

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 372

Revelation 7, Part 1

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Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Episode Summary

Revelation 7 is the first of two passages in the book that refer to the 144,000. The passage bristles with questions. Who are these individuals, 12,000 from 12 tribes of Israel? Should we understand the 144,000 literally or metaphorically, or both? Why is the tribe of Dan omitted from the list? Why are the tribes of Joseph and Manasseh mentioned, when Manasseh (with Ephraim) constituted the tribe of Joseph? Why the tribal arrangement at all? Might the 144,000 still represent the Church and the twelve apostles? Are the 144,000 specially protected as the apocalypse plays out? In this episode we begin our journey into these and other questions with a specific eye to the role of the Old Testament in John's thinking and theology.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 372: Revelation 7, Part 1. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! Lots of sevens in that title.

MH: [laughter] Really. That's true. It must be code for something.

TS: Yeah, some kind of...

MH: It's the key to unlocking the 144,000. That's what we're going to talk about today. [laughs]

TS: Yeah. You've tackled that, I believe, in a Q&A before. So I'm interested to hear what more you add to it.

MH: Yeah, and a little bit in *Reversing Hermon*, too. What listeners need to do now is record this and play it backwards, and then you'll know.

TS: Ooh, nice. [MH laughs] Yeah, if I had sound effects, I would completely put something in there in reverse.

MH: There you go.

TS: But hey, before we get into Revelation 7, I've been meaning to ask you about your thoughts on the new Dead Sea Scroll discoveries that happened a few weeks ago.

MH: Yeah. You know, I've looked around on... There's nothing (at least the last time I looked) on the ASOR blog (that's the American Schools of Oriental Research). I can't really find anything in the academic sources. Which isn't unusual, because they'll wait until somebody publishes something or is near publication or presents something at one of the universities in Israel and whatnot. I'm betting this November at either SBL or the ASOR meetings that somebody will have a session on this. But the most interesting part to me is that the new stuff is in Greek, which is... There are Greek Dead Sea Scrolls. That's not the first time for that. But obviously you'd expect Hebrew or Aramaic. But these are in Greek. And it's part of the... What I've been able to find is that there are two fragments, both from Minor Prophets (Zechariah 8:16-17 and Nahum 1:5-6). Just two verses from each book. So they're real small fragments. I found a few pictures. They're just little pieces. But this is typically how they come across stuff. Cave 4 was a few hundred thousand of these pieces (if you go up online and get a picture of these) under a few inches of bat dung (guano). [laughs]

TS: Yeah, that's crazy.

MH: So they're not all these neat scrolls in jars, like you see in the pictures. A lot of it's this kind of stuff, just little pieces that you've got to try to figure out how to join them and whatnot. But if it's biblical stuff, at least you can type it out and run it through a computer, and it speeds up the process, rather than just doing it out of your head like they did in the old days. But yeah, it's interesting for sure. I mean, the nice thing is it shows there's stuff still out there, even if it's this small. But there's stuff still out there. Now if they can only find a way of getting people on the black market to cough up what they have, that would be great. Because I strongly suspect that there's stuff like that just waiting to be sold, even though people nowadays know they've got to be real careful about that. They don't want to end up in jail. They want to make their money but not wind up in jail. So who knows.

TS: Yeah, especially because the robberies have been happening for 67 years, way before they found the first cave. So you would think they would've already sold a lot of that stuff.

MH: Yeah, I'm betting they did—sold it to other people who aren't going to release it to the public.

TS: Like private collectors?

MH: Yeah, private collectors. I'm sure that's going to be the case: somebody dies and, "Oh, look what we found, going through the house!" [laughs] So people can insulate themselves from legal problems and whatnot. But yeah, I'm sure you're right there.

TS: Yeah. Well, that's going to be interesting. It's probably going to be after our lifetime when all this stuff hits, I would think.

MH: Yeah. I would imagine there's going to be something like that. I don't think it'll take another hundred years to get something of significance out there. Because people do pass on, they do donate things, they come clean. That happens.

TS: Yeah.

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MH: And even if they manage to make a deal with someone who will release it to the public, then that other person can always say, "I bought it from somebody on the dark web. I don't know who it is. So here it is. I'm not keeping it. But there it is." I could see stuff like that happening.

TS: If you're a listener of the Naked Bible Podcast out there and you've got this in your private collection, we implore you to reach out to a museum, right, Mike? Or you could reach out to us! We'll be happy to facilitate transfer of ownership to a museum or university.

MH: The problem with all this, though, is the propensity of fakery. The Museum of the Bible got hammered not too long ago for having purchased fakes. And the faking is pretty sophisticated. But it's not hard to know how to do it. [laughs] Just, "Can you get to the materials? Do you have that much patience (that sort of thing) to reproduce this kind of stuff?" But people are scared.

TS: Seems like they could do carbon dating or something.

MH: Well, what they do is they'll cut out... We were just watching a couple of weeks ago something about the Mormon church faking Joseph Smith documents. The guy used (for the material on which the writing went) the same method as the old '60s or '70s novel by Irving Wallace (*The Word*). Because you get these manuscripts in museums and old libraries. And if they can get access to them, a lot of these codexes that come from 3rd, 4th century, they'll have blank pages in them. You just cut one out and walk out with it. You put it between something flat and there you go. So yeah, go ahead and carbon date that puppy all you want. [laughs] You're going to find out it's in the 300s AD and it's a new Gospel or something. So that's as old as Irving Wallace. But people who forge know how to find those things that have the extra pages and cut them out. And then it's just a matter of a chemical analysis of the ink, which you can get in any

journal article database that's online. They do that kind of analysis. And so you can make the ink. The trick is, can you reproduce the handwriting. That's usually where things go awry, trying to imitate a scribal hand. But the other stuff (the "scientific" stuff) you can fake. It's not that difficult, at least in terms of what to do.

TS: That's crazy. Alright, Mike, well let's turn our attention back to the Bible and Revelation 7. I know you've talked about in the past...

MH: Back to your encrypted introduction?

TS: Yeah. [MH laughs] I wish I had some backwards... You know, my name is "yert" backwards. [MH laughs] Does that mean anything? Yert? It kind of sounds...

MH: Yeah, I don't know if it's the correct spelling, but there are such things as yurts. Is that what you're talking about?

