

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 373

Revelation 7, Part 2

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Episode Summary

This episode continues our discussion of Revelation 7 and the 144,000. The discussion includes Revelation 14, a second passage referencing the 144,000. This latter passage adds an interesting descriptive detail, one that leads some scholars to wonder if the 144,000 have some relationship to the Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch), a work that elaborates on the fall of the sons of God of Gen 6:1-4. This question leads our episode, but we also discuss the early church tradition about the omission of the tribe of Dan from the tribes from which the 144,000 derive. Is the omission an indication that the Antichrist comes from Dan? Lastly, we consider the reference in Rev 7:13-14 to the “great tribulation”; what is the Old Testament context for this phrase?

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 373: Revelation 7, Part 2. I’m the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he’s the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! What’s going on?

MH: Well, we have had a new development here in Florida. My wife, Drenna, has declared war on two ducks in our back yard. The ducks like to land in the pool and do what ducks do. They poop in the pool. [TS laughs] They walk around on the sidewalk and poop on the sidewalk. And they eat the... There’s nothing in the pool to eat, but they eat the seeds that drop from the birdfeeder near the pool.

TS: Ah.

MH: So it’s funny. Every morning for a week now, the first thing Drenna does is get out of bed, look out the window and, “Argh, the ducks are here again!” [laughter] And she’s gone. Got to go chase the ducks out.

TS: Well, what do you do? Shoo them away? Because if you shoo them away, usually they just look at you and say, [inaudible] “This is *my* pool.”

MH: Yeah, they do. You’ve got to sort of get after them. I mean, they won’t respond just to yelling, or even barking. The dogs will go out there and bark at

them. But if you get the skimmer after them, then they'll fly away. You know? So we've looked it up, and the thing that is recommended that boats (like yachts) do to keep birds off, to keep them from landing on the yachts and doing the same thing, is to get a rubber snake and put that by the pool or in the pool. So we're going to try that and see if that's a duck deterrent. I mean, we've got the owl there for the raccoons. We haven't had a raccoon show up for a couple of months now. So the owl works for the raccoons, but the ducks could care less. So they need another predator. [laughs]

TS: Yeah, snakes will do it. I remember my grandparents had a bunch of rubber snakes tied up around their carport, I guess to keep the birds off, too. That memory just popped in my brain right now when you said that. So that's good.

MH: And, of course, my kids think Drenna's the villain, "Aw, the ducks are so pretty! Let the ducks alone." It's like, "The ducks are pooping in the pool, okay? So let's get rid of the ducks. You know?" So I'm on Drenna's side, obviously. I don't want ducks pooping in the pool. But it is funny. I have to admit that.

TS: Did you name the ducks?

MH: No, we haven't named them yet. That's a good idea. If I bring that up tonight, maybe, I'm sure we'll get some candidates.

TS: Well, let us know where y'all land. Because...

MH: Yeah, no pun intended, right? [laughter] We'll see if the ducks are there a week from now. She's going to go out and get the rubber snake. And I've got to tell her, "Look, don't get a little one. Get something five or six feet long so that they don't miss it. And just leave it out there and see if it works."

TS: Don't y'all have a ton of wild pythons and whatnot roaming around in Florida?

MH: Yeah, I'm sure there are some. I mean, the kids have seen one or two on the trails. Because by the walking trails here there's water. I don't know if you even call them a creek. But they flow. There's a lot of ponds around here. So you'll see them every now and then. But they scatter. They're not really a threat unless you do something stupid like try to chase one down. But yeah, you'll see them every now and then.

TS: Yeah. We have a pool, too, and the only thing we get now and then are frogs and turtles. So I'll open the basket covers, and you'll just see baby turtles in there spinning. [MH laughs] And so we've tried to keep them. We actually made a little turtle habitat kind of outside in our back yard in attempts to raise them and grow them, but these little baby red-eared sliders (I think they're called) keep escaping. And they're not going back into the pool. I don't know where they're going. But they're disappearing on us. But we've had a couple of frogs. And trying to catch

a frog... Have you ever seen a frog swim underwater? It's kind of amazing how good underwater swimmers they are. But I'm trying to catch them with a net, and their little frog legs [MH laughs] are kind of freaky the way they swim. You know? And it's just... I don't know, something about trying to catch a frog as it's swimming full speed is kind of weird.

5:00

MH: Well, if this doesn't work, I don't know what we're going to do. I'll suggest graduating to a little gator. Maybe a little one- or two-foot gator. [laughs] I'm just kidding. Because they're going to poop in the pool, too. [laughs]

TS: A little pet gator. That's perfect. Maybe if you get a little statue, like a little gnome gator or something, maybe that'll keep the ducks out.

MH: [laughs] Yeah, we'll try the gnome. Okay.

TS: Yeah, there you go.

MH: Just the regular gnome. I don't know that that would work. But yep, so that's the latest. We have a duck problem.

TS: That's good stuff. I don't know how we switch gears into the End Times [MH laughs] with that, but Part 2 of chapter 7...

MH: We do not have 144,000 ducks. How's that? There we go.

TS: Have you ever seen those deals, "What would you rather fight, 144 ducks or..."? How does that go? Would you rather fight one human-sized duck or would you rather fight 144 little ducks? What would you rather fight?

MH: Yeah, I'll take the human-sized duck. Because you've only got to use one bullet on it. [laughs]

TS: Oh, well, okay. [MH laughs] I didn't say weapons were allowed, but okay, I see what you did there. If you had to go hand-to-hand...

MH: [laughs] Hand-to-wing. Okay. That's still my choice.

TS: Okay, okay, good.

MH: The other one's too labor-intensive. There's too much work there.

TS: Well, Mike, I'm going to leave it up to you to transition here. Because it's all you.

MH: [laughs] Right. Well, okay, we'll just do it the simple way. We are back in Revelation 7. This is Part 2. And we are talking about the 144,000. This time...

