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THE 144,000 CANNOT BE PHYSICAL ISRAELITES

[This is Part 4 in a series of four articles. All four are connected to a common subject and should ideally be read in sequence. The 4 articles in this series are:

Part 1 = "Great Tribulation" And "The Great Tribulation"

Part 2 = The Great Multitude

Part 3 = The 144,000

Part 4 = The 144,000 Cannot Be Physical Israelites

Articles 2, 3 and 4 are based on the foundation of the article(s) that preceded them.]

In the third in this series of four articles I explained that the 144,000 in Revelation chapter 7 are not physical Israelites from the 12 tribes listed in that chapter, but that they are spiritual Israelites, meaning that the actual ethnic backgrounds of those people are not identified, and that their ethnicity is in fact inconsequential.

There are three different responses to that third article.

Response #1: There are those readers who understand the explanation and who readily accept it.

Response #2: There are those readers whose minds are biased against the explanation I have presented, and those readers reject that explanation. Their rejection is non-negotiable, irrespective of what evidence may be presented against their personal positions.

Response #3: There are those readers who are now unsure of what to believe on this issue. They have previously always believed that Revelation 7 is about 12,000 physical Israelites from each of the tribes listed in that chapter. But after reading my explanation they are now unsure about this question.

Regarding Response #2: **There is nothing I can say** or do that will persuade those people to change their minds. It is impossible for any outside force or logic or reasoning to penetrate that mindset. I've met the identical mindset with people who still believe that Mr. Herbert Armstrong, who died over 32 years ago, was supposedly the end-time Elijah. Nothing can get those people to change their minds. They will continue to cling to that belief, no matter how many more years pass before Jesus Christ's second coming. And if they are confronted with incontrovertible evidence against their own position, at best they might perhaps "adapt" their "Mr. Armstrong was Elijah" belief in a way that allows them to still cling to their adapted version. But they will never let go of that belief in its entirety.

That same type of mindset exists in some people who continue to believe that Revelation chapter 7 simply must be speaking about 144,000 physical Israelites at the end time. Nothing can persuade them to change their minds. That is why I said in the first article in this series that in

principle I seriously doubt that most people's minds are open to the truth when the truth challenges some of their personal views.

There is nothing I can do to help people in the "Response #2" category. So this present article is not written for them. This present article is written primarily for those people who are in the "Response #3" category. It is written for people who are now unsure about this question, and who are willing to examine more evidence to help them reach a clear answer.

So let's now examine why the 144,000 in Revelation 7 are spiritual Israelites, with a total disregard for their individual racial backgrounds.

THE FOUNDATION FOR THE ORIGINAL BELIEF

Here is the relevant Scripture.

Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed **the servants of our God** in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were* sealed **an hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel**. (Revelation 7:3-4)

Verses 5-8 then list the names: Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulon, Joseph and Benjamin.

So let's be quite clear:

Based on verse 4 alone we concluded 50 years ago that at the end time there must be 12,000 physical, ethnic Israelites from every one of those 12 tribes which are listed in the next four verses, who are going to be in the first resurrection.

No references to any other Scriptures were invoked or examined before reaching this conclusion. Verse 4 was deemed to be self-explanatory, not requiring any additional clarifications.

Specifically, if there is **any information** in any other book or passage in the Bible **that calls into question this conclusion** that "in the first resurrection there will be 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes listed" ... then such other biblical statements must be either **ignored**, **or** else **explained away**.

Let's face the facts!

If other Scriptures call our conclusion into question, then those other Scriptures must be explained away. There are no other options, if we intend to cling to our belief regarding the 144,000 in Revelation 7.

One immediately glaring weakness in this position that "the 144,000 are 12,000 physical Israelites from each of 12 tribes" is this: **there isn't a single other Scripture** anywhere in the Bible that can be used to support and to substantiate that position. And **neither is there a single biblical principle** that can be applied to that position. Think about that: not a single other Scripture to support this idea. The only thing "other Scriptures" can do is disprove this idea, but none support it. And other Scriptures do indeed disprove that idea.

Now we all know quite well that in the Book of Revelation God has made use of a great deal of symbolism. Many statements in Revelation represent something other than what those statements say in literal terms. Yes, there certainly are also many statements that God expects us to take literally. But the

decision regarding whether we are to accept something literally, or whether a statement involves a meaning other than what that statement says literally, that decision should only be reached after we have examined the context and the consequences of that statement.

In the Book of Revelation we cannot assume a literal meaning for any statement without first examining that statement against **the rest of the Bible**, and **in its own context**, and against **clear biblical principles**, and against **clear biblical instructions**.

