

## Why is the Tribe of Dan Missing in Revelation chapter 7?

**Question:** In Revelation chapter 7 the twelve tribes of Israel are mentioned but the Tribe of Dan is replaced by the Tribe of Levi. Why?

**Answer:** The tribe of Dan is omitted in Revelation chapter 7 while most other tribes are listed and named except that the tribe of Ephraim is called the tribe of Joseph. Why Dan is replaced by the tribe of Levi is not immediately apparent. Dan was the northernmost tribe geographically and the name means “judge”. Before he died, Jacob spoke prophetically of what would befall his sons *“in the last days”*. He said of Dan:

*“Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD”* (Gen.49:16-18).

Through history, the Tribe of Levi acted as judges, and assisted the sons of Aaron who had the priestly duties. Aaron was from the tribe of Levi. The tribe of Levi was given an inheritance among all the tribes so that it could fulfil its ministry and if Dan is to *“judge his people”* in the last days then Dan must perform that work in the millennium. We know that the tribe of Dan will be allotted a portion of the land in the millennial kingdom because Ezekiel plainly states the fact in Ezekiel 48:2 and the twelve gates of Jerusalem will be called after the twelve tribes. One gate is for the tribe of Dan (Ezek.48:32).

Joseph had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Joseph is normally replaced by Ephraim and Manasseh but the tribe of Manasseh is mentioned and Joseph replaces Ephraim in the list of tribes in Revelation chapter 7.

But this is not unusual. After the nation divided in the days of Rehoboam, the **whole northern kingdom** was sometimes called *Ephraim* which included 10 tribes but Joseph’s sons dominated. It was also called *Samaria* and *Israel*. The tribe of Simeon was absorbed into the southern kingdom of Judah in accordance with Jacob’s prophecy concerning Simeon and Levi: *“I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel”* (Gen.49:7). They were separated from each other and scattered in Israel.

However, in the millennium, the tribe of Levi will be located around the Temple (Ezek.48:13). **Only the sons of Zadok** from the Levites will be able to carry out **priestly duties** because the Levites must *“bear their iniquity”* for leading the people astray (Ezek.44:10-14). The most plausible explanation for the replacement of the tribe of Dan by the tribe of Levi is that Dan will take over Levi’s ministry of **judging Israel** in the millennial kingdom in accordance with the prophecy of Jacob that *“Dan shall judge his people”*.