

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 15TH, 2024 // REVELATION

THE SEALED SERVANTS OF GOD (REVELATION 7:1-8)

CHAPTER 7 IS AN INTERLUDE

John, from a heavenly perspective, is receiving a vision from God concerning the end of all things and God's judgment being poured out.

- Everything John is seeing and recording **takes place right after the breaking of the first six seals** (Chapter 6) **and before the seventh seal is broken** (Chapter 8).

THE FOUR CORNERS AND FOUR WINDS

John records seeing four angels standing at the **"four corners of the earth."** This is a poetic way to describe the entire earth by using terms similar to that of a compass (north, south, east, and west).

- The four angels are restraining the winds of God's judgment** (Jeremiah 4:11-12; Hosea 13:15) **until the people of God are sealed by a fifth angel who rises from the east.**

AUTHENTICATION AND PROTECTION

John sees this fifth angel ascending out of the east who has the seal of the Living God. **This angel cries out to the other four not to harm the earth until the servants of God have been sealed.**

- Most likely this seal is symbolic, but **John sees God's angel stamp God's seal on His servants.** Later in Revelation, **we see another mark placed on those who are hostile to God.**

12 TRIBES OF ISRAEL

Verses 4-8 contain the **only New Testament list of the 12 tribes of Israel**, but with one discrepancy: The tribe of Dan is absent, and a grandson of Jacob (Manasseh) is listed.

- This group is intended to represent **a special remnant of God's people that will be preserved and protected on the earth during the time of tribulation and judgment.**

TWO MAIN VIEWS OF THE 144,000

One view is that this number is **a symbolic representation of the church** (Galatians 6:16), regardless of ethnic background, who are preserved and protected from the last judgments on earth.

- Another view is that this number is **a remnant of Jewish Believers** who are preserved and protected for an end-times purpose.

THE FIRST VIEW: COVENANT VIEW

People with this view believe **the modern church has replaced the Jews because of their rejection of the Savior.** This group thinks that Israel in the NT is symbolic of Christianity.

- This view says there is one covenant, grace, that operates through different groups, and Believers in Jesus have been "grafted in" (Romans 11) and receive God's promise and grace.

THE SECOND VIEW: DISPENSATIONAL VIEW

People with this view believe **God has not forgotten the Jews.** Though the Jews initially rejected Jesus, **the Church is to carry the torch until the Jews have a revelation of the Messiah or the "fulness of the Gentiles"** (Romans 11:25).

- This view says that Israel and the Church are two different things, and Israel will eventually be restored.

THE MOST STRAIGHTFORWARD READING OF THE TEXT

If we are led to believe that the 144,000, who are identified as being **"from every tribe of the Israelites,"** are ethnic Jews, then this passage seems to be **a symbolic picture of the salvation of Israel that will happen in the last days.**

- The 144,000 most likely represent a remnant of Jewish Believers, who accept Jesus as the messiah in the last days.**

ALL OF GOD'S PROMISES ARE FAITHFUL AND TRUE

Paul addressed the topic of the Jewish unbelievers in light of the promises of God, insisting that **God's promises have not been revoked and He was not finished with Israel** (Romans 9-11).

- God is not through with Israel and **He will protect them, allowing them to fulfill the mandate of being a "light for the nations"** (Isaiah 49:6) **and the prophecy given to Zechariah** (8:23).

A VAST MULTITUDE (REVELATION 7:9-14)

TURNING HIS FOCUS BACK TO THE THRONE

After John sees the 144,000 on earth, he looks and sees **a multitude before the throne and before the Lamb.**

- We see **diversity in the multitude** ("every nation, tribe, people, and language") and the **fulfillment of the Great Commission** (Matthew 28:16-20) before the end (Matthew 24:14).

A GREAT CELEBRATION OF THE REDEEMED

The multitude were **"clothed in white robes,"** symbolizing purity, and **they held palm branches**, emblems of victory, similar to the triumphant entry of Jesus in John 12:12-16.

- The multitude is celebrating a great victory recognizing that **God is the source of salvation**—it is not something we earn, but something God gives us.

TRUE WORSHIP BRINGS PERFECT CLARITY

As the angels, four living creatures, elders, and the multitude worship, **they see God's power, wisdom, and majesty more clearly.**

- If worship is when we give our deepest affections and highest praise to something, **maybe we don't see things as clearly as we should because we haven't placed God above everything else and put Him first in our hearts.**

"SIR, YOU KNOW."

It was important that John knew the identity of the multitude so one of the elders prompted him by asking, **"Who are these people in white robes, and where did they come from?"**

- The elder's answer indicates the number of **the multitude was increasing** as those "rescued" (most likely martyred) for God's Kingdom during the tribulation, were joining in the celebration.

ONLY THE WORK OF JESUS CAN CLEANSE AND SAVE

Those rescued during the Great Tribulation are saved the same way as everyone else: **by the blood of the Lamb.** Their martyrdom, the shedding of their blood, is not what saved them.

- The multitude was able to endure this time of "great distress" because they were covered by the blood of the Lamb. **What worldly ways have we tried to "cover" sin?**

A GLIMPSE (REVELATION 7:15-17)

"FOR THIS REASON..."

Because of the redemptive work of Christ, **this multitude of people is described as receiving ten eternal blessings.**

- This multitude, and the martyrs being added to them, enjoyed these blessings because they gave their lives for Christ. They did so willingly because **they understood He had given His life for them.**

A GLIMPSE INTO SOME OF THE BLESSINGS OF HEAVEN

- They're "before the throne of God" serving Him with a heavenly purpose as He shelters them in His presence.
- They will **no longer hunger or thirst.** Famine and the pains of hunger and thirst will no longer exist.
- "The sun will not strike them nor any scorching heat."** Many Believers have been burned alive for their faith, but never again will that happen.
- The Lamb will **"shepherd them."** In eternity Jesus will guide and care for His people with gentleness and love.
- He **leads them to water.** Christ will usher His people into a place where our physical and spiritual thirst will be quenched eternally (Revelation 21:6).
- "God will wipe every tear from their eyes."** There will be no more pain, mourning, or death.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

- We see God keeping His promises in Chapter 7 and we can trust His promises, but we need to know **He has never promised a life of ease.**
- We should **expect to suffer in this life**, but also **to overcome by the blood of the Lamb.** Those "washed" in the "blood of Lamb" **can expect to enjoy eternity in the direct presence of God.**

WE HAVE A REASON TO CELEBRATE!

- Do we celebrate our redemption through Jesus, or do we believe we have done something to earn or deserve salvation?**
- Are we overjoyed because we have escaped eternal separation from our Creator and will be free from past mistakes, sadness, abuses, and trials we have endured in this life?**