GOD HAS TO OPEN OUR MINDS

Remember what Jesus Christ said to the Apostle Peter. In response to Peter stating "You are the Son of the Living God", Christ said:

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art you, Simon Barjona: for **flesh and blood has not revealed *it* unto you**, but My Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 16:17)

Jesus Christ was pointing out that real spiritual discernment is not something that we can generate on our own. It has nothing to do with supposedly being more intelligent than someone else who lacks that discernment. Spiritual discernment is totally dependent on God opening a person's mind to understand the truth of God, to understand God's plan and God's purposes.

The Apostle Paul made the same point to the Corinthians.

For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so **the things of God knows no man, but (by) the Spirit of God**. (1 Corinthians 2:11)

The point is this:

Whether people understand the truth when it is explained, or whether they don't understand it, does not really depend on how clear the explanation happens to be. It doesn't necessarily depend on sound reasoning and sound arguments being presented. Understanding God's plan and God's purposes depends, more than anything else, on God opening a person's mind to make possible such understanding and the person's willingness to examine the facts that God has brought to his attention.

So I realize that the explanation I will present here will make sense to some people, and it will not make sense to other people. That's true for every biblical teaching I have explained in all of the articles on my website. And there is nothing I can do to change that ratio between those who understand and those who don't.

AN OVERVIEW OF GOD'S PLAN

Since the creation of Adam and Eve **God has repeatedly modified His plan** of salvation for mankind, in order to take unexpected developments and changed circumstances into account. Because God gave man a totally free will, therefore there is always the possibility that man will use that free will in ways that are contrary to God's wishes and desires and intentions.

So when mankind has made choices that are unacceptable to God, then God has responded by modifying His plan. Think of these modifications like a driver of a car turning the steering wheel to keep

the car on the road when there are twists and turns ahead. The destination remains the same, but because of obstacles, getting there may be by a different route.

Now in the 120 years leading up to the flood (Genesis 6:3) God modified His original plan of salvation for mankind, so that the revised version of the plan would make provision for two "harvests" into the Family God will create: **a smaller first harvest** of 144,000 individuals into the Family of God, followed by **the greater fall harvest** of a huge multitude, the size of which multitude was impossible to predict in advance, simply because those people would all have to exercise their own free will.

We should understand that achieving that greater fall harvest of a huge multitude is totally contingent on that small harvest of firstfruits being achieved first. **If that first smaller harvest is not achieved, then the greater fall harvest will not be achieved either.** That greater fall harvest is built on the premise that those in the firstfruits harvest (the 144,000) will be working with Jesus Christ to achieve that greater fall harvest. Harvest #2 is built totally on the foundation of harvest #1 being achieved first.

Let me state it this way:

In the years leading up to the flood God the Father and Jesus Christ understood that They alone would not achieve what They had committed Themselves to achieve. On Their own They would not be able to build the Family They wanted to build. They realized that **They needed help to achieve Their goal**.

Therefore They devised the two-step plan. In step #1 They would test and train the individuals who would then be able to help Them achieve Their goal of building the Family of God. Their goal was "an innumerable great multitude" of children for the God Family.

Once They had 144,000 helpers available, then They would be in a position to achieve Their goal of creating an incredibly huge Family of God. Those 144,000 are essential for achieving step #2. Step #2 is really the goal that God the Father and Jesus Christ have committed Themselves to achieve. And step #1 was only introduced into the plan to make the achievement of step #2 possible.

We need to understand that the first resurrection is not a goal in itself. The first resurrection is "only" a vital step towards achieving the real goal for creating the incredibly huge Family of God.

Now when God modified His plan at the time of the flood, a very few people had already been prepared to become a part of the Family God is creating. With the modification in God’s plan those few individuals were then assigned by God to be in the harvest of firstfruits. Those individuals who were taught and trained by God before the flood are Abel, Enoch and Noah. If there were others before the flood, they are not identified for us.

But by the time of the flood God had devised a plan for **how to obtain those 144,000 individuals** (or 143,997 remaining individuals) for the first resurrection.

Here is the plan which God had devised.

THE STEPS IN GOD’S PLAN

1) God would look for a man who had a certain character disposition, one of being willing to voluntarily submit to God, someone with a character akin to the character of Abel or Enoch or Noah.

