout church history revivals have broken out in various places – the Great Awakening in NE in the mid-1700s, Welsh revivals of the early 1900s, current revival in China where thousands of people per day are coming to Christ. Revival has always been a part of God’s salvation economy. So what we see happening in Ch 7 has historical precedent. Let’s read about it…

1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree.

In Ch 6, we saw a world in chaos – great cosmic disturbances taking place as God’s wrath fell on the earth. Now we observe as four angels stay the judgment of God against the world. God is demonstrating grace. In the days of Noah God gave the world 120 years to repent. In Abraham’s day God did not spare Sodom and Gomorrah but He did allow Lot and his family to leave first. With Nineveh, God restrained His judgment on them for a while because they repented. Now in the Tribulation period, God once more is gracious by allowing many people to be saved.

2 Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea,

3 saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

This is an angelic messenger from God speaking. We have all heard about the mark of the beast – 666. This mark will be on the foreheads of those who align themselves with the antichrist (we’ll study about this in Ch 13). But did you know that God had this idea first? Here in these verses we see God’s plan to mark the foreheads of all those who follow Him (later on in Revelation).

This is not the first time God put His mark on people. Go back to the Book of Genesis. God put a mark on Cain designating him for sin (in Genesis 4:15). He put His mark of circumcision on Abraham signifying His covenant with him (in Genesis 17:11). God put a mark of redemption, a scarlet thread, in the walls of Jericho sparing Rahab and her family (in Joshua 2:18). God’s mark on New Testament saints is the testimony of baptism. And now He seals His servants by marking their foreheads.

4 And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

Here we have the 144,000. Who are they? There has been a lot of confusion in our day by many groups about this. God’s Word tells us who these 144,000 are…

5 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed, 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben, 12,000 from the tribe of Gad,

6 12,000 from the tribe of Asher, 12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali, 12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,

7 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon, 12,000 from the tribe of Levi, 12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,

8 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun, 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph, 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.

[no tribes of Dan or Ephraim mentioned – explanation?]

These are NOT the Seventh Day Adventists nor is it the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Both of those groups wrongly apply this scripture to themselves. This scripture plainly tells us that the redeemed of the Tribulation will be from the 12 tribes of Israel – these are Jews! They are not Gentiles or a part of any church or cult. These verses name the 12 tribes of Israel here and mentions 12,000 from each tribe. Every other time in Scripture that the 12 tribes of Israel are mentioned it refers to God’s covenant people, the Jews. So, this passage is clearly speaking about the Jews! During the Tribulation there is going to come a revival among the Jews. 144,000 Jewish people are going to be saved and they become the evangelists during the Tribulation.

By the way, this passage is one of the reasons I DO NOT believe in replacement theology. I do not think that the church replaces Israel. I believe strongly that God has plans to redeem His covenant people. God will save Israel. He’ll keep His promises to Israel (OT). God told Daniel: [speaking of the Tribulation] “and at that time your people [the Jews], everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued… And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” (Daniel 12:1,3)

Consider also the words of the prophet Joel: “It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy; your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth” [talks about all the calamities we saw in Ch 6 referring to it as the day of the Lord]. “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape, As the LORD has said, Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.” (Joel 2:28-32)

As I read this it seems clear to me that many Jews are going to be saved during the Tribulation. But what about the Gentiles? Will they also be saved? Look at the next verses…

9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Here we see a revival among Gentiles – “from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages.” How many? No number is given. It is simply described as “a great multitude.” Remember that passage I just read a few minutes ago from Daniel? “Those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” (Daniel 12:3) The last revival will be a Gentile revival and God will use those Jewish converts mentioned earlier to preach the message of salvation. Just like He used Jonah to preach in Nineveh and Paul to preach to pagan Gentiles. Many will come to Christ as a result of the testimony of saved Jews.

Notice in v 10 that when revival breaks out there is a bold declaration of the Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. These brand new saints praise the Lord Jesus with uninhibited, liberated voices. How do these new saints, those saved during the Tribulation, how do they know about the God of heaven who sits on the throne and about the Lamb? Well, the church may have been taken out, but their Bibles were left behind. These new believers can read the Book of Revelation! They can see that they are living out the very prophecy they’re reading about in Rev Ch 7!

11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

12 saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

Just in case you have ever wondered if people in heaven know about what happens on earth consider what Jesus told the Pharisees and scribes: “There will more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.” (Luke 15:7) So, yes, those in heaven are aware of this great revival taking place on the earth. The saints in heaven worship the great and mighty God of mercy and grace.

Now we have this interesting exchange between John and one of the elders around the throne in heaven…

13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?"

14 I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 "Therefore they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.”

The elder quizzes John as to the identity of the multitude that is being saved. But John doesn’t recognize them. I think that if they had been NT saints from his day, John would have recognized some of them. But he doesn’t recognize these saints because they are saved during the Tribulation.

The expression, “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” describes beautifully what happens when someone is saved. When a person of their own free will comes to God by the blood of His Son and confess their sin, then his or her filthy rags are cleansed in the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. That person is made to be white as snow.

Ch 7 closes with God’s promise to His dear saints, those who take a stand for Him during this time of terrible persecution…

16 “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

17 For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Wow, what a promise! At some point in all of our lives, we must all make a choice. We must decide either to accept or reject Jesus Christ. It is our own decision. Nobody can make it for us. To accept Him by faith produces an eternal reward, that is, to be in God’s blessed presence, close to the Lamb. I can’t think of any reward that is better than that!