We sort of just went through the passage last time and talked about different features of it—the number and whatnot, and just different lines and things that pop up as you read through. Especially the tribal arrangement, the Old Testament connections back to this sort of thing, the census thing and the tribes and whatnot—whether they're protected or not. We sort of telegraphed that when we get to the point about the plagues being unleashed, that there's an allusion here in this chapter to that, and then that, of course, factors into the issue with the plagues of Egypt, and were the Israelites protected, and if they were, are the 144,000 protected.

So we did some of that in Part 1. And we reserved Part 2 for different topical approaches to this. And what we talked about last time was that I alluded to the fact that when we get to Part 2, we're going to talk about a possible connection with the Book of the Watchers (that's the first 36 chapters of the book of Enoch) and also the "Antichrist from Dan" tradition. And by the end of going through those two things, we actually will also pick up a little bit of, related to how this chapter is used (or maybe shouldn't be used or something like that) in regard to certain points of End Times schemes or scenarios that people will be familiar with today.

So I want to get into the Book of the Watchers connection first. We're just going to take that and then the Antichrist from Dan idea and then sort of mop up chapter 7 in this episode. And if you've read *Reversing Hermon* (my book), there's going to be some of this content in that book. But we're going to say a few more things about this issue—this possible connection—to give you a little more detail here than I do in the book. And we'll do the same thing with the Antichrist from Dan tradition. And when I get to the Antichrist from Dan tradition, I'm going to have to be a little bit careful because believe it or not, this is a trajectory in my third novel. So I've got to be a little cagey with that. But we'll step around that when we get to it here. So the Book of the Watchers connection... Revelation 7:1-8, of course, is the 144,000. And then there's another passage in which the 144,000 are mentioned. And this is the passage where some scholars argue for a possible connection back to the Book of the Watchers idea. Or at least more broadly, the events of Genesis 6. Okay?

So in Revelation 14:1-5 (that's the second passage) we read this. I'm going to read the first five verses. This is ESV.

Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. ² And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, ³ and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one

could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. ⁴It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, ⁵and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.

So that's Revelation 14:1-5. You see already in the very first verse there, "on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name [the Lamb's name] and his Father's name written on their foreheads." So there we have the "bearing the Name" concept, which should be familiar to this audience through Carmen Imes' work. And we've had her on the podcast and we've talked about this before, how this relates to imaging God—these two concepts go together. Carmen's focus, of course, is Old Testament material, but she drifts into the New Testament as well, in her book, *Bearing the Name*. And this is representation. And one of the specific Old Testament contexts is the high priests.

So right away, for a Jew listening to this, they're going to associate this language with, broadly, Israelites bearing the name of Yahweh, and specifically the high priest who literally bore the name on his forehead. And that priestly context is going to be part of the approach when it comes to this whole thing—their connection to the Book of the Watchers. The key verse, though, is going to be verse 4,

⁴ It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins.

Now let's just back up a little bit and think about the 144,000 as they are cast in this passage. They're in the heavenly Zion, God's throne room. This is a Divine Council scene. In verse 3, we have another reference to the throne and the cherubim. We go back to Revelation 7. That follows on the heels of Revelation 4 and 5 pretty closely. And there are hooks back into Revelation 4 and 5, the Divine Council scene. So we're in the heavenly Zion, God's throne room. We've got the cherubim here and the throne. It's the spiritual realm. This is one reason why the 144,000 of chapter 7 are viewed as a different group. Remember we talked about this in Part 1. But why cannot John have an earthly 144,000 who are then in the vision (remember, this is a vision) also before the throne of God? Perhaps this is some sort of commissioning scene. And we talked about in Revelation 4-5, is this the Lamb's commissioning scene? Is it some other kind of way to look at this enthronement? We went through all these different categories. And in the course of doing that and in the course of the 144,000 in Part 1, there was this division about whether Revelation 7 and Revelation 14 are two different groups. The majority of scholarship doesn't hold them as two different groups. Because this is a vision. There's no reason—there's no necessary reason—why the 144,000 earthly can't also be present in heaven, and so on and so forth,

because this is a visionary context. We've seen these guys before. Is this some sort of flashback to their commissioning? Who knows? There's any number of ways to argue that they don't have to be distinguished.

We're going to set that aside and focus on verses 4 and 5 here. Because we've already sort of covered this other topic. Verses 4–5 mark them as virgins—specifically, *male* virgins who “have not defiled themselves with women.” And then thirdly, they're playing on their harps. They're singing a new song before the throne. So this is a heavenly scene, and then we've got this sort of weird line that feels like a throwaway line. What does the fact that they haven't defiled themselves with women have to do with a Divine Council (a throne room) scene—a heavenly scene in the divine abode—and worship. What does that have to do with anything? It just seems like it sticks out like a sore thumb.

Now that's one of the obvious questions. There are others that go along with this. Because again, the passage starts out with this “bearing the Name” concept, which a Jew would associate with Israelites bearing the Name. And let's not forget, Israelites were supposed to be “a kingdom of priests.” Then we've got the high priest, who literally bears the Name on his forehead. So here's a question we could bring to it. Are the 144,000 here portrayed as a heavenly priesthood? And we've actually talked about *this* before in relationship to the elders. In that whole discussion of Revelation 4-5 we talked a little bit about how certain sects of Judaism had this notion that they were on earth the mirror image or the symbiotic group that corresponded to the heavenly—the angelic—priesthood. This is known from Qumran, the Shabbat Shirot, and so on and so forth. So this is a legitimate question. Are they portrayed as a heavenly priesthood? And again, one of the reasons you'd ask this question is the “bearing the Name” concept. And also this male virgin thing. Okay?