TS: Is that the tents—the little circle tents?

MH: Yeah, those round things. Yeah.

TS: I was hoping for something more powerful like...

MH: [laughs] Yeah, it's not terribly exotic.

TS: Yeah, but a circle tent. That's not as exciting.

MH: Yeah, "You're a circle tent! Wow! I'm impressed."

TS: I'm going to need you to come up with some kind of Hebrew meaning.

MH: Yeah, a Hebrew word for "yurt." [laughs]

TS: Well, actually, I guess it can be the number three. Trey stands for "three." So technically I'm just three.

MH: It's not quite gematria, but we'll take it. You know?

TS: Yeah. We're in Revelation 7 today, Mike. So what more are you going to teach us about the 144,000 today?

MH: Well, this is Part 1, which obviously means we're going to need more time. I don't know yet if we're going to need a Part 3. We're going to get at least two parts, obviously. In this episode, we're going to tackle a few transparently obvious questions when it comes to repurposing the Old Testament and whatnot.

10:00

And then in the next episode we'll get into some of the odder stuff. But I've actually written a little bit about, "Why is Dan missing from the list of tribes?" So we'll get back into that sort of thing and a little bit of interpretive stuff. And even here, there's going to be some of that, too. But this is what the passage is known for—the 144,000, the first eight verses. This is the first of two listings of the 144,000, or two sections of the book of Revelation that spend any time on them. And so this is what everybody thinks of when you hit Revelation 7. And again, I did write about this before a little bit in *Reversing Hermon*. We're going to go beyond that, both in this episode and the next episode. So today we're not going to necessarily get into that, or how the story... Here's a teaser: how the text (the 144,000) may indeed factor into the Watcher story. I talk about that in *Reversing Hermon*. But that's for Part 2. But again, we'll get into a little more detail than we devoted to it there. So let's for today just jump into the passage (the first eight verses). And I'm reading from ESV. It says:

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

And then you get the list.

**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.**

Now a couple of general observations. Because we're focused here on what John is doing with the Old Testament. You know, the obvious ones are the tribes and the numbers. So let's just start with the numbers. What about all this counting? What does it remind you of in the Old Testament? Well, the answer is kind of obvious. It reminds you of census counting. I mean, you get these lists of tribes numbered in the Old Testament (like the book of Numbers—what a surprise). That's immediately what you think of. Now Aune, in his Revelation commentary (and this is Volume 2: Revelation 6-16), writes this:

The census is a specific form of list that occurs with some frequency in the OT, where it is used for purposes of taxation (Exod 30:11–16; 2 Kgs 15:19–20), for labor conscription (2 Chr 2:17–18; cf. 1 Kgs 5:13–18), for determining the cultic duties and social structure of members of the tribe of Levi (Num 3:14–4:49), for determining Israelite descent (Ezra 2 and par. in Neh 7 and 1 Esdr 5), but most commonly as a means for determining military strength (Num 1:2–46...)

Numbers 1:2-46 is a very obvious parallel or a source text for that.

... This suggests that the census in Rev 7:4–8 is for *military purposes*...

That might be a bit of an overstatement, but you could see it in the context of Revelation. And this is where Aune goes. I mean, he lists all these other things that don't really fit. So bad things are coming with boots-on-the-ground and all this sort of stuff, lots of conflict. It's an apocalyptic text. So this is a reasonable deduction. Again, he suggests:

... the census in Rev 7:4–8 is for *military purposes*, a possibility that is partially confirmed by the present literary context of this pericope since, according to Rev 14:3–4 [MH: that's the second mention of the 144,000], the group of 144,000 consists exclusively of adult males who practice sexual abstinence, an ancient Israelite requirement for holy warriors...

Again, we're going to get into the characterization of them being male virgins next week, when we get into more Levitical connections, possibly having to do with the story of the Book of the Watchers in Enoch. But just store that away. For now, Aune is noting that this was kind of the practice before as one of the preparations for war. You didn't have sex with your wife, that sort of thing. So again, he's saying this suggests we have a military context. But he also adds:

However, the absence of all military and holy war imagery from Rev 7:4–8 makes this suggestion doubtful [MH: so he's pulling back a little bit]. The author's insistence on an equal number (12,000) from each of *twelve* tribes indicates his interest in the eschatological restoration of the twelve-tribe nation of Israel (Luke 22:30; 24:21; Acts 1:6). The eschatology of the late OT and early Jewish periods

emphasized the hope of the restoration of Israel (Deut 30:3–5; Isa 11:11–16; 27:12–13; 49:5–6; 54:7–10; Jer 31:7–14; Ezek 37:15–23 [MH: that one’s a favorite on this podcast]; Hos 11:10–11; Pss 106:47; 147:2; Bar 5:5–9; 2 Macc 2:7; Sir 36:11; Tob 13:13; *1 Enoch* 57; 90:33; 4 Ezra 13:12–13, 39–47; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 78:5–7; *T. Jos.* 19:4; *Pss. Sol.* 11:2–7; 17:26; *Shemoneh Esreh* 10; *m. Sanh.* 10:3; Matt 19:28)...

15:00 He gives you 10 or 15 references here to this “hope of the restoration of Israel.” And specifically, a number of these texts have all twelve tribes included. So that’s Aune’s assessment. He angles for the military thing, points that out. “Okay, you could see that,” but then he backs away and says, “Eh, restoration seems like a better way to go here.” And that’s actually going to go better with where we’ll land next week when we hit the whole thing about the characterization of the 144,000 as sexual virgins—male virgins—and all that stuff.

Bauckham also pushes back on the holy war/military context in his article, “The Book of Revelation as a Christian War Scroll”. Now it’s interesting that you mentioned the Dead Sea Scrolls as we were chatting before the episode. One of the Dead Sea Scrolls (one of the more famous ones from the original truckload) is something called the War Scroll. It’s 1QM. And this is an apocalyptic war between (I like the phrase) gods and men. But you have angels and angelic beings and humans fighting on both the good side and the bad side. That’s why it’s known as the War Scroll. It’s set in the End Times. So Bauckham has this article comparing the book of Revelation to the War Scroll, calling the book of Revelation a Christian War Scroll. Now I’ve put this article in the protected folder just for anybody who’s interested in it. We’re not going to go point by point through it, but just so that you have access to it. But Bauckham says it’s a more fruitful trajectory to think about the tribes as opposed to this sort of faint military imagery. So he’s going to agree with Aune. He acknowledges the military element is there, but doesn’t find it that persuasive.