(**Comment**: If God had established this revised plan already at the time of Adam’s creation, then God

might well have used Abel or Enoch or Noah for the job that God later ended up giving to Abram (i.e. Abraham). In other words, after extensive testing God might have changed Abel's or Enoch's or Noah's name to "Abraham", meaning "a father of many nations". But the present version of God's plan had not yet been implemented before the flood. So therefore those particular men could not be chosen for this job. But the scarcity of such men before the flood indicated that **it might well take a few centuries** before God would find the right kind of man for this specific job.)

2) Once God had found such an individual, then God would thoroughly test that individual's loyalty and commitment and dedication to God. If the individual passed the tests, then God would also test that man's seed for two more generations.

3) Now why did God want to test one particular family line for three consecutive generations? What was the point? Notice how God has revealed His own thinking. In talking about Abraham, God said:

For **I know him**, that **he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD**, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. (Genesis 18:19)

Do you understand the real significance of this statement by God? Because God already knew Abraham's character, therefore God anticipated that Abraham would be able to start a chain-reaction for obedience to God's laws. All Abraham had to do is faithfully teach his own children God's ways, and those children would then in turn faithfully teach their children God's ways. And this system would become self-perpetuating. God anticipated that those faithfully taught descendants "shall keep the way of the Eternal".

(**Comment**: God did not necessarily expect all the children of such a man to follow in their father's obedience. But it seems that God anticipated in each case at least one child of such a righteous man to always follow in his father's footsteps. That would have been enough to keep this process going, always at least one child that would in turn faithfully teach God's ways to his own children. And there was the possibility that in many cases it would be two or more of the children of such a faithful man that would follow in their father's footsteps.)

4) And for the next two generations after Abraham this system actually worked! Abraham's son Isaac willingly submitted to God and was responsive to God. And then Isaac's son Jacob was submissive and responsive to God. Working with Abraham and then Isaac and then Jacob was **the pilot program for leading selected human beings to real repentance**. And up to that point this process was indeed self-perpetuating. That is very important, because that is one major way in which God creates and works: God sets something in motion, and then a self-perpetuating cycle is established.

5) Now let's see the real significance of this chain that had been established by God. Very few people understand that real significance.

When God called Abraham, trained him and tested him, and then tested Isaac and then tested Jacob, **it was God's intention that Abraham and his descendants would provide all of the remaining 143,997 individuals still needed for the first resurrection**!

Not a single non-Israelite (apart from the 3 pre-flood men) would have received access to the first resurrection! That was God's intention when God trained and tested Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

That is what God meant when God said "Israel is My son, even **My firstborn**" (Exodus 4:22). The descendants of Israel would provide all the men and women required for the first resurrection, those who would become "God's firstborn children".

6) When Jesus Christ "marries" the 144,000 in the first resurrection, then that "marriage" will produce a vast number of children (i.e. the great multitude of Revelation 7).

Likewise, when Jesus Christ "married" Old Testament Israel, the intention was that this "marriage" would have produced all the "children" needed for the first resurrection.

No non-Israelite people would feature at all in the first resurrection. (Yes, I realize that technically speaking Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Isaac were not really "Israelites", because they all preceded the man to whom God gave the name "Israel". And Jacob himself could not be identified with one specific tribe, since he was the father of all of them. But for all practical purposes these individuals can be counted as Israelites.)

Note! God did not anticipate that all Israelites would repent and be ready for the first resurrection. But God did intend to restrict "the potential manpower pool from which candidates for the first resurrection could be called and selected" to the descendants of Abraham through his grandson Jacob. So in due time over more than three millennia there would be hundreds of millions of Israelites, and from within their numbers God hoped to find (in round numbers) 144,000 individuals. That was the intention.

7) The problem that arose was this: while this self-perpetuating cycle worked with the first three generations (i.e. it worked with Abraham and with Isaac and with Jacob), **it really broke down in a major way with the fourth generation**!

The majority of Jacob's sons didn't submit their lives to God the way Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had done. And by the time they got to the sixth, seventh and eighth generation, the Israelites were character-wise no different from all the pagan nations around them.

The system from which God hoped to obtain 143,997 more individuals for the first resurrection had broken down!

8) So God worked and worked and worked with Israel, to get Israel back on the right track. God sent a long succession of prophets and leaders to represent God to the people of Israel. God worked with Israel for many centuries! And all the while Israel kept drifting further and further away from God.

The period from Abraham down to Ezra should have produced upward of ten thousand individuals for the first resurrection. Instead, that period only produced well less than 1,000 individuals, and more likely only around 100? Those were the judges and the prophets and the righteous kings like David, etc.

9) Once things had become really hopeless, **God "divorced" the Northern Kingdom of Israel**, and sent them into a national captivity, from which those nations never returned!

