

# Revelation Chapter 7

## 7:1-8 The Sealing of the 144,000 Jews

*“And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four comers of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.”*

This chapter is known as an interlude, a short piece introduced between acts which does not advance the narrative. It is also known as a parenthetical section where information is inserted into the narrative. Obviously these are correct ways to describe this chapter and other sections of the book, because it is clear that God temporarily stops a forward movement and inserts additional information on the many events that will happen during the coming tribulation time. Here's what we're to notice about the sealing of the one hundred and forty-four thousand Jews and the things surrounding them:

A. After John sees the events to take place under the opening of six of the seals, perhaps he begins to wonder if there's any hope at all from any during the tribulation and under such conditions, so, God pauses to inform him of some who would be saved and used of God even during the awful time of the tribulation. Chapter seven is a glimpse of glory in the midst of gloom.

B. These people that are saved in this chapter are people who have never heard a clear presentation of the gospel message before the rapture of the church. I understand this to be the case because of 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12, where it seems clear to me that if one has heard the gospel during this church age and has willfully rejected it, should the rap-

ture occur, they will believe a lie because they didn't love the truth when they had opportunity to receive it. I do not believe there'll be a second chance for those who have rejected Christ and were left behind.

C. John sees four angel standing on the four comers of the earth holding back the four winds of the earth, verse 1. These angels are not identified and it is fruitless to speculate. The four comers of the earth are the four direction of the earth, north, south, west, east. You can see this because the four comers of the earth and the four winds of the earth are used synonymously in this verse. Compare Isaiah 11:12, Matthew 24:31, Revelation 20:8. This is not a suggestion that the earth is flat and square as some have thought. God spoke of the circle of the earth many, many years before, Isaiah 40:22. God has given these four powerful angels charge to hold back his winds of judgement until such a time that they are designed to blow. God will have them restrained until his servants are sealed. These are judgements of God's wrath and God will not pour out wrath upon his loyal subjects. They must be sealed for protection against them. The tribulational judgements will affect the earth and all the unsaved, but will not directly affect these 144,000 Jews.

D. In verse 2 John sees another angel in addition to the four, ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And through this angel God commands the other four to keep holding those winds of judgement back until he had placed a seal of protection upon the foreheads of the 144,000 Jews, verses 3-8. Things to notice about their sealing:

1. The purpose of this seal in their foreheads is clearly to protect them from the judgements of God that will come during the tribulation upon the earth. This is a very important observation because of the fact that some expositors believe that this seal protects them from the wrath of the Antichrist. Some believe that these who are sealed are protected from death and are delivered safely through the tribulation alive. But such an ideal is not supported in scripture. The purpose of the seal is to protect them from the judgements of God, not the wrath of Antichrist.

2. God will protect them from his judgements that are falling all around in the same way that he protected Israel during the time of his judgement plagues upon Egypt. Compare Exodus 8:22, 9:6, 11:7, 12:13.

3. The 144,000 sealed Jews are not protected from the wrath of the Antichrist. In fact, they will suffer at his hands and be killed, Revelation 11:7, 12:17, 13:15, 14:1.

4. It is Israel as a nation that is preserved through the tribulation as they have always been preserved, Isaiah 1:9,

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Romans 11:1-7, Revelation 12:14-16. It is not reasonable to think that God would call 144,000 for the ministry during the tribulation and then hide them from the enemy whom they're to preach to and against. Even the two witnesses of chapter 11: 1-7 are only protected supernaturally for the first part of the tribulation, then they are killed. And there is no indication that these 144,000 will be so protected at all for any length of time. They will be martyred.

5. These 144,000 servants of God are Jews, not Gentiles, Mormons, so called Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptist or such.