15:00

So let's just proceed a little bit. We asked why this specific note? Because you know Israelite priests could be married. There wasn't a rule against that. You go back into the Old Testament and you can see that very plainly. Now last week we talked about how a few scholars (Aune and Bauckham) suggested that the sexual abstinence here was part of a military motif, practicing sexual abstinence before going to war. And you'll find that in the Hebrew Bible. But if you think about that analogy, the warriors there weren't virgins. They might have abstained before going to battle, but they're not virgins. They're just not. So that doesn't seem to really work well. And you could still argue a military context (at least part of the context) on the basis of tribal arrangement, census, demonic opposition. I mean, you don't need this sexual abstinence motif to have the military flavoring of Revelation 7 (the 144,000) be there. You have these other things that you can build the same argument out of. The abstinence idea is pretty weak, actually. And again, the virgin idea specifically for some scholars takes them in quite a different direction.

Now there are two scholarly studies on this passage that have argued that this description presents the 144,000 as priestly figures (they're in the presence of

God; they're occupying sacred space; they're worshipping at the throne; they bear the Name) who are intended as an oppositional reverse analogy to the sexual defilement of God's other holy ones who at one point occupied sacred space in heaven, but who did defile themselves by sexual engagement with women. And that would be the fallen sons of God of Genesis 6:1-4 (or the Watchers as they are known in Second Temple Jewish literature. Now those two articles are: D. C. Olson, "Those Who Have Not Defiled Themselves with Women": Revelation 14:4 and the Book of Enoch." That's from *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Volume 59:3 (1997), pages 492-510. And then the second one is from Terel Manikam and Jan A. Du Rand. It actually has this priestly idea in the title, which is "'The 144,000 Undeclared Levites' of Revelation 14:1-5 and the link to the defiled watchers of 1 Enoch 1-36." That's a long title. And the journal is pretty obscure. In fact, in my library of 7-8,000 journal articles that pertain to this sort of stuff, this might be the only article from this source. The journal is *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 94.1 (2012), pages 123-136. Now I've put both of these in the protected folder for anybody who's interested in them. In *Reversing Hermon*, I really focus on Manikam and Du Rand's article. They reference Olson, because Olson's was written in 1997. Theirs is 2012. So they interact with it. So I don't really bother (in the book, anyway) getting into the first one. But we're going to say a few things here, draw a little bit more from Olson so that you get the flavor for what he's arguing. But I'm still going to use Manikam and Du Rand to do that. You can access both of these articles in the protected folder if you want to.

So they (Manikam and Du Rand) take note of Olson's work (obviously, as I just noted) and write this. This is one point where they sort of summarize some things.

[Olson] argues that the redeemed 144,000 "virgins" (Rev. 14:4a) stand in radical opposition to the defiled fallen angels mentioned in 1 Enoch 1-36, who were engaged in sexual practices with the daughters of men (cf. Gen. 6:1-4). According to Olson (1997:500), the 144,000 virgins of Revelation 14 are an anti-image to, not only of the followers of the beast mentioned in the preceding chapter and Rev. 14:6-20 [MH: again, and of course we get the beast in] (cf. Rev. 17-18), but to the fallen angels of 1 Enoch 1-36. He also argues that by contrasting the Redeemed with the Watchers, John is actually giving the 144,000 the role of good angels (1997:501ff.).

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Again, that's very interesting, especially since we've already talked a little bit about angelic priesthood, both in some earlier episodes... If you've read *Unseen Realm* you should be familiar with this idea. We did an episode on Hebrews 12 (the cloud of witnesses). We've been on this topic before, this notion of angelic priesthood, or believers joining the Council, and so on and so forth. So this is actually part of that mix. This is one of the angles that Olson pursues. Now Manikam and Du Rand try to develop Olson's observation by more observations

of the Watchers tradition. And they expand the idea to argue that the 144,000 represent the entire people of God in the manner of the Old Testament idea of substitution. What they mean by that is that... The whole firstborn thing. The Levites take the place of a firstborn offering of everything else. This is Numbers 3:40-41. God is owed the firstborn, and the tribe of Levi has this function in the Old Testament. So he's drawing on that as well. And this is actually alluded to in Revelation 14. "These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God in the land." So this notion of substitution a la the firstborn is actually mentioned in the passage. So Manikam and Du Rand are going to pursue that idea and a few other things from the Book of the Watchers to sort of build out Olson's argument.

Now for our purposes, really only the Watchers tradition is of interest. And we have to limit this somehow for this episode so we can get through Revelation 7. The other aspect (the firstborn), we're not going to do so much with that. But I think this is a meaningful trajectory. I don't think his ideas should be dismissed. I think this is part of it. But in general, how do Manikam and Du Rand (with Olson, because they're on the same side, too) make these points—the idea that the 144,000 are a mirror opposition to the fallen Watchers? So I'm going to just walk you through their arguments here.

1. So what they do first is they go through some passages where Levites and angels do similar things (just general ministries). They look at different vocabulary for what angels do and then for what Levites do, and note, "Hey, the same Hebrew lemma is used here." That sort of thing. So they write this:

The Levites were to a certain degree, God's holy ministering servants on earth; as compared to angels being God's heavenly servants...

Let me just stop there. If you're already thinking of this notion of how believers are going to be grafted into the Council and essentially replace what has been lost through rebellion in heaven, this is all part of that matrix of ideas. So what they're suggesting here should be familiar to people in this audience who are familiar with the content of *Unseen Realm* or have been listening to the podcast for a while. So this is their beginning point, this simple observation:

The Levites were to a certain degree, God's holy ministering servants on earth; as compared to angels being God's heavenly servants...

Okay, this is also the concept of imaging, why there are plurals in Genesis 1. Again, this is all *Unseen Realm* content, how the plurality language in that passage somehow links God with humans with the heavenly host to whom God is speaking. And again, it's not the Trinity. I'm not going to rehearse all that material here. But it basically sets up this relationship between us (we are God's imagers here in the earthly sphere he has created for human habitation) and they are God's imagers in the spiritual world. Again, simple

idea. Very straightforward. So they reference here Hebrews 1:14, Numbers 3:5-9, 8:11, and Deuteronomy 18:5. And they give a number of examples, but here's one:

For example, both the angels and Levites were engaged in the worship of God [MH: that's a pretty easy, straightforward example] (Heb. 1:6; Rev. 4:5; Deut 18:5).

