

Chapter summary - *In this parenthetical chapter we find God sealing the 144,000 Jews. Assuming they are sealed and commissioned for the work that they should have aspired to perform at Christ's death and resurrection. Israel was to be the primary force behind the spreading the gospel throughout the world. Since they not only did not aspire to lead in this high calling of heavenly work, but didn't want anything to do with it period, the privilege was granted to the Gentiles to perform. This new privilege of the Gentiles being the primary leaders in the spreading of the gospel, is theirs until the conclusion of the "dispensation of grace." This dispensation began at the inception of the church after Christ's resurrection, and its conclusion will be at the rapture of the church, before the beginning of the 70 week of Daniel; the 7 years of tribulation. At this time the Jews will see their grave mistake and accept their commission to be the primary force in the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The next thing the Apostle John sees is the fruit of all those who labor in the sharing the gospel. The new believers cannot even be numbered because there are so many of them and all of heaven breaks out in praise because of it!

"Chapter 7 makes no advance in the chronology. The events of this section do not follow the sixth seal. We have a "time out" while we receive a description of certain events that occur at one time or another throughout the entire tribulation period."¹

To get this chapter in perspective, let's say that I want to teach you about W.W.II. I begin by giving you a brief introduction of some of the first events of the war. Then I say to you, "Let me stop for a moment and try to give you a picture of Germany's strength and destructive power before I continue." Then I ask you to picture Germany under Hitler's leadership; building up his nation for war. Picture seeing the planes, tanks, artillery, trucks, jeeps, ships, boats, radios, guns, bombs, rockets, ammunition and other provisions coming off of the assembly line. Day after day. Week after week. Month after month. Stock pile after stock pile rising several stories high. Picture the thousands upon thousands of men being politically programmed, organized and trained to fight. At this point I ask you to try to picture the possible destruction that Hitler's war machine could affect upon the world. After this I show you slide after slide after slide, simply of the devastation of Germany's war machine around the world; from the beginning to the end of the war. Now I go back to resume my initial depiction of the war in chronological fashion, but you have a better understanding of the dynamic of the war with Germany now.

This is what is happening in Revelation 7. God is showing us His preparations for the spiritual warfare of this seven year period. Then God shows us the devastation His 144,000 spiritual soldiers have had upon the gates of hell.

 **COMMENTARY:**

¹ Benson, *Revelation: The Grand Finale of History*, p. 36

IV. the vision of the Final Days, (Chs. 6-22)

A. THE SEAL JUDGMENTS - (6:1-8:5) -- "*WHERE SIN ABOUND, GOD'S GRACE AGAIN OVER ABOUND*"

6. The sixth seal, (6:1-7:17)

2) The interlude before the opening of the seventh seal, (7:1-17)

(1) The sealing of the 144,000 Jews before the opening of the seal, (7:1-8)

 INTERPRETATION:The Men Whose Fate Is Decided in Heaven and Sealed on Earth!

¹ **After** (watching), **these things** (concerning the six seals), **I saw four** (unnamed but designated), **angels standing at the four corners of the earth** (one on the north, another on the east, a third on the south and the fourth on the west corner), **holding** (fast), **the four winds of the earth**² (having been given the command and power), **that the wind should not blow** (anywhere), **on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree**, (there will be no amber waves of grain, not a single rustling leaf, not a single wave to break upon any shore nor against any boat -- just a dreadful, eerie stillness. A global calm. But, this is like a calm which takes place in the eye of the seven year hurricane.)³

² **Then** (when all was still), **I saw another angel** (a fifth angel [*some believe that this commanding angel who seals the saints should be translated "messenger" as it represents the Holy Spirit, {Jesus is spoken of as the Angel of the Lord; cp., the angel who offers up prayers in 8:3; taking possession of the heaven and the earth 10:1}*]), **ascending from the east** (from where the sun rises, the origin of light), **having** (in his possession), **the** (official), **seal of the living God**, (the real, honest-to-goodness, Most High God, the God who sits upon the throne of the universe).⁴ **And he**