So let’s talk about the tribes. So this is the second thing that stands out. The tribes and the tribal arrangement. So Bauckham writes this:

The list of the twelve tribes in Revelation 7 has several peculiarities which require comment [MH: that’s an understatement, believe me]:

1. The order of the list corresponds to no other extant list of the tribes [MH: in the Bible—this one’s unique in terms of its order]. Most significant is the fact that Judah heads the list. This is true of Old Testament lists in which the tribes are arranged geographically, moving from south to north (Nm 34:19; Jos 21:4; Jdg 1:2; 1 Chr 12:24), but the list in Revelation 7 bears no other resemblance to a geographical list. The only other Old Testament list of tribes which puts Judah first

is that of Numbers 2:3 (followed by 7:12; 10:14), that is the tribes in their military order in the camp.

So again, here he is making this comment about how there's a military flavoring to this, but then Bauckham says:

But, again, the rest of the order of the tribes in Revelation 7 bears no resemblance to the list in Numbers 2...

And again, he has his own pushback about, "Okay, there's some military stuff in here," but not enough to make him or Aune think that this is really what it's about. I don't think we should lose the military context personally. I think it does fit with spiritual warfare. But again, that's for Part 2 with the whole Watchers story. I think there's a reason why we get some military sprinkles in the text. But continuing on with Bauckham, he says that's one peculiarity: "the order of the list corresponds to no other extant list of the tribes."

2. The inclusion of *both* Joseph and Manasseh (Rv 7:6,8) (rather than either Joseph alone or Ephraim and Manasseh)...

Now let me just stop there. Ephraim and Manasseh were Joseph's two boys. And so after they're grafted into Israel (the Genesis 48 scene with Jacob crossing the hands and all that), after they are adopted essentially by Israel (by Jacob), you will often see Ephraim and Manasseh occupying the "Joseph" slot in the list of tribes. But here, you get both Joseph and Manasseh. (Like, "What happened to Ephraim?") Bauckham actually says here:

[This] is unparalleled and has never been explained.

[laughs] Thanks for that. Then he goes on and says:

A *possibility* is that the author had in mind Ezekiel 37:15- 23, the classic Old Testament prophecy of the reunion of the twelve tribes in the messianic kingdom. In the extant text of 37:16,19, the name Joseph has been glossed [MH: there's an explanatory item in these verses] with phrases referring to Ephraim, in such a way that the reader could think that "Joseph" is here being used as a name for the *tribe* of Ephraim. "Joseph" might therefore seem a suitable name for Ephraim in a list of the tribes of the eschatological, reunited Israel...

20:00

So let me just stop there. So Bauckham's saying it's really unusual (it's unprecedented, actually) that you have Joseph and Manasseh in a tribal list and you don't have Ephraim. Then to summarize what he's saying, "Well, if you go back in the Old Testament, you're going to find in Ezekiel 37 references to Joseph there. Because in Ezekiel 37 the context is the reunification of the tribes, you're going to find Joseph there, but Joseph is talked about in ways that would

be associated with Ephraim elsewhere in the Old Testament. So maybe a reader of John's apocalypse, when he encounters Joseph in the list will think 'Ephraim,' and therefore you sort of have Ephraim and Manasseh. You have this expected symmetry." Okay, that's a guess. And Bauckham admits it's a guess. He says, "This has never really been explained by anybody. There you go. Maybe that's what's going on."

3. The tribe of Levi (Rv 7:7) might seem out of place in a military census. It was excluded from the two Mosaic censuses (Nm 1:49; 2:33; 26:1- 51)...

Levi isn't included. Remember, the census in Numbers was, "This is for warfare, because they're going to go in and... The conquest is going to start. We're going to take the land," and all that. But the priestly tribe was excluded from that. But here they're included. It's just a little odd. I mean, in the book of Numbers, they do get numbered, but not as part of a military engagement party. They're not part of the military forces. Bauckham adds:

However, in 1QM [MH: that's the War Scroll from Qumran], although the priests and Levites do not fight with weapons, they play an essential part in the conduct of war, conducting prayers before, during and after battle, and blowing the trumpets which both direct the troops and call divine attention to the battle. Without them the war could not be a *holy* war [MH: so they have to participate in some way, he says]. Consequently, the tribe of Levi is organised on the same military pattern as the other tribes [MH: in the War Scroll, anyway] (1QM 4:1-8), and can even be said to fight (1:2) [MH: in this way].

Again, this is sort of like spiritual warfare, which I think is the more fruitful trajectory for all of this. So those are Bauckham's three anomalies that he notes right away when it comes to the tribes. He could have added... Well, he does add. I'll just include it here, even though we're going to talk about it next time. Fourth, the omission of Dan. Okay. The tribe of Dan is not on this list in Revelation 7 or later. So:

4. The omission of Dan from the list must probably be regarded as arbitrary...

I don't know if I agree with that. We'll spend more time on that in Part 2.

... one tribe was frequently omitted in order to achieve a list of twelve.

That's true, because after Joseph, you have Ephraim and Manasseh. So the number goes from twelve to 13. So you've got to take one away to get this nice round 12 number. So that's true, but it's still Dan. And Bauckham knows all this. So he adds:

The tradition that Antichrist was to come from the tribe of Dan (first found in Irenaeus, *Adv Haer* 5:30:2; Hippolytus, *De Antichristo* 14) [MH: these are early patristic writers] is unlikely to be pre-Christian [MH: in other words, he doesn't think it was part of the Jewish mindset—the Jewish cognitive environment of the time] (contra Bousset 1896:171-174), since the Antichrist figures of Jewish apocalyptic are invariably Gentile and pagan. In any case, even this would scarcely account for the exclusion of the whole tribe from the eschatological Israel.

So again, to summarize that, he notes that the absence of Dan (that's his fourth anomaly)... He thinks it's arbitrary. "You've got to take one out, so why not Dan? It's Dan's turn to be left out." He doesn't think there's anything to it, because he's thinking that this whole idea is something that springs from Christian tradition. Even though Christians use the Old Testament to get to this conclusion, he doesn't believe that it's present in Judaism. And so Bauckham says, "Nah, I don't think so." Again, we'll spend more time on the omission of Dan in Part 2.