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Now they move away from this pretty quickly. So as an editorial note here, just on my own, I actually think this part of their argument is weak and could be a lot stronger. And I think it needs to be, because it's fairly central to where they're going to go. So I would suggest that they need to strengthen this by working through the Second Temple material related to the idea of humans as the angelic priesthood. Again, Qumran is the example, that the Qumran community clearly saw themselves this way. And in the absence of a literal temple, they mimed temple service out there in the desert, there effectively casting themselves as the "real Levites" ("We're the *real* priests here") that kept heaven and earth in sync. Again, all you've got to do is read anything on Qumran calendar, the whole disagreement over that issue, why they separate from the Jerusalem priesthood. There's a lot more they could do with this, but they don't. So it's kind of disappointing, but still a legitimate point.

Now if you want a quick article on that (I've referenced this before in early episodes), Devorah Dimant, "Men as Angels: The Self-Image of the Qumran Community," and that's from the book *Religion and Politics in the Ancient Near East*, Studies in Jewish History and Culture. It's a 1996 book. She has a chapter in that. It's quite good.

2. Here's the second trajectory they follow. (So the first thing they say is, "Hey, there's this service relationship.") Second, the Watchers forsook their heavenly standing by defiling themselves with earthly women. In other words, they transgressed both the boundary between them and humanity *and* in so doing, they despised the identity given to them by God. Thus, they no longer represent the holy ones of heaven. The opposite of this (in this argument) is the virginity (that they "have not defiled themselves with women") of the 144,000 and their election to represent believers. (Or, if one prefers, Jewish believers. That whole argument goes back to Part 1.)

3. The Levitical instructions about who priests should marry (Leviticus 21) contains language similar to that of Revelation 14 in regard to the 144,000. So yes, priests could marry. They're not virgins. But nevertheless, we get instructions about who priests should marry and who they shouldn't. This is Leviticus 21:14-15:

¹⁴ A widow, or a divorced woman, or a woman who has been defiled, or a prostitute, these [the priest] shall not marry. But he shall take as his wife a

virgin of his own people, ¹⁵ that he may not profane his offspring among his people...

That's one of the Levitical rules for who priests should marry. So they're correct here. Some of this language is picked up on, or at least there's an echo, here in Revelation 14.

Now this description (this "not defiled themselves with women"), it is argued by Manikam and Du Rand and Olson, is how 1 Enoch views what the Watchers did. And here's what they think is a direct connection. So I'm going to read 1 Enoch 15:1-9. This is how the writer of 1 Enoch views what the Watchers did. And you're going to see that there are thematically... And in terms of, if we compared the lemmas here with the Septuagint of Leviticus and Revelation, you're going to get some hits. You're going to get some matches here. But just conceptually, here's how the writer of 1 Enoch viewed the offense. 1 Enoch 15:1.

^{15.1} And He answered and said to me, and I heard His voice: 'Fear not, Enoch, thou righteous man and scribe of righteousness: approach hither and hear my voice. ² And go, say to the Watchers of heaven, who have sent thee to intercede for them [MH: remember the Watchers try to get Enoch to be a negotiator with God, "Let us get out of the chains and the abyss"]: "You should intercede for men, and not men for you: ³ Wherefore have ye left the high, holy, and eternal heaven, and lain with women, and defiled yourselves with the daughters of men and taken to yourselves wives, and done like the children of earth, and begotten giants (as your) sons. ⁴ And though ye were holy, spiritual, living the eternal life, you have defiled yourselves with the blood of women, and have begotten (children) with the blood of flesh, and, as the children of men, have lusted after flesh and blood as those also do who die and perish [MH: in other words, "You're behaving like mortals"]. ⁵ Therefore have I given them wives also that they might impregnate them, and beget children by them, that thus nothing might be wanting to them on earth.

God says, "This is why I let humans do this, because they need to perpetuate the species." Alright?

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⁶ But you were formerly spiritual, living the eternal life, and immortal for all generations of the world. ⁷ And therefore I have not appointed wives for you; for as for the spiritual ones of the heaven, in heaven is their dwelling. ⁸ And now, the giants, who are produced from the spirits and flesh, shall be called evil spirits upon the earth, and on the earth shall be their dwelling. ⁹ Evil spirits have proceeded from their bodies; because they are born from men, and from the holy Watchers is their beginning and primal origin; they shall be evil spirits on earth, and evil spirits shall they be called.

It's a very clear origin of evil spirits (demons) from this event. This is one of the more explicit passages. So consequently, the argument is when you hit Revelation 14:4 and you read, "It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins," that that language is meant to be a mirror opposite of what the Watchers did. So the 144,000 are the other side of the Watchers coin.

4. The fourth trajectory that is used here: Since the 144,000 are seen in Revelation 14 in the heavenly temple, and they are opposite the Watchers in terms of purity and faithfulness, they also symbolically *replace* the Watchers. Hence Manikam and Du Rand's summary of Olson: "John is actually giving the 144,000 the role of good angels." This, of course, also dovetails with the broader idea that believers replace the fallen Council members, which is wider than Genesis 6, but obviously this would play a big part of that.

Now as I noted in the book *Reversing Hermon*,

The theological point is that the 144,000 holy ones who fight the Beast (the Antichrist) are counterpoints to the holy ones who rebelled and defiled themselves with human women. John telegraphs that these holy ones will help their earthly compatriots defeat the Beast and rectify the impurity brought to earth by the Watchers.