² We have already noticed, as we shall further note, the constant and prominent part angels have in the administration of affairs in heaven. Revelation 5:2-11; and further 8:3-5; then the seven angels with the trumpets, from chapter 8:6-11, sending terrible direct judgment from heaven. How God places in angels, "the mighty in strength," the execution of His plans is concretely suggested in Revelation 10:7. In 14:18 we find the angel "that hath power over fire." In 16:5 "the angel of the waters"; in 16:8 an angel the agent that gives power to the sun "to scorch men with fire"; and in 19:17 we find "an angel standing in the sun," speaking his message! (Newell, *The Book of the Revelation*, p. 109)

³ The circulation of the atmosphere is a mighty engine, by energy from the sun and from the earth's rotation. The tremendous powers involved in this operation become especially obvious when they are displayed in the form of great hurricanes and blizzards and tornadoes. These winds of the earth make life possible on earth through the hydrologic cycle, transporting waters inland from the ocean with which to water the earth. Yet the angels--only four of them--had turned off this gigantic engine. (Morris, *The Revelation Record*, 126)

⁴ The seal is an identifying mark of one possessing a certain power and authority. The use of the seal would then denote the individual's ownership and/or protection of a matter or person.

cried (out), **with a loud voice to the four angels** (who were holding back the wind), **to whom it was** (also), **granted to harm the earth and the sea** (when they release the winds),

F APPLICATION:

There is the possibility that these four angels represent four of the major wars that break out upon the earth. The first being the angel to the south which would represent the king of the South spoken of in Daniel 11. The angel to the north would then represent the king of the North (possibly Russia); also found in Daniel 11. The angel to the west would be the fourth war representing the allies from the west under the leadership of the Roman Prince as they move in against the king of the North. The fourth angel to the east would represent the arrival of the oriental army from the east.

³ **saying, "Do not** (begin to), **harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we⁵ have sealed** (placed the mark of the seal on), **the** (not angelic, but human), **servants of our God on their foreheads."**

⁴ **And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand** (out), **of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed:** (as being the property of the Living God and under His divine protection and leadership).

F APPLICATION:

Prior to any of these wars (or judgements), getting started, God wants His servants sealed and protected before they become casualties of these events of destruction.

These are at least the initial ones who are "*wise*" in Daniel 12:3. The ones who will "*turn many to righteousness like the stars, forever and ever.*"

⁵ **of the tribe of Judah** (the royal tribe), **twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed;**

⁶ **of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed;**

⁷ **of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed;**

⁸ **of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed**

⁵ If the angel speaking is the Holy Spirit, the "we" is easily identified as the triune God. But, the "our," then presents us with some trouble.

F APPLICATION:

The 144,000 Jews will receive the Father's name as their seal (Rev. 14:1), in contrast to the "mark of the beast" that Antichrist will give those who follow him (Rev. 13:17; 14:11; 16:2; 19:20).

This seal will protect these chosen Jews from the judgments that will "hurt the earth and the sea" (Rev. 7:2), and occur when the first four angels blow their trumpets (Rev. 8). The judgments are intensified when the horrible locusts are released from the pit (Rev. 9:1-4). Protected from these awesome judgments, the 144,000 will be able to do their work and glorify the Lord.

In every age, God has had His faithful remnant. Elijah thought he was alone, but God had 7,000 who were yet faithful to Him (1 Kings 19:18). The sealing described in Revelation 7 certainly has its background in Ezekiel 9:1-7, where the faithful were sealed before God's judgment fell. So, while these 144,000 Jews are an elect people in the last days with a special task from God, they also symbolize God's faithful elect in every age of history.

The number 144,000 is significant because it signifies perfection and completeness (144=12 x 12). Some see here the completeness of *all* God's people: the twelve tribes of Israel (Old Testament saints) and the twelve Apostles (New Testament saints). This may be a good *application* of this passage, but it is not the basic *interpretation*; for we are told that these 144,000 are all Jews, and even their tribes are named.