25:00

So there are all four anomalies. Now again, the point for now is that it does seem fair to me that the census lists and the tribal arrangement is on target. Maybe we don't have too much of an overemphasis on the military side. Maybe it really is about the portrayals and the restoration of the tribes. I mean, I think that's legitimate. That's on target. But I don't think that that really means that the military element should just be dismissed or ignored. I think John is using that Old Testament theme, as well, to portray opposition on earth to the forces of evil, who it's going to turn out in the book of Revelation to be this antichrist figure in the last days. So I think spiritual warfare is much more in view than anything boots-on-the-ground military engagement. So I think it should remain part of the picture and not just be set aside.

But for the rest of this episode, though, I want to drill down on a couple of other things. Now one of the sources that I mentioned really early on (we have not used it too much) is Steve Moyise. He, in his book on *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, raises the two obvious questions about this chapter. He writes this:

The two main questions that arise from John's use of this tradition concern the identity of those protected (the 144,000 and their relation to the great throng of Rev. 7:9)...

Like, is it the same group or a different group? Let me just go and read that. So after you get the list of the 144,000 in Revelation 7, that list ends with verse 8. Then in verse 9 we read this:

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...

Then the description continues. But anyway, there are scholars who think that the great throng there *is* the 144,000, and others (I'm including myself in this group) don't. I don't think they're from the tribes of Israel. I think that excludes them right away. I think you have two different groups here. But Moyise is saying the two questions are: 1) "Who are these guys? Who are the 144,000? And what's their relationship to verse 9?" And 2) "What is it that they are protected from?" So let's take those two in order.

1. Who are the 144,000 (this identification)?

Moyise will start us off again from his same source (his book on *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*). He writes this:

The sealing of the saints in Rev. 7:2–3 is almost certainly modelled on Ezek. 9:4–6...

So I'm going to read Ezekiel 9:4-6. Because he doesn't give you the full passage. He has an excerpt here. But let me just go there and read Ezekiel 9. Because, again, I think this for sure is John's source material. I'm going to start in verse 1 and read through verse 6.

Then he cried in my ears with a loud voice, saying, "Bring near the executioners of the city..."

Okay, if you remember way back in our series on Ezekiel, in chapter 8 you get this vision of the abominations in the temple, all the stuff that the people are doing wrong, and God is angry, and so on and so forth. And so Ezekiel hears the voice of God.

Then he cried in my ears with a loud voice, saying, "Bring near the executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand." ² And behold, six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his weapon for slaughter in his hand, and with them was a man clothed in linen, with a writing case at his waist. And they went in and stood beside the bronze altar.

³ Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his waist. ⁴ And the LORD said to him, “Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.” ⁵ And to the others he said in my hearing, “Pass through the city after him [MH: after the first guy], and strike. Your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity. ⁶ Kill old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women, but touch no one on whom is the mark. And begin at my sanctuary” [MH: with the priests]. So they began with the elders who were before the house.

That’s the first six verses. So you have this judgment scene in Ezekiel, basically for the thorough-going apostasy, not only of the priesthood and the temple, but the whole city. So Moyise says, this is... It’s pretty hard to not see this as John’s point of reference. So he quotes this passage:

Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and *put a mark on the foreheads* of those who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it ... Cut down old men, young men and young women, little children and women, *but touch no one who has the mark* ... (Ezek. 9:4–6).

And then he compares that with Revelation 7:2-3:

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I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to damage earth and sea, saying, ‘*Do not damage the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads.*

Later tradition identified this sealing either with baptism, the laying on of hands or the marking of the cross [MH: this is later Christian tradition], and perhaps Paul’s use of *sphragizein* [MH: that’s a specific verb in 2 Corinthians 1:22—it means to certify or seal] (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30) made this [MH: later tradition] inevitable. Nevertheless, it seems clear that John’s meaning is closer to Ezekiel’s...

I mean, Paul doesn’t have sealing going on for some sort of purpose that would align with the sealing of Ezekiel 9. They’re not being protected physically from

something in Paul. So Moyise is saying, “John seems to be going the same direction as Ezekiel. He’s not tracking with Paul; he’s tracking with Ezekiel.” So he keeps writing and says:

... it seems clear that John’s meaning is closer to Ezekiel’s, namely, that God’s people are to be given a special mark to protect them from the approaching slaughter... One further point of interest is that the sealing episode is followed by an angel reaching into the altar and hurling fire onto the earth: ‘Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth’ (Rev. 8:5). A similar thing follows Ezekiel’s account of the sealing: ‘He said to the man clothed in linen, “Go within the wheelwork underneath the cherubim; fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim, and scatter them over the city’ ” (10:2).

So Moyise is saying, “Look, even this element’s there.” So it would seem clear that the sealing is drawn from a Jewish text (Ezekiel 9) and wider Jewish contexts (the tribes and the census), arguably the main factor in the identity of the 144,000 (being the restoration of the tribes). So Aune is aware of all this, and he notes as much, but sort of adds a little twist:

Many who think that Rev 7:4–8 is based on a Jewish source hold that while the 144,000 may have *originally* referred to Jews or the real Israel [MH: i.e., the ethnic Israel], that source has been reinterpreted by the author [MH: John] to refer to a different group, such as the Christian church or Christian martyrs... There are others, however, who think that whether or not 7:4–8 is based on a Jewish source, the text in its present context refers to Jews.

So right there you have a difference of opinion. And Aune lays it out. Even though this goes back to Ezekiel 9, he says, some scholars think John’s reinterpreting it and applying it to Christians. And then there are others who would say, “Nope. These are all Jews. The 144,000 are Jews. They’re not Gentile, in other words.” See, and catch the way I said that. Because right away, even in the academic discussion, there’s an odd mixing up or conflation of the term “Christian” and “Jew.” Look, you can still be a Christian—you can still be a believer—and be a Jew or a Gentile. But historically, in the history of interpretation, scholars have looked at this and said, “Ethnic Jews are one group.” The other one says, “Nope, they’re Christian. The Christian church.” Well, can’t they still be Jews? I mean, if they’re followers of Jesus, aren’t they Christians anyway? But again, it seems like a lot of people don’t even ask that question, which is kind of shocking, to be honest with you. But Aune is correct here. These are the two sides that historically have been taken. 1) The 144,000

are Jews. 2) The 144,000 are not Jews. Like it's this black and white, either/or thinking. And I'm going to end up objecting to this as we go on. I think you can already tell that. But that's typically how this is laid out. So Aune goes into, "Okay, why does each side take its position? What are the arguments? Should we stick with the context of Ezekiel 9 (Jews) or should we do something different with it? Should we assume that John is altering it when he uses it? Or is John being consistent with his use of it? Where do we fall out here?" So Aune writes this:

There are several arguments that proponents of this view [MH: as far as the Jewish view] put forward: (a) The detailed enumeration of 12,000 sealed from each of the twelve tribes of Israel suggests that Jews or Jewish Christians are in view...

