

# The End

Every Tribe

## Introduction

Last week, I asked you to search for the phrase “every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9), or something similar throughout Revelation.

**Q:** Why might this phrase and the ones like it be significant in Revelation and/or the grand layout of the Bible?

## Every Tribe and Language and People and Nation

The opening chapter of Revelation provides us with a series of descriptions and titles of Jesus. Most of these are either explicit Old Testament quotes, or find their foundation within the Old Testament text. Below are the various descriptions of Jesus and where they find their Old Testament home:

“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.” (Rev. 1:7)

“...by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation..” (Rev. 5:9)

“And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them...” (Rev. 5:13)

“Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains...” (Rev. 6:15)

“And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel.” (Rev. 7:4)

“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands...” (Rev. 7:9)

“And I was told, “You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.” (Rev. 10:11)

“For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb,” (Rev. 11:9)

“Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation...” (Rev. 13:7)

“Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people.” (Rev. 14:6)

“Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.” (Rev. 15:4)

“And the angel said to me, “The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. (Rev. 17:5)

“By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it...”  
(Rev. 21:24)

There are other references to “nations” throughout the book of Revelation. It’s clear, from the sheer prevalence of the references to the spread of them from the opening chapter to the last, that part of the hope of heaven are those that will be present.

These references are so much more than ‘a lot of people will be there’. They show the finality of God’s grand plan, a plan that God set into motion from the very beginning...

## All Nations, In the Old Testament

### Genesis

We begin the book of Genesis, and Scripture as a whole, with a picture of how God created things to be. Specifically, God created the world to be a place where His creation would live in harmony (peace) with one another and with Him. Sin ultimately corrupts this picture (Genesis 3), but God is not content to let His vision go by the wayside. The rest of the Biblical narrative shows us God’s work to bring about the creation again, specifically that all creation would once again be in harmony with the Creator.

As we move into Genesis 11, we, as readers, come to understand something God has known since before the creation was made, if the creation is going to be redeemed, it is going to take **direct** involvement from Him to bring it about. When man is left to their own devices, they will become their own gods (“make a name for ourselves”; Gen. 11:4) and move **further** from their Creator.

This is what ultimately leads us to the promise made to Abram in Genesis 12. This is God directly working with someone that will bring about His plan for all time: that of Creator and creation without separation. The words of this promise, which are repeated throughout the Old Testament, are very important:

*“...I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**”*

(Genesis 12:2-3)

God’s intention was never to take a part of the creation to be His own possession, but rather to reclaim all the nations of the earth by working directly with and through a specific part of the creation.

**Q:** What evidence from the Old Testament testifies to this truth?

### Isaiah

Through the upholding of God’s laws, the Jewish people would become righteous (this is still true today in our Christian walk), but this was never a solitary thing. By following these commandments, the Israelites would become God’s image-bearers reflecting a picture of His perfect creation to the world.

The idea of being a “light to the nations” is expressed repeatedly throughout the ending part of Isaiah (42:6; 49:6; 51:4; 60:3). These references are given during the hope-coming-out-of-exile portion of Isaiah and right before the ultimate references to God’s “new heavens and new earth” (65:17; 66:22) that John will reference at the end of the Revelation (Revelation 21:1).

### Ezekiel

The term "nation" is used some 80+ times in the prophecy of Ezekiel. Many of them center around what God is doing in the nations, as well as Israel's reputation among the nations (not good due to their ignoring of God's commandments).

There are a few references in the hopeful section of Ezekiel's prophecy that points to what the other nations will see about God (Ezekiel 38:23; 39:7, 21)

### Daniel

Daniel uses the phrase "peoples, nations, and languages" a few times throughout his writing. We've already noted some similarities between Daniel and the Revelation. The importance of the connection continues with this phrase. Notice how it is used...

**Q:** What is interesting about how the phrase is used throughout Daniel?

"And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages..." (Daniel 3:4)

"Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up." (Daniel 3:7)

"Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way." (Daniel 3:29)

"King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you!" (Daniel 4:1)

"And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled." (Daniel 5:19)

"Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you. I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel..." (Daniel 6:25-26)

"And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." (Daniel 7:14)

Daniel, like Revelation, is a book about empires. Throughout both books, there is a pull on all the nations, peoples, and languages, to come and join one empire over another. In Daniel, it's Babylon and in Revelation it's Rome (see Revelation 14:8; also Revelation 16:19; 17:5; 18:1, 2, 10, 21). Revelation is a reminder to the Christians undergoing persecution, that the nation of God's people will, like they have before, be the nation that is left standing. This time however, the purpose of God in being with His creation without separation will be fully realized...

### **One Nation, Under God**

The ending of Revelation includes a couple descriptors of heaven that use the term of "nation". They are as follows:

“And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the **nations** walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the **nations**. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.” (Revelation 21:23-27)

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the **nations**.” (Revelation 22:1-2)

These references close the loop on what we've seen so far. The nations will ultimately come to walk in the light of God (which God desired through Abraham and Israel). We even get a picture of the “nations” coming to God to be healed by leaves of the tree of life (an idea expressed in Ezekiel 47:12).

### **Summary**

Revelation presents an image of a world divided, coming together under the banner of King Jesus. We are moving towards a future where the nations will become one nation, under God fully devoted to Him, Creator with His creation without separation.

As we anticipate this future reality, we are presented with the same actions as Israel: to show others, through the righteousness that comes from living under the rule of God, that God is the power that should be followed, not the empires of the world.

### **Take Home**

Look for the word “conquer” throughout Revelation and note the occurrences below.