Again, I think there is something to this approach, but I'd like to see more thorough research done in defense of it. In other words, I like the content of Olson and Manikam and Du Rand's articles, but there are parts of the argument that need development and I think could get further development. So this is sort of a dissertation topic, really. I'd like to see more thorough research into Revelation 7 and 14 with the Septuagint vocabulary, for instance about the priests—aligning that plus or minus with the Greek Enoch vocabulary. And then I'd like to see a thorough investigation of angelic priesthood texts. There are just things that they could do, I think, to add support—to bolster this argument, this trajectory. But right now, where I sit, looking at the work that exists on this point, I think there's something to it. I do think there's something to it. Let's put it this way: this has pretty good explanatory power. It's better than, "Oh, this is like warriors in Israel who didn't have sex before going out to battle." That's actually quite weak. This is better. That doesn't mean it's the *right* answer. But it's just better. It has more explanatory power. And I'd like to just see more done with it.

Let's go on to the second main topic for our episode, the antichrist and Dan. And again, this is quite debatable. I'm going to read you some parts from *Reversing Hermon* so we get into the subject. I take a less positive view of this in that book. And again, I have to be cagey here, because I'm actually going to use this idea

and its association with some other things in the third novel. But anyway, from *Reversing Hermon* I wrote this:

Dan had a checkered history. The tribe forsook its allotted inheritance in the south of Canaan and migrated north, appropriating the priest of Micah the Levite, who kept household gods and an idol in his house (Joshua 19:40–48; Judges 18). The Danites eventually conquered the city of Laish and renamed it Dan (Judges 18:27, 29). This city became a cult center to Baal in later Israelite history. Earlier in Israel’s history, instead of receiving a blessing from the dying Jacob like his brothers, the patriarch pronounced, “Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that his rider falls backward” (Genesis 49:17).

“Thanks for the blessing, Dad!” [laughs] That’s not really a blessing. To continue with what I wrote:

Deuteronomy 33:22 contains the cryptic note that “Dan is a lion’s cub that leaps from Bashan.”

And there’s Bashan again, the creepy place. Now...

These failures and passages associate Dan with rebellion against God, the region of Bashan, whose name in Canaanite would have been *bathan* (“serpent”), and Baal worship at a location at the foot of Mount Hermon.

So there’s a lot going on there.

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It is no wonder that some early church writers believed that the reason Dan was omitted from Revelation 7 was because the Antichrist—the enemy of the 144,000—would come from the tribe of Dan.

That’s a belief you’ll find in early Church writings. And then I quote C. E. Hill, who has a journal article that’s a study of this idea—this tradition. He writes this:

Our first explicit mention of a Jewish Antichrist comes in the writings of Irenaeus, where it occurs already in tandem with the opinion that he will also spring from the tribe of Dan (*AH* [MH: this is his *Against Heresies*] 5.30.2)... Somewhat surprisingly, Irenaeus brings forth but two scriptural passages in support of Antichrist’s Danite origin. The first is Jer[emiah] 8:16 (LXX) “We shall hear the voice of his swift horses from Dan; the whole earth shall be moved by the voice of the neighing of his galloping horses: he shall also come and devour the earth, and the fulness thereof, the city also, and they that dwell therein.” He [MH: Irenaeus] finds further support for this in the omission of Dan from the list of the twelve tribes of the sealed in Rev[elation] 7:5–7.... Antichrist from the tribe of Dan ...

makes his first known appearance in Irenaeus, but it is in Hippolytus that he finds his most scrupulous and eloquent biographer. Hippolytus' copious description proceeds on the principle that "the deceiver seeks to liken himself in all things to the Son of God." As Jesus was the lion from the tribe of Judah—referring to Jacob's blessing on Judah in Genesis 49:9—Antichrist will be the lion from the tribe of Dan—referring to Moses' blessing [MH: or his words, at least] on the tribe of Dan in Deut. 33:22.

So that's the end of the Hill quotation. Now the difficulty with these ideas is that the antichrist figure elsewhere is pretty clearly Gentile. Aha, isn't that interesting? And here, again, I have to be a little cagey. All I'm going to say... In *Reversing Hermon* I brought up this point. The antichrist elsewhere is a Gentile. And of course, evangelicals assume that "antichrist" means some sort of fake/counterfeit Jesus, and so opt for a Jew. But the antichrist idea of the New Testament generates from two Old Testament sources or ideas:

- 1) The messiah must surely have a final Day of the Lord enemy. In other words, that's not a counterfeit messiah, but an enemy, an oppositional figure—a supernaturally empowered warrior or a divine warrior that aligns himself against the divine warrior that is the messiah. And therefore, it would make sense for a Gentile to be opposed to a Jewish messiah. So that's one trajectory in the Old Testament.
- 2) The second is that Daniel 9 and 11 get repurposed in the New Testament. If Daniel is accurate in historical terms in these chapters, the eschatological enemy of the people of God in *that* material was Antiochus IV, who was a Gentile.

So this is what casts the antichrist firmly in New Testament scholarship as a Gentile. Now let's go back here. We've got all that. And we sort of operate with an assumption: the difficulty of these ideas is that the antichrist figure elsewhere is pretty clearly a Gentile. Okay, here's the question. And I'm not going to get into it here because this would be a whole episode (maybe two episodes). And again, it's a trajectory for my third novel. *What if Dan was not an Israelite tribe?* [gasp] That would make Dan Gentile, wouldn't it? There's a historical problem with Dan and the Danite migration in Joshua and the book of Judges. And it goes like this. This is very short form. And there are ways that you could acknowledge what I'm going to say here and still have Dan be an Israelite tribe. It would be and not be. In other words, one of the explanations for what I'm going to share with you here is that the original Jewish tribe of Dan in the South was either conquered or willingly assimilated. People known as the Denyen or the Danunai... There are three or four different spellings of this here. So the Denyen, the Danaoi, the Danu, Danunen... There are a bunch of different spellings. It's a sea people tribe—it's a Gentile tribe—from specifically the Aegean, and even more

specifically Mycenae. Now if you've read my second novel, Mycenae should just make the hair on the back of your neck stand up, okay?