At that point in time God still continued to try to work with the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

10) Now understand something very clearly! This may be difficult to accept because it is likely to go against your bias!

When God "divorced" the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom, then that "divorce" terminated God's efforts to seek candidates for the first resurrection from amongst those ten tribes!

The divorce marked the end of God working with those ten tribes on the national level, as far as looking for candidates for the first resurrection is concerned. "A divorce" is a severing of a relationship. When God sent those ten tribes into captivity, with the intention that they would never return, then **God severed His relationship with those ten tribes**, as far as seeking candidates for the first resurrection is

concerned.

11) The Apostle Paul referred to this severing of God's relationship with the ten tribes as "**some of the branches were broken off**" (Romans 11:17). When a branch is "broken off" the olive tree, then that branch no longer has any relationship with the tree. And when those branches are "broken off", then **they can't possibly each produce 12,000 individuals**. Broken off branches simply don't produce servants of God".

12) So to state this very plainly:

If the 10 tribes that were "broken off" and "divorced" from God could somehow end up still producing 12,000 individuals from each tribe for the first resurrection, then those 10 tribes could not have been "broken off" from the olive tree!

It is **either** that each of those 10 tribes produces 12,000 for the first resurrection, **or** those 10 tribes are "divorced from God" and "broken off" the olive tree. But it cannot be both of these options at the same time.

This is one of those Scriptures that people who believe in 12,000 physical Israelites from each tribe have to ignore or else explain away.

13) **God's original intention** was that the original 12 tribes, one for each son of Jacob, would each produce 12,000 individuals (making allowance for the 6 or more individuals who were not a part of any of the 12 tribes) for the first resurrection.

(Comment: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob weren't a part of any of the 12 tribes. And perhaps some wives like Sarah are also in that number. So there may be a very few more than 6 who are not a part of any of the 12 tribes. God would have made provision for however many people fall into this category.)

God's original intentions did not include Manasseh as one of those 12 tribes. Adding Manasseh and dropping Dan from that list was a modification away from God's original intentions.

God's original intention was that the 10 tribes that were "broken off" should have produced 10 x 12,000 = 120,000 individuals for the first resurrection. For several centuries after the time of Moses God kept trying to work with those tribes, down past the time of King David.

14) Now once it became obvious, beyond any doubts, that these numbers (12,000 per tribe) would never be achieved with those 10 tribes, then God sent them away into a national captivity, from which they never returned.

Yes, a small number of people from those 10 tribes had submitted their lives to God during those centuries. But that small number was very likely still less than 1% of the quota God had expected from each of those 10 tribes.

15) Having "divorced" the 10 tribes, God kept working with the two tribes of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Those two tribes were Judah and Benjamin. But then many of the people from the tribe of Levi also moved away from the Northern Kingdom, and into the Southern Kingdom, because Jeroboam had removed them from their religious offices. This made the Levites jobless. So then that Southern Kingdom ended up with about two-and-one-half tribes. People may thus also refer to the Southern Kingdom as having three tribes (i.e. including much or even most of Levi).

16) You know the parable about the two sisters Aholah (Northern Kingdom) and Aholibah (Southern Kingdom), which is recorded in Ezekiel 23. God's point in this parable is that the Southern Kingdom (Aholibah) became "**more corrupt**" than her sister (see Ezekiel 23:11, 30). So Judah, who had become even more corrupt, then went into Babylonian captivity.

17) But the point is: with Judah God did not stop working with those two (or three) tribes! The Babylonian captivity was only a temporary punishment; and perhaps half of them later returned to the area of Jerusalem. (Many Jews chose to remain in Babylon.)

This means that God continued working with the people of these two or three tribes. There clearly was the hope on God's part that the Southern Kingdom would still produce more people for the first resurrection. Also Jesus Christ, the Savior, had to come to the people of Judah (see the prophecy in Genesis 49:10).

18) After the Babylonian captivity God continued to work with the remnant of Judah, sending prophets (Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi) and leaders like Joshua and Zerubbabel and Ezra and Nehemiah. God had not yet given up on Judah.

19) Then Jesus Christ came and conducted His ministry amongst the Jewish people. And during His ministry Jesus Christ said very clearly: "**I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel**" (Matthew 15:24).

And earlier when He had sent out the 12 apostles, Christ had said very plainly "**Go not into the way of the nations, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter you not**" (Matthew 10:5). This instruction was binding until the day of Jesus Christ's crucifixion.

20) Throughout His ministry Jesus Christ was still working with that portion of Israel that had not yet been "broken off", namely the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. And that work by Jesus Christ produced a harvest directed towards the hoped-for 12,000 from Judah and another 12,000 from Benjamin.

