

Revelation Chapter 7

Verses 7-14: Suggest that before the world is plunged into the plagues and disasters ushered in by the sixth seal judgment at the end of the first quarter of the Tribulation, God will raise up an army of 144,000 Jewish evangelists to spread across the globe and bring in a soul harvest of unimaginable proportions. Each of these "servants" of God will receive a "seal" on his forehead. While we don't know exactly what this seal will be, the text seems to suggest it will be visible, (at least to Christians). Whatever the seal is, it affords these 144,000 Jewish witnesses "of all the tribes of the children of Israel", some kind of supernatural protection. At least until the great soul harvest (of Rev. 7:9), can be accomplished.

Chapter 7 is a parenthesis in the chronology of Revelation, showing God's program of grace and salvation during the period of judgment. The winds depict God's judgment of the earth, and the four angels are restraining agents who hold back the judgment until God's special servants can be sealed.

This answers the question posed at the end of chapter 6. Two distinct groups will survive the divine fury:

- (1) 144,000 Jewish evangelists on earth (verses 1-8); and
- (2) Their converts in heaven (verses 9-17).

The parenthesis probably looks back to the same time period as that covered by the six seals, so that the 144,000 must be sealed before the Tribulation judgments begin.

Revelation 7:1 "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners 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."

This "after" is after the happenings of the first six seals. These angels (ministering spirits), were to do something to the whole earth (four corners of the earth). These angels were waiting for orders from God.

The 4 quadrants of the compass; that is, the angels will take up key positions on earth. Their job at this moment was to control these four winds until God said release them. The four winds is a figurative expression, indicating all the earth's winds, those from south, east, north and west. The 4 angels will turn off, for a brief interlude, the essential engine of our earth's atmosphere. The wrath is held back until those who must be sealed are sealed.

Revelation 7:2 "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,"

This angel sent from God was probably an archangel, or maybe even Jesus, Himself. This angel is entrusted with the job of taking a signet and putting God's mark upon the group that God will protect in the midst of the wrath of God. Even though this group will be on the earth during this terrible wrath that shall fall on the inhabitants of the earth, they will be protected, for they are sealed with God's name on their forehead in full view.

God has said over and over throughout the Bible that there has been a remnant of Jews who have not bowed their knee to false gods. At one point in the Old Testament, He said that the number then was 7000. We read (in the 11th chapter of Romans), that God told Elijah that there were 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

Romans 11:4, "But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal."

You see, God has always had a remnant of physical Israel.

This angel comes from the east. This is the same location from which the light comes. This angel has authority over these four angels.

Revelation 7:3 "Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."

"Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea ... trees": Let the winds be restrained until what is here designated shall be done. The "sea" here could be a literal sea or as in other places it means large groups of people.

These destroying angels were commanded to suspend the work of destruction until the servants of God could be rendered secure. The division here (as in Revelation 7:1), of the "earth, the sea, and the trees," seems to include everything; water, land, and the productions of the earth. Nothing was to be injured until the angel should designate the true servants of God.

It was common in John's day for masters to seal or brand their slaves on the forehead or the hand to declare ownership. This mark also granted them protection for those who would steal or misuse them. In future days, when the seal of the Antichrist signifies death or life, Satan will have marked his followers, but God's witnesses will be sealed as well, with the name of the Father "in their foreheads".

Verses 4-8: The seal shows ownership and security, as a king's signet ring was used to authenticate and protect official documents. The 144,000 are all Israelites from the 12 tribes (12 times 12,000). This number may be taken literally, or figuratively of a national conversion. All 12 tribes returned from exile, and there was always a remnant from the entire nation in Israel

(compare 2 Chron. 30:1-10, 25, 26; Matt. 10:5-6; Acts 26:7). The promise of future restoration is given to all 12 tribes (compare Isa. 11:11-13; Ezek. 3; Revelation 7:15-28). There are no lost tribes". In the list of tribes, Joseph stands for Ephraim, and Dan is missing, possibly because it was the first tribe to go into idolatry and apostasy (compare Judges chapter 18). The 144,000 will apparently be converted and commissioned to be a light to the Gentiles during the Tribulation.

Revelation 7:4 "And I heard the number of them which were sealed: [and there were] sealed a hundred [and] forty [and] four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel."

"A hundred and forty and four thousand": A missionary corps of redeemed Jews who are instrumental in the salvation of many Jews and Gentiles during the Tribulation (verses 9-17). They will be the firstfruits of a new redeemed Israel (Zech. 12:10). Finally, Israel will be the witness nation she refused to be in the Old Testament (see notes on Rom. 11:25-27).

"All the tribes of the children of Israel": By sovereign election, God will seal 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes, promising His protection while they accomplish their mission.

"You Shall Seek Me and Find Me When You Search For Me with All Your Heart". This is a promise from God Almighty (Deut. 4:29). God has never been without a witness of His salvation on this earth. Since all believers from this present age will have been suddenly and miraculously removed by the event known as the Rapture, new witnesses must be raised up immediately.

Imagine what would happen if, suddenly, in the midst of some very trying times on earth, 144,000 Israelites instantly and miraculously became devout believers in Jesus as their promised Messiah and Savior. This will occur much the same as Saul of Tarsus (Paul), was miraculously brought to faith on the road to Damascus. I don't know what will cause the conversion, other than the power of the Holy Spirit.