6. The seal of the living God in their forehead is the Father's name, Revelation 14:1.

7. These 144,000 servants of God consist of 12,000 from twelve tribes of Israel. John lists them as follows:

- (1) Juda
- (2) Reuben
- (3) Gad
- (4) Aser
- (5) Nephtalim
- (6) Manasses
- (7) Simeon
- (8) Levi
- (9) Issachar
- (11) Joseph
- (12) Benjamin

8. If you compare the list of the twelve tribes given by John with the list given in the old testament you will notice that they are a little different. For instance:

(1) The tribe of Dan does not appear in John's list. Possible explanations are; Since Dan was more quickly led into idolatry than the others, see Judges 17-18, maybe God can not trust them during the tribulation when there will be an even greater temptation to go into idolatry. Also, the name Dan means judged, Genesis 30:6. Perhaps for reasons of his own God judged Dan unworthy to be among the tribulation witnesses. Then, there is a possible prophetic indication that the Antichrist will come from that tribe, "he shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path," Genesis 49:17. And even though judges came out of this tribe, could it still be that in the final days they will be associated with that old serpent, the devil, Revelation 12:9? Would not they support one from their own tribe?

(2) The half tribe Ephraim does not appear. They too were very idolatrous, joined to idols, Hosea 4:17, and compassed God about with lies, Hosea 11:12. Could it be that they will believe "the lie of the tribulation", II Thessalonians 2: 11? The name of Joseph takes his place along side Manasses. It seems that the half tribe Ephraim is there but goes by the name of Joseph instead of Ephraim, probably

to disassociate them with the idolatrous name Ephraim and associate them with the more godly name of Joseph.

(3) The tribe of Levi, not normally numbered with the other tribes because of it's calling and position of priest, is here numbered, instead of Dan. They will minister during the tribulation.

E. It seems clear that these 144,000 Jews will serve God during the tribulation in the capacity of evangelist who preach the gospel of the then soon coming kingdom, see Matthew 24:14.

- (4) Aser
- (5) Nephtalim
- (9) Issachar
- (10) Zabulon

## 7:9-17 The Salvation of many during the tribulation

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beast, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God. Saying, Amen:

Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in this temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

As stated earlier, chapter 7 is a glimpse of glory in the midst of gloom. In addition to the 144,000 Jews who are sealed for service during the tribulation, many, many more are saved. And it seems that this great multitude are saved as a result to the labour of the 144,000 servants. Let's notice these things:

a. This unnumbered multitude consist of all nationalities and languages. Obviously they will be reached by massive evangelistic efforts. John sees them standing before the

throne and before Christ in heaven. This multitude is clearly identified as those who will come out of great tribulation, verse 14, Matthew 24:21,29. Therefore they are not the church. They are an additional multitude. It's interesting that one of the elders ask John who this multitude was and where they came from. It's not that the elders didn't know, they did, verse 14. It seems rather that God wanted John and in turn us to have a clear understanding of the fact that many will be saved during the tribulation. John said "Sir, thou knowest".

b. This unnumbered multitude before God's throne are clothed in white robes, verses 9,13,14.

Their robes are white because they are made white in the blood of the Lamb. You see, while there are definitely different dispensations of time with different requirements for a right relationship with God placed upon man, there is only one way of salvation, only one plan that spans the ages, and that way is Christ, John 14:6. The bottom line is always the grace of God! It is only Christ's blood that can cleanse and make us fit subjects for heaven. Yes, the tribulation time will be different from this church age. It will be similar to the old testament economy with God working through the nation of Israel again, but, salvation will still be as it's always been, by the blood of Christ.

c. It also seems clear that this unnumbered multitude have been persecuted and killed by the Antichrist because they would not accept his mark nor bow to his worship, Revelation 13:7,15-17. Notice how their blessings in heaven are contrasted with their sufferings on earth, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;" verse 16. Because they were fugitives from the Antichrist system, they could not buy food or water. They therefore were left to find it where they could and they never find enough. But the trial of their faith is over now and they "hunger and thirst no more", because the Lamb feeds them, verse 17. They had been forced to flee where they could and many times suffer in the hot sun, but now all that's over and they are at home with Jesus around the living waters of glory. And their tears are wiped away!

d. This unnumbered multitudes stand before God with palms in their hands. These are emblems of victory and praise. And doubtless they lay them down before the feet of Jesus in adoration of him. Compare John 12:13, Revelation 4:10. As the multitude give their praises to God, verse 10, the angels of God, the elders representing the church, and the four beast representing creation reconciled, fall upon their faces before the throne with their additional praise, verse 12.