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See now, he throws that in. [laughs] That's his safety net. "Jews or Jewish Christians are in view." But they're still ethnic Jews. And I'm actually going to agree with that qualification. I think they *are* ethnic Jews, but I think they're followers of the Lamb. They're believers. They're Christians. Okay? So let's try to keep the terminology straight here. So his first argument *for* that view is, "Look, 12,000 from each tribe. Okay? That's what's in view.

... for while "the twelve tribes in dispersion" (Jas 1:1; cf. Herm. *Sim.* 9.17.1) can be used in a Christian context to represent the [MH: whole] Christian church [MH: inclusive of Gentiles], a detailed enumeration of 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes does not lend itself easily to allegorization [MH: I don't know why it calls it that, but okay, we'll just let it go] (b) Since the author is undoubtedly a Jewish Christian... it is not particularly surprising that he would have envisioned a special role in the eschaton for Christians of Jewish origin [MH: that's easy enough]. Paul struggled with the problem of the rejection of the gospel by most Jews in Rom 9–11, recognizing that not everyone descended from Israel belongs to the true Israel (Rom 9:6), yet nevertheless held out the eschatological hope that Israel would eventually be converted (Rom 11:25–27). The eschatological tradition of the future gathering of Israel and the Gentiles at the New Jerusalem at the coming of Christ is found elsewhere in early Christian literature...

See now, here he's getting confusing. Because now he's looping the Gentiles in. You know, I don't know why he does this. What I want *you* as the listener to know is, look, here are your options for the 144,000: 1) All ethnic Jews having nothing to do with their status as Christians, which doesn't seem possible because they're followers of the Lamb. The Lamb is Jesus. 2) They're all Christians with no Jewish ethnicity. Again, to me that's possible, but it doesn't seem right. 3) To me the better option is, okay, they're Jews. They're ethnic Jews. But they're Christians too. We don't have to have the Gentiles in the picture. Because my

view (that you're going to hear in a moment) is when you get to verse 9, the massive multitude from *every* tribe, *every* nation, those are the Gentiles. Okay? And these two groups (the 144,000 and the massive group in Revelation 7:9) are on the same side. It's just two different ways of talking about the composition of the people of God. So to me, this doesn't seem like so much of a dilemma. But I want you to hear the academic discussion. Because even the academic discussions... "Well, you say one thing; then you say another; then you mix the two." It just gets really confusing, where I don't think it really *has* to be that confusing.

So Aune keeps going on, and then he's going to talk about the other view, the one that's sort of, "I think," or "Should we say?" lands on this: "Oh, they're all Christians. Really there's nothing to see here with Jewish ethnicity." So...

Opponents of this view have proposed a number of arguments against interpreting the 144,000 as Jews or Jewish Christians...

So this second view wants to see them as the Church (mixture of Jew and Gentile), and no attention is being drawn. The second view says that the Church *is* the new Israel anyway, so Jewish ethnicity is not even part of what's going on here. So those who defend that view say:

(a) The twelve tribes did not literally exist in the first century A.D. [MH: I mean, nobody knew their tribal affiliation], and the hope of their eventual restoration belonged not to the real but to the ideal world. Against this objection [MH: Aune's going to push back here, because he doesn't buy this, and neither do I, so I'm going to let you have it here with him] it can be countered that Josephus, writing at the end of the first century A.D., reckoned with the existence of twelve tribes in his day...

So Josephus would've agreed, "Well, yeah, we do have people here who know what tribe they're from, here in the 1st century." And Josephus talked about:

... the widespread Jewish eschatological hope of the regathering of the twelve tribes of Israel [MH: which] was certainly based on the assumption of their actual existence in the world...

Why else would you hope for it? If there were no tribes at all—nobody knew what... "What are you talking about tribes for?" Then it wouldn't have been a big item of discussion in terms of the apocalyptic literature—the religious literature—but it was. Secondly:

... (b) The distinction between Jewish Christianity and gentile Christianity, common in the early decades of the apostolic age, was no longer current at the end of the first century.

Meh, again, I doubt that too, and so does Aune.

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Against this position it may be argued that the debate between Christianity and Judaism continued well into the second century, as evident in *Barnabas* and the *Dialogue* of Justin [MH: Justin Martyr]. (c) So many ways of describing the real Israel have been applied to the Church in Revelation that it would be perverse to treat Rev 7:4–8 as an exception to the rule (Caird, 95). To this it may be replied that, while certain OT language used of Israel is applied to Christians, e.g., that Christians [MH: just generally—the Church, believers, generally are called] are a “kingdom” and [MH: a kingdom of] “priests” (an allusion to Exod 19:6 found in Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6...

Sure, that happens. But Aune says:

... the use of other traditional language in Revelation suggests that the Church is constituted of both Jews and Gentiles; e.g., the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem bear the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel, while the twelve foundations of the city bear the names of the twelve apostles.

So in other words, he’s saying, “Look, they’re on the same side, but there are passages that distinguish them, too. So don’t just jam all of them together.” So these are the two sides. Aune is on the side that these 144,000 are either ethnic Jews or Jewish Christians. And my position is that they’re Jewish Christians. This would seem coherent in light of the transition at Rev 7:9. So Aune is going to argue for this, and again, I’m in agreement with him. He says:

There are striking differences between the two groups described in Rev 7:4–8 [MH: the 144,000] and 7:9–17 [MH: the rest of the chapter] that must be borne in mind: (i) There is a clear contrast between the specific enumeration of the 144,000 (7:4–8) and the vast size of the great multitude, which “no one was able to number” (7:9)

Well, it can’t be the same, because they just numbered them back in verses 4-8. So how does it make any sense to say that the massive group in verses 9-17 is the same as the 144,000? Well, it doesn’t.