So the 3,000 people that were baptized on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41), a number that in a short period of time increased to 5,000 (Acts 4:4), were almost all from the tribe of Judah (some may have been from Benjamin or from Levi). But none of those first 5,000 in the Church were non-Israelites.

21) So in spite of Aholibah being worse than her sister Aholah, the intense work of Christ's own ministry had laid the foundation for a harvest of several thousand individuals for the first resurrection.

22) But even as the flood had been the dividing line between one version of God's plan and the next version (i.e. the modified version), so also Jesus Christ's death for our sins became **the dividing line** between two versions of God working with human beings.

23) Right up to the day of His death Jesus Christ was focused on working with the Jewish people. Before His death Jesus Christ had already indicated that in due time "this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world ..." (Matthew 24:14). But at that point He did not give His followers any instructions to actually do so.

24) It was only after His death and resurrection that Jesus Christ gave the command: "**go you therefore and teach all nations** to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20, text corrected to omit the fraudulent trinitarian baptism formula).

25) That commandment after Christ's resurrection established **another modification in God's plan for mankind**. This was a change from seeking out "the lost sheep of the house of Israel". This instruction

was the final part in "breaking off" the Jewish branch from the olive tree.

God had broken off the 10 tribes about seven centuries earlier. Now the remaining two tribes were broken off. As the Apostle Paul explained: "**the casting away of them**" (i.e. Judah and all the other tribes) opened the way for people from all non-Israelite nations to be "grafted in" (see Romans 11:15-17). Paul continued to say that the natural branches (i.e. all 12 tribes of Israel) were broken off because of unbelief (see Romans 11:20). Paul then stated very plainly "**God spared not the natural branches**" (Romans 11:21).

26) So with Jesus Christ's crucifixion and resurrection **all of the tribes of Israel have been removed from the exalted position** of being the exclusive nations to provide the manpower pool for people to call for the first resurrection.

Since that time God has expanded the manpower pool for potential candidates for the first resurrection to "**all nations**". This most certainly includes all of the nations of the 12 tribes of Israel. However many positions within the 144,000 still needed to be filled at the time of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection (and I suspect that at that point the number was still in excess of 140,000), from then onwards those candidates would be drawn "from all nations" without any nation having some "favored status" within that process.

As Paul put it: "**now God commands all men every** where to repent" (Acts 17:30). That command represents a change in plan from what was the case before Christ's resurrection.

From that time forward God has accepted candidates for the first resurrection (i.e. for the 144,000) from all nations, based solely on the level of dedication and commitment to God that those people "bring to the table" when God has opened their minds. **In this process God has not made being of Israelite stock a consideration.**

Being of Israelite stock was a fundamental requirement for being considered for the first resurrection until the end of Jesus Christ's own ministry. Since that time that requirement has been erased, to the point where now it is not a consideration at all.

27) Understand something else Paul said. Paul made clear that "the natural branches" (i.e. all 12 tribes of Israel) shall in time be "grafted into their own olive tree" (Romans 11:24). In other words, they'll be grafted back into the tree from which they had been broken off. But **that "grafting back" will not be in time for the first resurrection**! That "grafting back" will only happen during the millennium, when they will become eligible to become a part of that "great multitude" together with all other nations.

But the branches that were broken off (i.e. all 12 tribes) cannot get back what was taken from them. What was taken from them was the opportunity to be **the exclusive providers** for candidates for the first resurrection. That opportunity was lost when God "divorced" them.

28) In the Old Testament Jesus Christ "was married" to "the mother" that was supposed to produce 144,000 individuals for the first resurrection. When that "mother" was unfaithful to God, then Christ divorced that "mother".

Instead of again marrying the physical nations, which nations should have become "the mother" for all those in the first resurrection, at His second coming Jesus Christ will "marry" the 144,000 themselves, who are destined to then become "the mother" for "the great multitude".

29) So let's get back to God's initial plan for future eternity.

A) Initially God intended for the 12 tribes of Israel to provide 12,000 individuals each for the first resurrection. They would become the leading nations in the Family of God for all future eternity. Each of those 12 nations would be named after one of the 12 tribes of Israel.

B) Something happened with the tribe of Dan (perhaps it was their rapid descent into paganism, see Judges chapter 18, which pretty well killed the prospect of Dan ever providing 12,000 candidates for the first resurrection), and God then removed the name of Dan and replaced it with the name Manasseh.

