

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 15TH, 2024 // REVELATION

THE SEALED OF ISRAEL (REVELATION 7:1-8) CHAPTER 7 IS AN INTERLUDE

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

- From this heavenly vantage point, John will see the state of the church during the time of the seals.

THE FOUR WINDS ARE JUDGMENTS PERSONIFIED

Jeremiah 4:11-12 mentions these 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 Jesus broke on the scroll. This seal is a **mark of protection from destruction and God's judgment.**

SEALED ON THEIR FOREHEADS

The seal these people receive is not the sign of salvation like mentioned in Eph. 1:13 when we give our lives to Christ. This is a unique metaphorical seal for these people to indicate **divine ownership** and **protection**.

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

WHAT'S UP WITH THE 144,000?

There are several views on who these 144,000 will be, but two views stand out as the most logical.

- This is either a symbolic number of end-time Christians regardless of ethnic background or a remnant of Jews who fulfill God's promise to Israel.

THE 1ST VIEW IS CALLED THE COVENANT VIEW

It's the idea that the **modern-day Church is the fulfillment of OT promises through the Messiah**. Israel and the Church are united throughout redemptive history.

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

THE 2ND VIEW IS CALLED THE DISPENSATIONAL VIEW

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

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

SO, WHO ARE THEY?

- The **Covenant View** would say the sealed saints are protected to lead people to Christ during the tribulation. God's promise is fulfilled through the Church.
- The **Dispensational View** would say it is a symbolic or literal number of Jews who are left and saved to ensure God keeps His promise to the Jewish people (Jeremiah 31).

FOCUSING ON WHAT IS IMPORTANT

Not only are we speculating on who the 144,000 represent, but the Tribes mentioned are slightly different from the OT lists (Dan is completely missing). So, we must focus on the main point.

- **God is sovereign and will protect those He's promised to protect through the worst of the end-time events.**

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

The first half of this chapter is focused on a small group of people on earth going through the Tribulation, but the second half is on a multitude of people in heaven "no one could number."

- These people represent "every nation, tribe, people, and language." **Heaven will be a very diverse place.**

STANDING BEFORE THE THRONE AND THE LAMB

This vast multitude was "clothed in white robes" that symbolize purity and had palm branches in their hands as they "cried out in a loud voice" and worshiped God.

- Palm branches were the equivalent of balloons at a party. They marked joy and festivity. **Not only will heaven be diverse, it will be a huge celebration.**

WHAT ARE THEY CELEBRATING?

Their praise and celebration come 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 IN 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 God's glory, wisdom, honor, power, and strength made salvation possible, not humanity's goodness or ability.**

WHO ARE THEY, AND WHERE ARE THEY FROM?

One of the elders around God 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 worship scene is all followers of God, but the number is increasing because of people being killed during the Tribulation.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

This term refers to the last 7 years of human existence on earth. Jesus said there would be "great distress" during this time, which would 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 being covered in blood is graphic and provocative, and it is intended to be. **It shows us that the only thing that can cleanse us is the cross and the blood Jesus shed for our sins!**

- **We try all kinds of materialistic and bizarre means of helping ourselves, but it's only Jesus Who can purify!**

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 life for them.

- The elder said 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 POINTS OUT SOME BLESSINGS OF HEAVEN

- **God will "shelter them"**: Which means dwelling and living with humanity, not just in spirit but literally seeing His presence.
- **"They will no longer hunger [or thirst]"**: We will eat from the Tree of Life, and famine will no longer exist.
- **"The sun will no longer strike them"**: There is no need for the sun; we have 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"**: Every need is met by the Lamb Who is, as we now see, our Shepherd Who leads us to "springs of the waters of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

PROPER CHRISTIAN EXPECTATIONS

- We should expect to suffer in this life. We should also expect to overcome by the power of God's Spirit.
- **The cross can cover all sin**, if we will humble ourselves and repent. God's Spirit will not share space with other gods.
- **If we fail to repent, we should not expect positive results or change in our lives.**

HOPE AMONGST DESTRUCTION

- We need to be reminded that this life is temporary and the things we tend to value are fleeting. **The things we are pursuing are not fixing our problems.**
- A relationship with Jesus gives us hope and peace in the middle of societies and cultures that are self-destructing and hurting others in the process.
- We learn from chapter 7 that **God keeps His promises**. We must also know that **God never promised us an easy life.**
- **We are promised a reward for our dedication to Him**. We will not only be eternally taken care of, but **we will be with Him in perfect joy and community.**