40:00

So there's this whole issue of Dan. Why is Dan referenced later in the Prophets? "Why did Dan stay in the ships in a certain battle? Why didn't he fight against certain peoples in the Promised Land that were also sea peoples?" "Well, maybe it's because Dan was essentially a sea people tribe. Or maybe it's because Dan was a seafaring tribe. Because that's what the sea peoples..." You see all these things. This is again one of these little subset issues in Old Testament scholarship. It doesn't mean that there weren't twelve original tribes including an original Jewish Dan tribe. But what it *does* mean is that Dan has problems. Okay? [laughs] Dan could very well be conceived of as a group of sea peoples, predominantly, that usurp this tribe's position, migrate north, and do Gentile stuff, and basically become a problem historically, theologically, and religiously. And if that's the case, a Jew wouldn't have been startled if you would've suggested that the antichrist might come from Dan. And it works with Gentile typologies. That's a possibility. That's all I'm going to say here. Okay?

So the Danite problem—the Danite migration problem—is an issue that *might* work—might contribute—to a Dan antichrist typology. Now I don't discuss this in *Reversing Hermon*. That would've been like adding 100 pages to the book, and I just couldn't do that at that point. But you're going to see this again. And again, if you read my fiction, that's where I get to play with it a little bit. But I'm telling you here because we should not dismiss the Danite antichrist thing. And let's just say it more broadly: the great eschatological enemy thing. Okay? The opponent of the eschatological messiah and his people being a Gentile. Dan might be part of that picture. It might be part of that typology. We should not exclude that or dismiss it if we're committed to this great eschatological enemy being a Gentile. I think that's fairly obvious that he's not a Jew, but that doesn't exclude the Dan thing. Okay, enough said there.

So it's difficult to really say too much more about that. But that is the Dan antichrist trajectory. And one of the prongs of it (one of the things that propels it is probably a better way to say it) is the omission of Dan in the 144,000 list. Now you might recall from the last episode (Revelation 7, Part 1) that that's not the only omission. Who else is omitted? Usually... Think of the original twelve, Dan included, and Joseph. Those are the twelve sons of Israel. Usually when Joseph is not included in the tribal lists, what do you get? Well, you get his two boys—his two sons. The half tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Guess which other... Other than Joseph. He doesn't show up in a lot of tribal lists anyway. But his usual stand-ins (Ephraim and Manasseh) also... There's an issue there. Guess which one of those is not in Revelation 7's list? Ephraim. Why would that be significant? Well, because Ephraim was the capital of the apostate northern kingdom. And in Ephraim's territory (the whole of it), Bashan is included in Dan. Dan to Beersheba, Dan is in the North. Okay? So Ephraim isn't in the list either. [laughs]

So again, this is one of those things where there could be something to this, and we shouldn't dismiss it because of the Gentile part of the typology.

So to me it really hinges on whether there's a Danite problem and how the Danite problem worked, which is probably an unanswerable question: "What exactly happened here?" But if something happened to make the other tribes suspicious of Dan, and that something at least included something of a Gentile composition in their people—in the tribe... The tribe gets polluted (we'll just say) with Gentiles. If that's the case, then that's on the table. It's on the table when it comes to this other material.

45:00

So let's move on. There's a lot you could run around and do research on about the Danite problem. Like I said, it's complicated. Lots of facets to it. A number of different ways to address it. But that's a subject for one or two other episodes, and I don't know that we'll ever do that. But again, you will see it in novel #3. Let's just move on and mop up the chapter here.

The third main topic for our episode: Revelation 7:13-14. There's one other thing I want to get into here. And that is the phrase "great tribulation." So let's go to Revelation 7:13.

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.

Now I want to just say a few things about this phrase. Because as soon as you say "great tribulation," that phrase is going to be interpreted—it's going to be parsed—in certain ways by certain End Times systems. Now we already talked about the Old Testament context for the white robe imagery in the verses I just read. We're not going to go back and rehearse all that. But I want to focus on this phrase. That's all we're going to do the rest of the episode. It *does* have an Old Testament context, and it's not what many in the audience might presume. The usual idea is that "great tribulation" equals the 70th week of Daniel. But the concept of a seven year "tribulation" never appears in Daniel 9:24-27 (when you get the 70th week talk). The closest you come in that mix is Daniel 9:25. Let me just read this to you. Daniel 9:25.

²⁵ Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

So the “troubled time” is a possible reference... vocabulary associated with a tribulation period. But if you’ll notice, this stuff happens (it’ll be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time) somewhere during the first 69 weeks. It’s not the 70th week. The anointed one rises and you have this building going on in a troubled time, and then it’s only later that the anointed one gets cut off and so on and so forth. So it’s not a match. A lot of people think it is, but it’s not if you actually look closely at what it’s saying. So that’s one problem. The other problem is the vocabulary for “tribulation” never occurs with the terminology for “week” or “seven” in either the Old Testament or the New Testament. So the assumption that the great tribulation is the 70th week of Daniel (or the last “seven” of Daniel), there’s actually no textual support for that. Now that doesn’t mean that it can’t be. It means there’s no textual support for it. There is, though, a better Old Testament context for the “great tribulation” language. And that is Daniel 12:1. I’m going to read Revelation 7:13-14 again just so that you have that ringing in your head.

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.

So let’s take a look at the elements. We have Revelation 7:13-14. We just read that. It references a great tribulation. You’re also going to get this language in the New Testament in Matthew 24:21. Let me just read that for you. Again, this is an eschatological passage, part of the Olivet Discourse here.