C) So **the names for the top 12 nations** in the Family of God **became fixed**.

D) But in time all 12 of them became so bad that God "divorced them" and broke them off from the olive tree.

Now we come to another Scripture that must be ignored or else explained away!

E) The breaking off of the 12 natural branches created the situation where "**they who were invited were not worthy**" (see Matthew 22:8). So what did God do? Note! These 12 tribes had been invited "to the wedding", i.e. **they had been invited to be in the first resurrection**.

This verse makes clear that **they were rejected** from that opportunity. Therefore there cannot possibly be 12,000 from each of these tribes in the first resurrection. Those who had been invited were not worthy!

Read Jesus Christ's own words!

Then saith He to His servants, The wedding is ready, but **they which were bidden were not worthy**. (Matthew 22:8)

It was the 12 tribes of Israel who had been invited "to the wedding" to provide 12,000 guests each. And right here Jesus Christ said that **they are rejected** because "they were not worthy". Therefore any claim that somehow there will be 12,000 physical Israelites from each tribe in the first resurrection contradicts Jesus Christ's unequivocal statement in this verse!

Go ahead! Try to explain away Matthew 22:8! But if you do so, you will be endangering your moral integrity before Almighty God! You have been warned!

To continue:

F) So "**the name tags**" for the 12 nations invited to the wedding **have already been put on the table**. But the people for whom those name tags had been prepared are not worthy.

G) So God then invited people from all national backgrounds (i.e. they were found in the highways, etc., verse 9) to be in the first resurrection. So does God now remove those name tags from the table, and replace them with totally new name tags? That's difficult to picture, since these replacements come from literally hundreds of nations and tribes and languages and ethnic backgrounds (but not to be confused with the great multitude).

H) So God assigns 12,000 of these replacements to each of **the 12 names already on the table**. Physically they could not qualify for those 12 names because of their ethnic descent, which is not from those 12 tribes. But God counts all of these replacements as "spiritual Israelites". After all, if necessary, God is able "of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matthew 3:9).

As Paul explained to the non-Israelites in Galatia, "**if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise**" (Galatians 3:29). All those who qualify to be called "Abraham's seed" must in some way be slotted into the 12 tribes of Israel.

Since all those in the first resurrection are "Abraham's seed", therefore it is a small thing to slot them into the 12 names that are already on the table.

The 12,000 in each of the 12 tribes in Revelation 7 represent the people who were invited to the wedding **at a later time**, because those who were originally invited proved themselves to be "not worthy".

There is simply no way that the 12,000 from each tribe in Revelation 7 refer to 12,000 physical Israelites from each tribe at the end time. The "divorce" made that clear. The "breaking off" reinforced that point. The "uninviting" of the original guests nailed it!

Let's now consider something else.

SERVANTS OF GOD

The first form of identification for the 144,000 in Revelation 7 is that they are "**the servants of our God**" (Revelation 7:3). So first and foremost they are converted members of God's Church. This means that over 95% of them must come from the seven eras of God's Church, making allowance for the small number of people from Old Testament times. Since Christ's ministry the seven eras of God's Church are the only place where "the servants of our God" can be found.

Now Revelation 14:1-4 makes clear that 144,000 is the total number of "firstfruits". Therefore "the servants of our God" in Revelation 7:3 cannot possibly come from one single era. They can only come from all seven eras combined.

We have to understand that there cannot possibly be two different groups of firstfruits.

There cannot be any firstfruits who are somehow not with Jesus Christ on Mount Zion in Revelation 14:1. God doesn't have "first class firstfruits" who are on Mount Zion, and "second class firstfruits" who are at that point hiding in the bushes somewhere. That scenario is absurd!

All the firstfruits form **one unified group**, where even people like Noah and Abraham and David and the apostles are not resurrected ahead of anyone else in the first resurrection.

Since the 144,000 in Revelation 7 are all "servants of our God", therefore they must be in the first resurrection. They must be firstfruits. They cannot possibly be in the second resurrection. Being "sealed in their foreheads" must refer to them being resurrected to spirit life.

But for a moment let's consider the flawed idea that these 144,000 are supposedly 12,000 physical Israelites at the end time from each of 12 different tribes of Israel. Here are the insurmountable problems with this position:

The identity of Ephraim (Great Britain) and Manasseh (USA) is quite likely correct. Add to that the identity of Judah being the ethnic Jews. The tribe of Levi seems to be scattered amongst the Jews.

