

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 14TH-15TH, 2024 // REVELATION

THE SEALED 144,000 (REVELATION 7:1-8) CHAPTER 7 IS AN INTERLUDE

After John witnesses the sixth seal, he sees "four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, restraining the four winds" before more judgment from God takes place.

- If one believes Christians are present for at least some of the Tribulation, this is John seeing the state of the church during the seals.

"FOUR WINDS" ARE JUDGMENTS PERSONIFIED

Jeremiah 4:11-12 mentions winds of judgment. Before these winds are unleashed on humanity, the people of God will be sealed by a fifth angel who rises from the east.

- This is a different kind of seal from the ones on the scroll. This seal is a **mark of protection from God's judgment.**

"UNTIL WE SEAL THE SERVANTS..."

The seal is also a little different than the seal of salvation mentioned in Ephesians 1:13 when we give our lives to Christ. This is a metaphorical seal that also indicates **ownership.**

- Later in Revelation, another group will also receive a seal of ownership, but it will not be from God.

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE SEALED 144,000

This is a literal number of all saved people who will rule a perfect new earth (JW).

- A symbolic number of all saved people from every nation.
- A literal sealing of a remnant of Jews that God will bring through the Great Tribulation in order to keep His promise (Genesis 12, Jeremiah 31).

THIS BECOMES A SOURCE OF CONTENTION

Some believe we will be raptured before the Tribulation and the Jews will convert and be the vessel God uses to reach people.

- Many in this camp believe in Replacement Theology (also called Covenant View) that states modern Christians have replaced the Jews since they rejected Jesus.

MORE ON THE COVENANT VIEW

It's the view that the modern church replaced the Jews because they rejected Jesus. Also, Israel in the NT is symbolic of Christianity.

- They believe God has one covenant, grace, that operates through different groups. Since we've been "grafted in" (Romans 11), God's promise and grace are now with us.

ANOTHER VIEW IS THE DISPENSATIONAL VIEW

God has not forgotten the Jews, but since they initially rejected Christ, **Christians are to carry the torch until they have a revelation of Christ, or the "fullness of the Gentiles"** (Romans 11:25).

- Israel and the Church are separate things in the NT and Israel will be restored.

TO SIMPLIFY IT A TOUCH

Some would say the first half of this chapter is about God's concern for the Jews and the second half about His concern for Christians. This seems to make the most sense.

- **God keeps His promises and will spiritually protect His people through the end. He also isn't finished with the Jews.**

A REMINDER THAT WE WON'T FIGURE IT ALL OUT

We're speculating on the identity of the 144,000, and the tribes mentioned are slightly different from the OT lists (Dan is missing and the list is similar to military formation in the OT).

- **We won't know every detail, so we must focus on the main objective; to be spiritually ready for whatever the future holds.**

A VAST MULTITUDE (REVELATION 7:9-14) FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN

The first half of this chapter seems to focus on a small group of people on earth during the Tribulation. The second half focuses on a "vast multitude" in heaven "no one could number."

- These people represent "every nation, tribe, people, and language." This shows us that **heaven will be diverse.**

STANDING BEFORE THE THRONE OF THE LAMB

This multitude was "clothed in white robes" (purity) and had palm branches in their hands as they "loud[ly]" worshiped God. Palm branches were the equivalent of balloons at a party. This marked joy and festivity.

- **Not only will heaven be diverse, it will be a fun, huge celebration.**

WHAT ARE THEY CELEBRATING?

Their praise and celebration comes from being saved by Christ. They are overjoyed because not only have they **escaped eternal separation from their Creator**, but they have been **saved from their mistakes, abuse, sadness, heartbreak, and the trials they've endured in life.**

THE ANGELS JOIN THE CELEBRATION

Imagine the countless amounts of angels, the four creatures, and 24 elders joining all saved humans as we collectively worship God!

- They all acknowledge that **it is God's glory, wisdom, honor, power, and strength that make salvation possible, not humanity's "goodness" or ability.**

WHO ARE THEY AND WHERE ARE THEY FROM?

One of the elders asks John, "Who are these people in white robes, and where did they come from?" This is rhetorical, so John replies, "Sir, you know."

- This scene is all followers of God, but the number is increasing because of people being martyred during the Tribulation.

THE FIRST MENTION OF THE "GREAT TRIBULATION"

This refers to the last 7 years of life as we know it (more specifically the last 3 ½ years). Jesus said that during this time there will be "great distress" that will be unprecedented.

- The only way the multitude endured was they "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

TO BE CLEAN, WE MUST BE COVERED

The visual of white robes covered in blood is provocative and is intended to be. It shows **the only thing able to cleanse us from sin and evil is the blood of Jesus!**

- **We try all kinds of means of self-help, but we continue to spiral because only Jesus' work can purify and restore!**

A GLIMPSE (REVELATION 7:15-17)

"FOR THIS REASON THEY ARE BEFORE THE THRONE"

The people worshipping around the throne were **willing to give their lives for Christ, because they understood He'd given His for them.**

- They'll "serve him day and night." **Serve** in this passage means to *worship*. There is no day, night, or temple in heaven. These are metaphors for being with God forever.

THE ELDER MENTIONS SOME ETERNAL BLESSINGS

- **God will "shelter them":** Saved humanity will spiritually, physically, and eternally dwell with God in safety and peace.
- **"They will no longer hunger [or thirst]":** We will eat from the Tree of Life and hunger, famine, and sickness will cease to exist.
- **"The sun will no longer strike them":** The universe will no longer be hostile. There is no need for the sun, we get life and illumination from the Son.
- **"Nor will any scorching heat":** This could mean the heat from warfare, weapons, or even being burned alive for their faith.
- **The Lamb will "shepherd them":** An interesting phrase. The Lamb is the Savior, but also the Shepherd Who eternally leads us to **"springs of the waters of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."**
- **We see that eternity is active and that we are still growing in our experiences.**

THE DIFFERENT SEALS OF OUR FAITH

- In Revelation we learn of 7 seals that unlock future events. We are also reminded of more personal seals given to us by God.
- At salvation we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. This seal leads to another seal of ownership and spiritual protection through extreme adversity.

PROPER EXPECTATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY

- **Diversity:** Our faith is made up of all colors, ethnicities, nationalities, and backgrounds.
- **Adversity:** Following Christ is not an escape from hardships but is often a door to them.
- **Dependency:** Because of adversity and our past sins, we must become utterly dependent and trusting of Jesus and His Word.
- **Responsibility:** We must also take initiative to build a relationship with Jesus through prayer, reading the Word, and obedience. We are also responsible for sharing the truth and loving and serving other people. **Christians must own their actions and thoughts.**
- **Hope:** A relationship with Jesus produces hope, even when things look bleak.
- **Joy, peace, and love:** Regardless of circumstances, true Christians experience joy, peace, and true/pure love.
- **Growth:** With God we not only grow now but continue to have new experiences forever.

KEEPING HIS PROMISES

- God keeps His promises. **He assures those willing to lose their life because of Him that they will find life.** This means salvation, change, and being equipped in life.
- The promise of salvation is conditional. We must **take the initiative to be in relationship with Jesus and to submit to His authority.**
- With salvation comes the promise of hope and help in this life and the promise of a perfect eternal life. In eternity we receive permanent **shelter and security, sustenance, and a perfect mind, body, and environment.**

THE GREATEST PROMISE

- **Even greater than the amenities of heaven is the promise we will dwell with God forever** (Revelation 21:3). **This will be the true beauty of heaven.** We will be forever reconciled with our Creator and will get to walk and talk with Him in perfection.