²⁰ Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

So, like, this is the ultimate tribulation, okay? So you have this language in Revelation 7:13-14, Matthew 24:21. You have believers and martyrs on behalf of the Lamb who have gone *through* the great tribulation. That’s Revelation 7:14. “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.” They’ve gone *through* the great tribulation. They’re glorified (because they have white robes). Their faith in the Lamb has saved them despite the great tribulation. Now if the tribulation is at a close in Revelation 7 (and basically all eschatological views are going to say that), then we’re at the final Day of the Lord judgment, which includes the Great White Throne, the Book of Life, and all that sort of stuff. Because we get this glorification element and so on and so forth. Now the Old Testament context. Here’s Daniel 12:1. Just list to Daniel 12:1 in light of Revelation 7:13-14, and then Matthew 24:21. Here’s Daniel 12:1:

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“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.

Again, look at the elements. And their overlap with Revelation 7:13-14 and Matthew 24:21. You have an end of days tribulation. There’s no number assigned to it. Doesn’t say it’s seven years. It doesn’t say it’s anything. It’s tribulation. And it’s “great” because of the wording. This tribulation is “such as never has been since there was a nation till that time.” And because of that wording, scholars will link Daniel 12:1 to another Old Testament passage, Jeremiah 30:7. And I’ll read that.

**⁷ Alas! That day is so great
there is none like it;
it is a time of distress for Jacob [MH: i.e., Israel];
yet he shall be saved out of it.**

Now this is the passage where you get the phrase “time of Jacob’s trouble,” which certain End Times systems will marry to the seven-year Great Tribulation and consider that the 70th week of Daniel. Again, there’s certainly a connection there, but there’s no number in any of these passages, and there’s no association with the weeks of Daniel. Again, that’s a problem for specific systems. But you have an end-of-days tribulation, and it’s “great” because that’s the way it’s worded. “Never seen anything like this, and never will be again.” The second element is the righteous (the people of God) are delivered, whose names are found written in the book. I think this is obviously the Book of Life. To loop Aune in, he writes, “part of a series of events associated with the arrival of the eschaton in early Judaism and early Christianity” is in view here. I mean, this language in Revelation 7:13-14 gets picked up in Second Temple Jewish literature, okay? I say “picked up” because scholars think its source is Daniel 12 (and Jeremiah 30 and so on and so forth). For instance, you’ve got *Testament of Moses* 8:1, *Jubilees* 23:11-21, *4 Ezra* 13:16-19, *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 27:1-15. There are other Jewish texts in the Second Temple period that pick up on these passages and talk about them in kind of the same ways that you’re also going to see in Revelation 7:13-14. So even ancient people associated this language from Daniel 12:1 and Jeremiah 30:7 with the apocalypse. And of course, Revelation is an apocalypse, and so on and so forth. I mean, there’s a lot of agreement here in terms of the ancient literature. Where there’s disagreement is what modern End Times systems do with this and information that gets added along the way. Now Aune also writes this:

Since the Danielic phrase “time of distress” [MH: this time of trouble] was interpreted as the time of the battle against the Kittim [MH: that means

“Westerners”] in 1QM [MH: the War Scroll] 1:11–12; 15:1, Bauckham suggests that the phrase “those who emerged from the great tribulation” here [MH: in Revelation 7:13-14] means “those who emerge victorious from the eschatological war” (“War Scroll,” 226)... It appears that while “the great tribulation” belonged to a discrete series of events in Jewish eschatological expectation, early Christians regarded their frequent experience of persecution and opposition (see Rev 1:9; 2:9–10; Matt 10:16–23; Acts 8:1) as part of this eschatological period of tribulation presaging the end (Mark 13:9–20 = Matt 24:9–22).

And preterists like that, because that’s essentially the preterist argument, at least in terms of the flavor of it. Now Beale (who’s not a preterist) is going to express these ideas this way:

Dan. 12:1 is acknowledged as the likely origin for the idea of “the great tribulation”: “there will be a time of tribulation, such tribulation as has not come about from when a nation was on the earth until that time”. That Daniel is in mind is also apparent from the fact that the phrase “great tribulation” occurs in the NT outside Revelation only in Matt. 24:21, where it is part of a fuller and more explicit reference to Dan. 12:1 (cf. likewise Mark 13:19; [MH: he also references the War Scroll for these ideas] 1QM 1.11ff. prophecies that God will protect Israelite saints as they pass through the imminent, unprecedented “time of distress” prophesied in Dan. 12:1, after which they will be rewarded with eternal blessing [1QM 1.8–9])...

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In Daniel’s tribulation, the eschatological opponent persecutes the saints because of their covenant loyalty to God (cf. Dan. 11:30–39, 44; 12:10). Some will apostatize and persecute those remaining loyal, especially attempting to cause them to forsake their loyalty...

Therefore, the tribulation consists of pressures to compromise faith, these pressures coming both from within the church community through seductive teaching and from without through overt oppression. Sometimes the persecution is economically oriented (so *thlipsis* [“tribulation”] in 2:9, and *thlipsai* [“to afflict”] in LXX Lev. 26:26, referring to a “famine of bread” and distributing “loaves by weight,” which stands partly behind [MH: in Beale’s mind] Rev. 6:5–6). At other times the tribulation is heightened to include imprisonment and even death (so *thlipsis* [“tribulation”] in 2:10). Whatever its nature, tribulation always comes because of believers’ faithful witness to Jesus (so *thlipsis* [“tribulation”] in 1:9; cf. 6:9). The “greatness” of the tribulation [MH: again, in Beale’s thinking] is the intensity of the seduction and oppression through which believers pass...

Now another item here. If Revelation 3:10 is an allusion to Daniel 12:1... Let’s read Revelation 3:10. We’ve hit this before.