[T]he latter is obviously a much larger group than the former and therefore very probably a different group. (ii) The 144,000 are composed of 12,000 drawn from each of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel, while the members of the great multitude in explicit contrast, according to 7:9, are drawn from “every nation and tribe and people and language group.”

It’s very obvious.

(iii) The 144,000 are apparently located on earth while the innumerable multitude is in heaven before the throne of God (7:11).

Again, that's pretty obvious, too.

(iv) In 7:4–8, the 144,000 are in a situation of imminent peril that requires protective sealing (see Rev 9:4), while the innumerable multitude in 7:9–17 has passed victoriously through the great tribulation and has received a heavenly reward.

Obviously, they weren't sealed, okay [laughs], because they're dead. [laughs] They've suffered, okay? So for my money, it makes more sense to have the 144,000 as Jews who are also Christians. They're loyal to the Lamb. They are Christians, but the Old Testament orientation suggests that they should not be thought of as Gentiles. Gentiles are not included in this group. Again, they're not "spiritual Israelites." They're Jews who follow the Lamb. Everything about Revelation 7:1-8 is Jewish and Old Testament in context. What does John repurpose? The census stuff, the tribes, and Ezekiel 9. I mean, everything is pointing this direction. So again, in Part 2, we're going to also throw in Levitical elements here as well, when we get to the whole issue of how this possibly connects to the Watcher story.

So I think Revelation 14 also is consistent with this. This is the other passage with the 144,000. I don't see a contrast between that 144,000 and this 144,000. Again, some scholars argue the two groups are different, asserting that the 144,000 in Revelation 14 cannot be Jews, which makes zero sense in my mind. The only possible basis for such a conclusion is that the 144,000 in Revelation 14 are not listed by tribes. Oh, okay, well, why would John need to do that twice? He's already done it once in Revelation 7. Why does he have to do it again? Again, this is John. He's not that neat. We've seen this countless times already. The same guy that assumes that you're going to be able to pluck out the four or five phrases from four or five different books of the Old Testament and know what he's doing with it and why... He probably expects you to remember something seven chapters ago, in the same document that he's writing. So to me this is really a lame trajectory, to try to distinguish one group from the other.

The other thing says, "Well, the ones in chapter 14 follow the Lamb." Well, so do these. I mean, lots of ethnic Jews followed the Lamb—followed Christ. That doesn't mean they aren't Jews. They don't lose their ethnicity. Again, this whole objection seems to confuse a spiritual label ("Christian"—follower of the Lamb) with an ethnic one ("Jew"). None of this requires the notion that John intends to

45:00 keep Jewish believers and Gentile believers separate. Because elsewhere he's going to put everybody together in one people of God and so on and so forth.

So my advice here (my little End Times system jab of the day) is pretty simple: Look, don't take the 144,000 and use their Jewish ethnicity to argue for a particular End Times system that keeps the Jew (the Jewish believer) absolutely separate from the Gentile or the circumcision-neutral thing we call the Church. Because John is going to join them elsewhere. And vice versa. Don't (for another End Times system) take the merging passages and argue against the separation passages. This is typically what's done with End Times systems. People pick the trajectory on which their system works best, and then they look back at the places where it doesn't work and they call them "problem passages." Okay, let's just not do that.

So Beale gets into this a little bit. I'm not going to read everything that Beale has because... Well, maybe I should. Because he wants everything to be the Church. [laughs] He's Reformed and he wants everything to be the Church. So I'll just read you what he has here. He says:

Some commentators understand the number 144,000 as literal and conclude that those who are sealed are a remnant of ethnic Israelites.

Why does it have to be that way, Dr. Beale? Why can't it be a group of Jewish Christians? But anyway, to be fair to him, this is how it is articulated, so that is fair. So a number of them conclude that it must be "a remnant of ethnic Israelites." This is a typical dispensational approach, for instance, which Beale is not. He says:

This is based on the presupposition that John's language is to be understood literally except where he states explicitly otherwise. It is also usually based on a futurist understanding of the book's structure [MH: that's dispensationalism] according to which [MH: Revelation] 4:1–22:5 refers only to a future tribulation immediately preceding Christ's second coming. Accordingly, 7:4–8 is said to allude to a group of ethnic Israelites who come to believe in Christ during this tribulation period...

So in other words, they're not even believers when they're sealed. They come to believe, in a dispensational system. Or at least some of them anyway. And then they'll get:

... protected from martyrdom during it.

It's just unwise to take the separation aspects, argue one End Times system, and then ignore the places where they're merged. You know, I'm sorry, but Old Testament imagery like the kingdom of priests, Old Testament passages about ethnic Israel are applied to all believers in the book of Revelation (in the letters to the churches), where very clearly they're not just Jews there. Okay? That does happen in the book. So let's not just skip those to create our system and then call them "problem passages" or just ignore them. That's cheating. Don't do that. This is why I say, again, we'll add this to the very long list of how *all* systems of eschatology cheat somewhere. They just do. That's just the way it is.

So I'm going to skip a little bit here to what Beale says elsewhere. Again, Beale wants everything to be the Church here. It should be obvious from this that the separation of Jews and Gentiles as believers must be married to assumptions about Revelation describing a future tribulation period. So Beale notes:

Some commentators link [MH: Revelation] 7:3–8 to the prophecy in Rom. 11:24–26 that all ethnic [MH: again, this is an assumption that he's shooting at, all ethnic] Israel will be saved at Christ's second coming. Most holding this view attach figurative significance to the number 144,000.

So isn't this wonderful? I mean, I'm glad I included this, because do you realize what I just read there? Beale is... And again, I grew up in this tradition, and this actually does... You will actually read this. You actually encounter this. That there are going to be those who say, "Look, Revelation 7 is only Jews. Only Jews. And they're going to come to know the Lord during the tribulation, because the tribulation is against the Jews. Because the Church has been raptured. Okay? And this is a fulfillment of Romans 11:24-26, that all Israel would be saved." So on the one hand, they're looking at it literally, that the 144,000 are literally ethnic Jews, but then when they go to Romans 11, they can't be literal there. Because it says "all Israel." And here in Revelation 7 you have 144,000. "So we don't like the subset because Romans 11 says 'all Israel,' so the *number* of the passage we're taking literally must be figurative. Tadaaaa!" [laughs] So basically you get to argue your position from the same passage where part of it is literal and the other part is figurative. Just pardon my spasm. This is why I dislike eschatology so much. Because I don't like cheating with outliers. I don't like cheating with method. That's what this is.

