

*“And I heard the number of them who had been sealed a hundred and forty-four thousands having been sealed out of every tribe of Israel’s sons.*

*“From Judah’s tribe, twelve thousands having been sealed; from Reuben’s tribe twelve thousands having been sealed; from Gad’s tribe twelve thousands having been sealed; from Asher’s tribe twelve thousands having been sealed; from Naphthalim’s tribe twelve thousands having been sealed; from Manasseh’s tribe twelve thousands have been sealed; from Simeon’s tribe twelve thousands having been sealed; from Levi’s tribe twelve thousands have been sealed; from Issachar’s tribe twelve thousands have been; from Zebulon’s tribe twelve thousands have been sealed; from Joseph’s tribe twelve thousands have been sealed; from Benjamin’s tribe twelve thousands have been sealed.”*

This is the translation from Eureka by our Pioneer Brother John Thomas.

Sections to read from that book are No 4 Tribes of Israel’s sons, and No 5 The 144,000 Sealed. No 6 The Apocalyptic Urim & Thummim NO 7 The Tribes of the Apostacy. Blue pages 297 – 322. Brown pages 311 - 336.

The last class set the scene in the chapter as an interlude between the end of the sixth seal with “*the great day of wrath is come*”, and the opening of the seventh seal in 8v1. It is not a short time period in history during which the saints are sealed but a reminder of the ongoing process which takes place over many years during the time of the gentiles. In the verses we have for consideration this evening is a repeated pattern, which is a reinforced telling of the information to emphasise process. The Holy Spirit could just have said from each of these 12 tribes 12,000 was sealed, but it does not do this but instead repeats the formula - of the tribe of Judah was sealed 12,000 for a total of 12 times. This is not a question of wasting words, but it is rather emphasising the pattern. With this in mind we can say that the process of sealing is important, and bears repeating on a consistent basis.

Each time the tribes of Israel are listed the order is different sometimes they are called the tribes of Jacob as in Luke chapter one verse 33, where the House of Jacob is mentioned rather than Israel itself. Here in Revelation, it is not only the order that is distinct but the actual 12 names given are unique and is found in no other list of the children of Israel in the Bible. First, we should notice that the tribe of Dan is not mentioned at all but is missing from the list. Secondly, we should notice that the House of Levi is included, so it is not a territorial possession regarding the physical inheritance of God’s people the Jews which is the purpose as Levi had a different inheritance under Moses. Thirdly we should notice that Joseph is used in addition to Manasseh, and that the tribe of Ephraim is therefore not mentioned here. In no other list of the children of Israel is Joseph and one of his sons included in the breakdown. Normally it is either Joseph, as the original son of Jacob, or Joseph’s children Ephraim and Manasseh who are mentioned separately.

The reason behind this is not explicitly given, but we can deduce that this is not a sealing out of the literal children of Israel, but rather a spiritual sealing out of the spiritual nation of the tribes of the children of Israel. This is in keeping with Revelation

chapter 3 verse 9 where *“the synagogue of Satan which say they are Jews and are not but do lie”*, are mentioned. The Book of Revelation is looking at things from the position of the gentiles not the Jews. The sealing out of each tribe may then be said to be a sealing out of the corruption of so-called orthodox Christianity, over the 2000 years of the darkness of the gentiles, the period of the madness of the pigs into which Jesus had cast the unclean spirits at Gergesene. If we divide these 2000 years into 12, we have a period of about 160 years for each tribe, or 150 years if we include the period for the missing tribe of Dan. Can we then say that each tribe represents a historical period in sequence, ending in Benjamin, which is the last epoch during which the sealing took place. This would mean that just before the return of Christ the Saints are sealed out of the tribe of Benjamin, and the suggestion has been made that This would mean that the Saints in the modern era will be ascribed to the tribe of Benjamin in the Kingdom era as they will be inheritors as the sons of the Prince.

Looking at the exclusion of both Dan and Ephraim, in the list of the names of the tribes, and equating this with those encamped around the Tabernacle as the host of Israel, this would mean that both the northern Cherub and the western Cherub are not represented here. If we consider the Roman world, the emphasis in the sealing is therefore to the South and East. The UK is in the northwest of the Roman territory, a veritable backwater, when looking at the lasting evidence of Roman civilization. That so many latter-day Saints come from the English-speaking world, maybe a reflection of this, but these are only ideas presented as suggestions and for the basis of contemplation and discussion, these are not established facts. The passage does therefore seem to be one of implication, where ideas and meaning have not been explicitly rendered. The whole book is symbolic and prophetic.

The tense used in the expression *“of the tribe of Judah were sealed 12,000”*, in the Greek, is “having been” sealed. This is the pluperfect tense, recording an action which has been completed in the past. Use of this particular tense implies that each sealing from a tribe is a distinct action and hence the suggestion of different epochs for each tribe as a portion of gentile history.

The total of 144,000 would therefore seem to be a representative number for the aggregate of the faithful drawn out of the gentile age. This stands in contrast with v 9, where *“a great multitude which no man can number of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues stood before the throne”*. Before the gentile era, people were only called to the truth through the nation of Israel, and any gentiles who were attracted would have become Jewish proselytes and the males would have been circumcised in order to embrace the hope of Israel. This is no longer necessary in the period of the largely gentile Ecclesia. In prophetic language the use of a smaller number to represent a larger is the norm. Those who look to a literal 144,000 do not understand the construct of the Apocalypse as a book of sign and symbol. We can take heart then that there will be more saints justified until eternal life than we might consider in this day of small things! God is merciful and works in ways we cannot fully understand, nor is He obliged to inform each of us of all His current activities!

During the period of the seals in the previous chapter, political events occurring within the Pagan Roman Empire were thrust upon the unbelieving and ignorant gentiles. The spiritual element is referred to in verses 1,3,5 and 7 of the chapter where the different

beasts or living ones are mentioned in turn. Then in the 5th seal the persecution of the Saints is represented by *"the souls under the altar"*. And in the 6th seal the religious element is referred to in the citation of the wrath of the lamb, demonstrating that God's judgement was in the matter in the overthrowing of paganism as a political force within the Roman Empire. Chapter 7 is an interlude which includes in the latter verses a vision of future glory but in the earlier verses there is a lead up towards this vision with the detail of the process of sealing.

The idea that the church is the new Israel is not supported here, the very reverse. The saints are sealed out of these twelve tribes. The tribes are not the church as the church is the saved body and the righteous are not taken from the church but comprise that true church. In John 6v27 Jesus taught *"Labour not for the meat that perisheth but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you, for him hath God the Father sealed"*. Jesus was speaking to the people, see verse 24, and Jesus as the Son of Man was sealed out of his brethren. The people of that era were the largely unbelieving Jews, or the actual tribes of Israel who were extant in those days. Also, in 2 Corinthians 1v22 the Ecclesia at Corinth were addressed as the sealed, and therefore the Bible does not speak of the sealed being sealed out of the Ecclesia.

There is an interesting comment in the section from Eureka which is particularly noteworthy. "1st that which is natural says Paul and then that which is spiritual. This is the order of the day at ease developments in relation to body world and nation. Hence, the spiritual body is developed out of the natural; The spiritual world out of the natural; And the spiritual Israelitish nation out of the natural, we gentiles coming in by adoption through the king of Israel who himself was first natural before he became spirit. The principle is fundamental and perceived in the generation of all things- first the naked grain, or body; Then that which shall be fruit bearing in the field."

A Voice from the Altar

Russel Noonan