¹⁰ Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

So if that's an allusion to Daniel 12:1, which would then be connected to Revelation 7:13-14, then one could argue (now catch this) that the great tribulation is yet another "already, but not yet" element in biblical thought, because Revelation 3 is addressed to the churches that are already boots-on-the-ground. If Revelation 3:10 refers to Daniel 12:1, the writer sees this happening "already," but then you're going to get these later passages where it's "not yet." It's still something prospective. So the tribulation itself (this great End Times tribulation, whatever it is, that people assume is the 70th week of Daniel even though there's no textual support for that) could be an "already, but not yet" thing in the mind of the writer of Revelation. And that's actually Beale's position. Here's what he writes (just before we wrap up here):

Indeed, the author of 1 Macc. 9:27 understood that the "great tribulation" of Dan. 12:1 had already begun in the second century B.C., as a result of the chaos produced by Judas's death [MH: This is Judas Maccabee] at the hands of Israel's enemy: "So was there *a great tribulation* (θλίψις μεγάλη) [MH: *thlipsis megale*] in Israel, the like of which had not occurred since the time that a prophet was not seen among them." *Midr.* [MH: *Midrash* of] Ps. 119.31 applies the Dan. 12:10 tribulation prophecy to the afflictions of Israel throughout history...

So on and on and on. He lists a few other examples here and he writes:

We have seen that the "hour of testing" in Rev. 3:10 also alludes to Dan. 12:1, 10 [MH: so he thinks they *are* connected], and that it appears to include the entire time before Jesus' ministry and the parousia [MH: the Second Coming]. If so, the present analysis of the tribulation in [MH: Revelation] 7:14 is supported further, though others also see a parallel between 3:10 and 7:14, but see both as alluding to [MH: something in the future] a final trial at the very end of history.

So what Beale is arguing is, "It could be 'already, but not yet.'" That's where he lands, because *Maccabees* picks up the language and some other sources. "Already," the people of God are under oppression from a couple of centuries B.C. all the way through the first century, when John is writing the book of Revelation. It's "already" but it's "not yet." It's already happening. Believers are under oppression. But "not yet." The end, the ultimate consummation of this persecution—this tribulation—has yet to come.

So let's just wrap up this way. At the very least, here's what can be said about the "great tribulation" of Revelation 7:13-14 in biblical thought:

1. It's certainly connected to Daniel 12:1 and Jeremiah 30:7. I don't think there's any way to deny that.
2. It's therefore linked to Matthew 24:21.
3. It is a time that precedes the final judgment and return of Jesus. Remember the white robes? The Book of Life? So it's a time that precedes that.
4. And it involves persecution of believers.

1:00:00

That's about what you can say about the "great tribulation" for sure. Notice that there's no reference to weeks. There's no time. There's no number of years. All of that kind of stuff is supplied or kept from being part of the equation by whatever your End Times system happens to be. So we shouldn't be making assumptions that the Great Tribulation is the 70th week of Daniel. Hey, maybe that's the way it'll turn out. Who knows? But there isn't a verse to hang that on, is the point. Rather, it might be this "already, but not yet" thing, which wouldn't necessarily exclude the former. But again, it'd be sure nice to have a verse for that numerical equation. But we don't have it.

So again, ultimately this is what you're left with. This is why we have different End Times systems. This is why, if you love one and you need this element in it for it to work, you're going to cheat. You're just going to say it, "And that works, and now we move onto the next point." If you don't like that eschatological system, you're going to say, "There's not even room for discussing this. Forget it. Blah blah blah." You're going to dismiss it from the realm of possibility just out of the gate. It's a non-discussion item. And so there you go. This is how systems work. Both sides are going to do this at different points to make their system beautiful. And they're all beautiful. Except when they're not. Okay? "They're all beautiful until something messes with them, which is why in this series we're not propping up an End Times system. I just want you to be thinking about Old Testament antecedents to these ideas—to the content here of Revelation 7 here in Part 2. So again, 1) possible connection to Genesis 6, i.e., the Book of the Watchers stuff. The way that's worded, the way that was taken in Second Temple Judaism. The way that was understood. 2) And you've got the Danite problem. The great eschatological enemy. Does he have a relationship to Dan? Again, there's data there for that, but we don't necessarily know for sure. 3) And then third, the Great Tribulation. Now all these things have Old Testament precedent/antecedents. And that's what we're trying to do in this series on the podcast, just introduce you to these things so that you can think about them when you're studying, in this case the book of Revelation.

TS: Mike, we want hardcore answers here. We want to know the facts. WE want to know exactly which one is [inaudible] ...

MH: Do you want hardcore speculation? [laughs]

TS: Yeah. We want to pinpoint it down to one. Don't give us a bunch of them. We want *the* right one.

MH: That's what the novel's for. [laughs] Hardcore speculation. [laughs]

TS: That's my next thing. You mentioned that, so what's up with that? Can we expect that sometime soon?

MH: Well, "soon" is a relative term, Trey.

TS: 2021?

MH: It'd be nice to hand this off (to my little circle of draft readers who helped me with the first two) by the end of the year. That would be wonderful. So I don't know if anyone defines "soon" as "early next year" or not.

TS: No.

MH: That's probably the best timetable I can give you. But anyway, that's where we're at.

TS: But definitely 2022 is what you're saying?

MH: Oh, I would think so. Absolutely.

TS: So your guarantee right now... You're willing to go on the record that 2022 is guaranteed.

MH: I'm going to go out on that limb. Yes. Sometime in 2022. January 1st to December 31st, 2022. [laughs]

TS: Whoop! Alright. Breaking news! You heard it here first. Guaranteed. Alright. In time for Christmas 2022. There you go. Alright. Well, that's good stuff. Mike, I also wanted to mention to people out there that we are going to do a Q&A of Revelation. So start gathering your questions. If you have some you can go ahead and send those to me at TreyStricklin@gmail.com. And if you would, in the subject please put "Revelation Q&A" or something so I can keep those together. Or if you want to wait till we get close to the end...

MH: No questions about Dan. And no questions about ducks either.

TS: Oh. Well, hey, why not? [MH laughs] You're going to have to give us an update on the war of the ducks.

MH: That's right. Our apocalyptic war against these two ducks.

TS: Exactly. Alright, that's it, Mike. And with that... Next week, we're going to be doing a Q&A. So we'll be looking forward to a Q&A next week. And with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.