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And it's not just that particular End Times system. You get it on the other side, too, with assumptions about the Church being *the* Israel as opposed to *a* new Israel. And the terminology matters. I mean, we've had podcast episodes on this before. The text does both, folks. It does both things because the one people of God is composed of two units (we'll call them). You have ethnic Jews who follow Jesus and you have Gentiles who follow Jesus. They are two different things, but

collectively they are one. So let's just own that. And when they become one, their ethnicity isn't erased. The fact that the two become one doesn't mean that God has no... "There isn't a single element eschatologically speaking of any of God's plans for national Israel." Again, how do we know that? There are certain passages that seem to suggest it. You know, how about Armageddon? It's a battle for Jerusalem. I would suggest that Jerusalem is in Israel. There are just things like this that seem ethnic Israel focused. There's a lot that isn't, because of the "one new man" idea, the one people of God. But there are still these outliers. And we need to let the outliers be outliers. We need to affirm *both* rather than find some way to make them disappear and be grafted in. (You see what I did there with Romans?) They're grafted into our theological system. Again, tactically, it's just not (another Jewish-ism)... It's not kosher. [laughs] It just isn't.

Anyway... But this is what you get with the 144,000 discussion. So let's go down a little bit here. Beale wants to have everything be the Church. He says:

If Gentile believers are clearly identified together with "the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel" as part of the new Jerusalem [MH: in Revelation] (21:12, 14, 24; 22:2-5), then it is not odd that John should refer to them together with Jewish Christians in 7:4 as "the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel."

Well, okay. That's coherent, and you could see how he gets there, but it's not conclusive. Why can't we allow John to do both? Why does it have to be one or the other? There is one family of God, and it's a point of factuality that, in the early Church and New Testament theology, that one family derived from Jewish believers and Gentiles. There's no cosmic law that says that John can't talk about the one family in both ways. For example, Acts does it all the time, as do the epistles. There are Jewish believers and Gentile believers. They're still one Church. When Paul talks about Jews who follow Jesus and then he talks about his Gentile friends, did he just say that he doesn't believe that the Church is one? No, of course not! It's ridiculous. Why can't John be talking both ways about the same single entity as well? The honest answer is, there's no rule against it. The only thing against it is the effort to prop up a system. That's what's against it. Why not apply the "already, but not yet"? Why not? If the Lamb in the book of Revelation is risen and ruling in some way, but not enthroned until Revelation 21 (we've seen this in a prior episode), why is it not reasonable to think John delays the full picture of Gentiles being identified with the twelve tribes until Revelation 21 as well? Can't John do that? Can't it be "already, but not yet"? Again, my view is, "Yeah, it can." So I don't find Beale's arguments persuasive here either. The second question (we've got to keep moving here):

2. Are the 144,000 specially protected?

Again, no surprise, you get more than one view of this, too. So some samples are in order. Beale writes this:

Why God “seals” his servants is debated. The main alternatives are: (1) for protection from physical harm, (2) for protection from demons, and (3) for protection from losing their faith and hence their salvation.

Okay, so basically Beale is saying, “I’ve encountered all three of these reasons here.” We’ll bring Moyise back into the discussion. He writes this of the same question about the special protection:

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[As to the sealing of the 144,000], it does not appear to be protection against physical attacks [MH: so he’s out of the gate denying that it’s protection against anything physical], given that they have already had to endure the effects of the first six seals [MH: which is kind of an assumption]. Neither is it likely to be [protection against] death, since Revelation consistently portrays martyrdom as the way to victory. Charles [MH: R.H. Charles, who was the big New Testament and Enoch scholar of a century ago] thinks it is protection against the Satanic forces about to be unleashed [MH: then he cites Revelation 9, the abyss passage], though one might have expected it to come directly before this (instead of before the trumpets).

So Moyise is saying, “Eh, the difference of opinion here.” Aune (let’s loop him in) sees things in a different way. He acknowledges the other perspective. He says:

The seal of God explicitly provides special protection for the wrath of God that is coming upon the world (9:4); there is no explicit indication that the sealed are not protected from the wrath of the ungodly (even though this is the claim of many commentators). In many early Christian texts, the eschatological tribulation was thought to be a present feature of Christian experience in the world, and no distinction was made between plagues and punishments sent by God upon humankind and the hostility and persecution inflicted on Christians by Jews...

So there’s your spectrum of opinion. Now Beale has a note about Ezekiel 9, and for my money, I think it’s pretty decisive here, though with one qualification. Beale is the only one of these three who loops Ezekiel 9 into the “protection” question, oddly enough. He writes:

Ezekiel 9 is often correctly proposed as the best background for the divine sealing [MH: I would agree]. There God commands an angel to put a mark on all genuine believers but instructs other angels to slay unfaithful Israelites. The mark on believers is to protect them from the coming wrath, which will be inflicted by the Babylonians and which unfaithful Israelites will suffer. Ezekiel 9, like Ezek. 14:12–23, apparently speaks of the physical protection of the righteous remnant within Israel, who have been purged from the unfaithful by the fire of judgment. This is confirmed by the same function of the mark of blood over the Hebrews' doors at Passover [MH: so he loops Passover in here] (Exod. 12:7, 13, 22–28), which may stand behind Ezekiel 9 [MH: itself—he's saying Passover might actually be behind Ezekiel 9] as well as behind Rev. 7:2–3 (as is evident from the fact that the seal protects believers from the harmful effects of the following trumpet and bowl plagues, which have been modeled on the Exodus plagues).

Let me just stop there. You see why I think this is decisive. You know, it's like he's looping Passover in here because the next chapter's going to do that. As the trumpet and bowl judgments get rolled out here in the book of Revelation, the 144,000 are going to be protected from them just as the faithful Israelites were at Passover. And it matters for this question, that those judgments (the trumpet and bowl plagues) are modeled after the plagues of the book of Exodus, leading up to the Passover—the death angel. So Beale is saying, “Look, you've got to consider all of this data.”