But **the identities of the other nine tribes** (i.e. Reuben, Simeon, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulon and Benjamin) **are pure speculations**, based on nothing more than the flimsiest of biblical

statements. Mr. Armstrong himself didn't try to figure out those identities. That was done by other men. And their main supposed evidence consisted of the very brief one-liners in Genesis 49. Mr. Armstrong restricted himself to identifying Ephraim and Manasseh.

Perhaps some of those speculations regarding the end-time identities are even correct? But they are still only guesswork at best.

A simple example is the identity of the tribe of Dan. Was it Denmark or was it Ireland? There is a huge difference between those two countries, and those two countries are not really two branches of the same tribe. So which is it? Is Dan a tribe that lives on the River Danube, or do they live along the River Dnieper in Russia? Or do they live everywhere where we can find names with "Dn" in them?

And Benjamin was supposed to be Norway. Why? Well, it says that Benjamin "shall tear in pieces as a wolf ... he shall divide the spoil" (see Genesis 49:27). And that's all the evidence for Benjamin being Norway. Hmmm?

But **assuming our guesses** for the modern identities of the lost tribes of Israel **are correct**, how will we ever find 12,000 **deeply converted adults** amongst the people of **Norway**, and another 12,000 amongst the **Swedes**, and another 12,000 amongst the **Dutch**, and another 12,000 amongst the **Belgians**, and another 12,000 amongst the people of **Switzerland**, and another 12,000 **French** people, and another 12,000 amongst the **Jews**, and another 12,000 people amongst ethnic **Levites**, and another 12,000 from **Finland**?

Such expectations are totally and completely unrealistic! Such expectations are in fact absurd!

It is absolutely certain that between now and Jesus Christ's second coming **there is no way that these nations** (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Holland, Belgium, France, Switzerland, etc.) **will each produce 12,000 deeply converted men and women**. No way!

For over three millennia it has been a struggle for God to try to find 12,000 individuals from each tribe of Israel. And now, in the next decade or two or three, those nations will somehow miraculously each provide 12,000 converted people?

That's not how free moral agency works!

As an aside, Finland is supposedly Issachar, but there is also a linguistic connection between Finland and Hungary. The Hungarian people are the descendants of the Huns, who were certainly not Israelites. So how sure are we that Finland really does represent the tribe of Issachar? Is it all based on making the one-liner in Genesis 49:14-15 "fit"? Perhaps the Finns are descendants of the tribe of Issachar? And perhaps they are not? Perhaps they are related to the Magyars of Hungary? Who really knows?

Consider one other point:

With **modern DNA testing** people have been able to establish genetic profiles for most nations and most ethnic groups on earth today. You can regularly see ads for: "take our DNA test and find out your real ancestry".

Now when people as individuals do that type of DNA testing, nobody comes out with a pure ethnic picture! Nobody has DNA that comes from just one national group! Everybody who is tested has DNA that can be traced back to five or more national or ethnic groups. There are no "pure" people alive today. By "pure" I mean people whose total DNA belongs to only one national or ethnic group!

So what kind of DNA picture is God prepared to accept for the 12,000 people from each tribe of Israel? Must a person have at least 51% DNA from Reuben to qualify to be considered for inclusion in the 12,000 from Reuben? How about Gad? Must someone have 51% or more DNA from Gad to qualify for consideration for inclusion in the 12,000 from Gad? What if modern Gad has three different and distinct DNA profiles (a German one, a French one and an Italian one) ... which of those profiles will count as "Israelite"?

Or is God perhaps expecting the 12,000 from each tribe to have 100% DNA for their particular tribe? Is God really concerned about DNA profiles for the people who will be in the first resurrection? (The unequivocal answer here is "no", in case you are wondering.)

What about nations, like the USA and Switzerland, that have more than one distinct DNA profile? The USA is a classic example of this. Which of those distinct DNA profiles is the one for a tribe of Israel? Are the other distinct DNA profiles for such a national group also acceptable for inclusion in the 12,000 for that tribe? **Can one tribe of Israel have more than one distinct DNA profile?**

Who decides which people can be called "physical Israelites" from a very specific tribe?

What if people think of themselves as Ephraim or as Manasseh or as Zebulon or as Issachar, etc., but then it turns out that **over 50% of their DNA** is actually Greek or Italian or German or Spanish or American Indian or a combination of a whole bunch of non-Israelite nations? What then? Will God include people in Manasseh who have more than 50% DNA that is non-Israelite? Or is the geographic location on earth where they happen to live the deciding factor for inclusion in or exclusion from the group of 12,000 for a particular tribe?

HOW ABOUT AMOS 9:9?

Perhaps you'd like to quote Amos 9:9?