But in multiple miraculous incidences, 144,000 Jews will be brought to faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, and will become powerful evangelists. Picture 144,000 Hebrew Billy Grahams' running around the world and bringing this miraculous saving truth to a troubled and confused populace. That's just what's going to happen.

God's Special Protection for the 144,000. Since these servants will be marked men on earth, working directly counter to the interests of the global leader, they will be "marked" men in more than one sense of the word. They will be under constant attack by the Antichrist's forces as well as the demonic powers unleashed upon the earth. At various times, they will suffer from hunger, exposure, ridicule, torture and imprisonment. But they all will be miraculously preserved to continue their witness throughout the tribulation period.

At the very end, the 144,000 witnesses will stand triumphantly on Mount Zion with Jesus. Jesus refers to them as "these brothers of mine". (Matt. 25:31-46). The way a person treats these

evangelists during the Tribulation will reflect whether he is a believer in their message or not. Keep in mind, it will be extremely perilous to aid and abet them. They will no doubt be on the Antichrist's "most wanted list". But the lesson is that God's man or woman is indestructible until God is finished with him here on earth.

Just the fact that there is a specific number given tells you that these are not the believers. The believers cannot be numbered for multitude. The Christians are not from the tribes of Israel necessarily. Many of them have no Jewish blood whatsoever. In (Galatians chapter 3), we read that believers in Christ are Abraham's descendants because of faith, not blood.

In (Gal. 3:8), the believers are called heathen, which people of physical Israel are never called. Abraham is not the father of believers because of blood line, but because they (the same as Abraham), are saved by faith.

Galatians 3:7-8, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, [saying], In thee shall all nations be blessed."

You see, the tribes we are about to see listed are all of the nation of Israel. The only way this makes any sense is that this 144,000 is the remnant of physical Israel that God has always had.

Verses 7:5-8: Some scholars argue that the 144,000 evangelists aren't necessarily Jews? But a reading of (Rev. 7:4-8), tells us they are wrong. Those verses go on to identify the "tribes" that each of the 12,000 comes from.

Revelation 7:5-8 "Of the tribe of Judah [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 Asher [were] sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Naphtali [were] sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasseh [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 Zebulon [were] sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph [were] sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin [were] sealed twelve thousand".

Most Jews alive today do not know which tribe they come from. But God does! And He purposely selects 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes. You may notice when you read (Rev. 7:5-8), that 2 tribes are missing and 2 others have been substituted in their places. Why?

Some scholars believe the tribe of Dan is missing because the Jewish Antichrist, known as the False Prophet, will be a descendant. This certainly seems to be the meaning of an ancient prophecy that Jacob gave about the tribes of Israel in the last days:

Gen. 49:17 "Dan will be a serpent in the way, a venomous viper by the path, that bites the horse's heels so that his rider falls backward".

We can expect the Holy Spirit to move on the hearts of people at the beginning of the Tribulation and culminate with the second coming of Christ.

Later (in Revelation 14), we'll discover another 144,000. See if you think that they are the same or different.

From this list of 12 names both Dan (who we just discussed), and Ephraim are omitted. Dan was omitted because of the evil in his life. On the other hand, Levi, Joseph, and Manasseh help to make up the twelve. Levi was not listed before, because he received no land. He was of the priestly tribe which inherited no land. God chooses whom He will.

Verses 9-12: Many Gentiles will be saved during the Tribulation, apparently through the evangelistic ministry of the sealed Jews. The "white robes" portray a standing of righteousness, and the multitude praises God especially for their "salvation". Note the seven fold praise of verse 12.

Revelation 7:9 "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;"

While the tribulation period will be a time of judgment, it will also be a time of unprecedented redemption (compare verses 14; 6:9-11; 20:4; Isa. 11:10; Matt. 24:14).

"All nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues": All the earth's people groups.

"White robes" (see note on 3:4).

"And palms": In ancient times, they were associated with celebrations, including the Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles (Lev. 23:40; Neh. 8:17; John 12:13).

These are obviously the believers in Jesus Christ (Lamb), who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and raptured into heaven prior to the Tribulation.

One comforting truth gleaned from Revelation is that although Antichrist will have power over all peoples and languages, he will not deceive every individual. (verse 9), makes it clear that the preaching of the gospel by the 144,000 Jewish witnesses will reach a multitude that no one can number, from every language, tribe, and people. Therefore, even Satan's control will not keep people from receiving Christ individually.

This is in accord with the way it has been all during the Christian dispensation. Nations and peoples have rejected Christ, but individuals have received Him (according to John 1).

John 1:10-12 "He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him." "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

Revelation Chapter 7 Questions

1. Who did John see standing on the four corners of the earth?
2. Why were they there?
3. What do the four corners show us?
4. Who were these angels awaiting orders from?
5. Where did this other angel ascend from?
6. What did this angel have?
7. What instruction did the angel, that called out, give the four angels?
8. What was this angel to do with the signet?
9. Where will this group be during the Wrath of God?
10. What, besides a literal sea, could be meant here?
11. In the 11th chapter of Romans, we read that God said, He had a remnant of how many who had not bowed the knee to Baal?
12. Is this 144,000 physical or spiritual Israel?
13. This 144,000 were from where?
14. In Galatians chapter 3, we read what about the believers?
15. What is a name physical Israel is never called?
16. Name the twelve tribes who had 12,000 each sealed?
17. Who was obviously missing?
18. Why was Levi not listed in other lists in the Bible when they were dividing the land?

19. What does the fact that this multitude is dressed in white robes tell us about them?