Spiritual protection of the Israelite faithful may also be included in these two OT texts... Whichever may be the case in Ezekiel or Exodus, uppermost in John's mind is certainly not physical security but protection of the believers' faith and salvation from the various sufferings and persecutions that are inflicted on them, whether by Satan or by his demonic and earthly agents...

Do you see what Beale just did there? He builds this physical argument about protection modeled after the association with the plagues, and then he turns away from it. And now he makes it spiritual protection. I just want you to be as frustrated as I am. [laughs] Okay? Because it's like, “Man! You're just right there. You've got Ezekiel 9. You've got the Passover. You've got the plagues and Goshen and all this stuff. Okay, it's not a perfect parallel, or even a perfect argument, but there's obviously a physical element at least in here.” And then he just turns around and goes the other direction. And ultimately Beale's going to argue that this is protection from spiritual forces. And he's a Calvinist, so he doesn't think that... He has a very low view of what he thinks is the concept of losing salvation here, so he's going to use this material against that. So it's just really unsatisfying that he does such a nice job of providing some Old Testament context for a physical element and then just doesn't go there. It's just odd. If protection here means protection from losing faith, then he *has* to see the 144,000 as the whole Church, which is his view from a few minutes ago. He

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doesn't want to see them only as Jewish believers. He wants to see it as the whole Church. And if you do that, then you're going to look at it this way, that we're protected from apostasy here—spiritual attacks and so on and so forth. But the very data that he uses could be used to go the other way. So I just... Again, it's a little unsatisfying as to what is done with this material.

To sum up here, I think the best way to look at the 144,000 is that these are ethnic Jews. I think John's description is deliberate. I think he's using the census, the tribes, Ezekiel 9, as a parallel to them. The biggest argument for me is Revelation 7:9. Because it's very clear that the group that is in verses 9 through the end of the chapter is different than the one in the first eight verses. The first eight verses very clear Old Testament (i.e., Israelite, Jewish) elements there to portray this group. And after that point, in verse 9 and onwards, you don't have any of that. Every tribe, every people, every language, every nation. And it can't be numbered. So how can it be what you see in the first eight verses? It doesn't make any sense to me. So if you have this distinction, to me that opens the door to not only Ezekiel 9 being about some sort of physical protection, but also I think Beale's observations about Passover are legit.

Now if you think about the Exodus plagues... Let's just... Not all of them totally exempted the Israelites. After all, the last one (death of the firstborn), they had to go into their house. They had to put the blood on the lintel, otherwise they would have died. So there's no necessary immunity there. You've got to do what the Lord tells you to do to avoid physical harm. You have to *take* that mark, on the house, door, doorposts and lintel. So there's that element. The plague of darkness. I mean, when we went through Exodus, I pointed out that in some of these it's very clear that Israel didn't suffer whatever the plague was, but in other cases that's not said, or it would be almost impossible to see how it could be, like the plague of darkness. It's dark, okay? There's no spotlight shining on Goshen. I mean, you never see that. So even with those qualifications, there's clearly at least an element of physical protection in the plague accounts that I do think... Because as we keep going through Revelation, what happens to people (and the 144,000 are not part of this group) is modeled after the plagues. And some of those, the believers did not suffer them. So I think you've got to just honor that rather than just saying, "Oh, it's all about losing your faith," or something like that. No. Why? Why marshal the argument and eliminate that possibility? For sure it's spiritual warfare. Again, that's going to be obvious. Any threat to have somebody surrender the faith or drift off into unbelief, of course that's a spiritual warfare issue. Of course. And you're going to get demonic forces that are described in the book of Revelation. Of course. But why is it that we sort of run from some of these other elements? I don't think it's very consistent.

I think the other reason why Beale does it is because he wants to move as far away as he can from (let's be honest) cartoonish interpretations of the book of Revelation. I get that. But that really isn't an excuse to deny the parallels that

you've just helped us see. Why would you do that? Give me a good reason. Here's this reason. I understand you don't want to go to fantasyland here. But on the other hand, the parallels are still there. So why must we cancel that out? Why can't we just hold that up and say, "Look, this could be an element right here"?

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Now again, if you're looking at the book of Revelation as something already fulfilled (or at least 99% fulfilled) in the 1st century (i.e., the temple destruction in 70 A.D.), you really can't do anything with the parallels to the Exodus plagues. Where would the evidence be that Jews who follow Jesus were protected when the Romans came into town and destroyed the temple? I mean, I don't know where you're going to argue that. So that sort of takes that away from you. But for anyone who's not in that position (a non-preterist view), and who wouldn't be sort of seeing any of this, or who's willing to see at least some of this as a boots-on-the-ground reality (maybe not Hal Lindsey or something like that), but if you're at least willing to see real-time stuff in what's in the content of the book of Revelation preceding the Second Coming and all that, it would seem to me that this still has to be on the table—this possibility at least. Let's just call it a possibility at least—that our examination of the Old Testament and its connections into Revelation renders this a possibility as far as how to look at things. So I think we need to leave it there and not try to argue it away or cancel it out. Because I think the text opens that door and leaves it open. I don't think there's any way to successfully exegetically cancel it out. So that's all I'm trying to say.

So next time (in Part 2) we're going to get into elements of Revelation 7 that get into the whole issue of how this might relate to the Book of the Watchers. If you've read *Reversing Hermon*, you're going to know some of the source material I'll take us back into there. The Dan and the antichrist thing we'll get into a little bit more. So that'll be what we cover in Part 2, and we should be able to wrap up Revelation 7 in that second part.

TS: Alright, Mike. We've got our homework, to read *Reversing Hermon*, again. [MH laughs] So that's...

MH: Rush right out there and buy it. [laughs]

TS: That's right. If you don't have it, you need to get to Amazon and buy *Reversing Hermon*, right now.

MH: Get it before Amazon pulls it, right? [laughs]

TS: Absolutely. And get it before the next episode. So there's your homework. Alright, looking forward to the next episode. I always love it when we get into the Watchers. Watchers are some of our favorite topics. I don't know why we like them so much. Maybe we shouldn't.

MH: What can I say? I mean, I understand. But it's still a little creepy. [laughs]

TS: Exactly. Alright, Mike, we'll be looking forward to Part 2 next week, and with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.