For, lo, I will command, and **I will sift the house of Israel among all nations**, like as *corn* is sifted in a sieve, **yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth**. (Amos 9:9)

There you are, someone might say. This shows that the Israelites would preserve their genetic purity. Really? Perhaps we should also look at the verse before this one, and also the verse after verse 9. That will put God's statement into its proper context.

Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD *are* upon **the sinful kingdom**, and **I will destroy it from off the face of the earth**; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD. (Amos 9:8)

All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us. (Amos 9:10)

So here is what Amos 9 verses 8-10 tell us.

1) God would "destroy" the sinful kingdom "off the face of the earth". Did you know that? Do you accept this and believe it?

2) But in that process God would allow some people to survive that destruction; i.e. "I will not utterly destroy them".

3) Verse 9 elaborates the point that "I will not utterly destroy them". God means that the small percentage who would survive would be "sifted among all nations". This is speaking about the small minority that is not "destroyed off the face of the earth" surviving by being spread amongst many other nations.

4) So the next statement focuses on the majority and says that "all the sinners of My people shall die".

Verse 9 does not mean that those survivors would not intermarry with the non-Israelite people, amongst whom they would be sifted. Verse 9 is not about maintaining genetic purity, but about survival. The record shows that the people of Israel have always intermarried with non-Israelite stock. And so today most people exhibit DNA profiles that are quite complex.

But let's assume that the people in each of the nations we have designated as "Israelite" have a more or less consistent DNA profile.

How does God get 12,000 people who all have the more or less same DNA picture **to all really repent within the same generation**? Do those 12,000 people have a free will, or are they somehow compelled to repent at a specific point in time?

Understand the following:

Finding **12,000 converted people** in one country (or all with one distinct DNA profile) within one generation is something that God has never yet been able to achieve.

That is not a failure of God. It is because **all people are free moral agents**. Whether or not people will repent depends on those people themselves and not on God. God can call people and give them the opportunity to repent; but the people themselves must always decide whether or not to actually respond to that opportunity to repent. You know the parable of the sower sowing the seed. God does not determine the type of soil on which the seeds happen to fall. Human beings decide what that soil will be like.

Let me state something very plainly:

When we are talking about one single generation who are all alive at the same time, then it is impossible for God to predict how many of them will repent. And it is impossible to predict that the exact same number of people (i.e. 12,000) from 12 different national groups will all repent simultaneously within that one generation alive at that time. That is not something God can predict.

There is no way that this can happen amongst people who all have their own free will and free moral agency. The exact number of people **would have to be forced to repent** at that specific time. But that is not how God does things. And "forced repentance" has no value to God.

And furthermore, there cannot be two groups of 144,000 each in the first resurrection! There is no way that God will have 288,000 people in the first resurrection.

The only option for the 144,000 in Revelation 7 is that they are the same group as the 144,000 in Revelation 14. God identifies them already in Revelation 7 because they will play a key role in producing the great multitude that is described immediately after the 144,000. They are the wife that produces that great multitude. Revelation 14 sees that same group from a different perspective, one of ruling with Jesus Christ.

God structures His Family into groups called "nations". The 144,000 make up the top 12 nations in

God’s Family, and they will all reside in the New Jerusalem. Those top 12 nations will all be named for the 12 tribes of Israel, with the name Manasseh taking the place of the name Dan. Their "children" (i.e. the great multitude) will also be grouped into "nations", and they will all reside in cities outside of the New Jerusalem on the new earth.

Well, this should suffice for now. The most important points we’ve covered are:

1) The foundation for the wrong belief was extremely shallow with no other scriptural support. It was based totally on falsely interpreting one specific verse.

2) God "**divorced**" Israel.

3) All the natural branches were "**broken off**" from the olive tree.

4) Those who were invited to the first resurrection "were **not worthy**".

5) A second group of 144,000 in the first resurrection would not serve any specific purpose at all. Christ is not going to have **two wives**.

6) It is impossible for God to guarantee 12,000 converted individuals for each of 12 national groups within the same one generation.

7) Finding 12,000 individuals with distinct DNA profiles for each of 12 different nations, and then have all of them repent at more or less the same time, is a daunting task, to put it mildly. It is actually an impossible task.

8) The Book of Revelation makes more use of symbolism than any other book in the Bible. **Using physical Israel to represent spiritual Israel** is such an obvious choice that it is difficult to see how that can be questioned.

Can you understand that it is absolutely impossible for the 144,000 in Revelation 7 to be 12,000 physical Israelites from each of those 12 tribes at the end time?

Frank W Nelte