A man once told me [Warren Wiersbe] he was one of the 144,000; so I asked him, "To which tribe do you belong, and can you prove it?" Of course, he could not prove it, no more than a Jew today can prove the tribe from which he or she descended. The genealogical records have all been destroyed. Even the fact that ten of the tribes were taken by the Assyrian and "lost" is no problem to God. He knows His people and their whereabouts (see Matt. 19:28; Acts 26:7; James 1:1).⁶

Naphtali, [is] Rachel's son by her handmaid, Bilhah. Dan, Bilhah's first son, is left out altogether here. He was ever a cherisher of idolatry. Yet Dan is mentioned first, when the land is divided in Ezekiel 48, for the 1,000 year kingdom: which shows God's *grace!* And that Dan should- be *preserved through* The Tribulation, though not publicly *sealed*, is greater grace still!⁷

Some also believe that the Antichrist comes from the tribe of Dan.

⁶ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 1997, [Online] Available: Logos Library System.

⁷ Newell, *The Book of the Revelation*, p. 112

(2) The voices of the tribulation saints before the opening of the seal, (7:9-17)

NOTES:

The Men and Women Whose Fate Causes an Irruption of Praise in Heaven!

- ⁹ **After these things** (the sealing of the 144,000 Jewish believers), **I looked, and behold** (what I saw shocked me!), **a great multitude** (of people), **which no one could number** (there were too many and they were), **of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues** (they were of every culture and language), **standing before the throne** (of the universe and the Father who sat on it), **and before the Lamb** (who held the scroll; Jesus Christ), **clothed with white** (*leukos* - brilliant, dazzling, shining white), **robes** (signifying that they are clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ), **with palm branches in their hands** (symbolizing the celebration of their deliverance from pain and suffering, to their eternal rest and joy through and with Christ [Eph. 1:20]),
- ¹⁰ **and crying out** (dramatically and in unison), **with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne** (of the universe), **and to the Lamb!"** (Jesus Christ, who sits at his right hand)
- ¹¹ **All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures** (cp., Revelation 4 and 5), **and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God** (as a result of this proclamation),
- ¹² **saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God** (who is worthy to be ascribed all of these things and more in our praise to Him, and worship of Him), **forever and ever** (it shall be so for all eternity). **Amen."**
- ¹³ **Then** (after this mighty shout of praise), **one of the** (24) **elders** (who surround the throne), **answered** (spoke up), **saying to me** (the Apostle John), **"Who are these** (incalculable saints), **arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"**
- ¹⁴ **And** (not knowing), **I said to him, "Sir, you know,"** (you tell me). **So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation,"**⁸ (lit. "*out of the tribulation, the*

⁸ There are several interpretations as to what this "*great tribulation*," is. For example some say:

1. It represents the saints that live through the tribulation and enter into the millennial reign of Christ; "*out of*" meaning through the other side, or out the other end of the tribulation.
2. It represents the saints that are saved during the last half of the seven year tribulation period as described in Matthew 24:21.
3. It represents the saints through the entire seven years of the tribulation, "*great one*" defining it as indeed the seven year period of tribulation from any other period of serious tribulation.

I hold to the third view ⁽¹⁾ because I believe it best fits the context of the first half of the chapter concerning the sealing of the 144,000 and ⁽²⁾ because of the literal writing, "*the tribulation, the great*." I think "*the great*" describes the kind of tribulation it is as a whole, not a particular period of the tribulation in part.

great"), and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, (i.e., have been redeemed having placed their faith in Christ's efficacious, saving work on the cross).

¹⁵ **"Therefore** (because of the 144,000 that preached the gospel of Christ and this great multitude who accepted the gospel), **they are before** (or present at), **the throne of God, and** (not as visitors or spectators, but as God's personal attendants, to), **serve Him day and night** (i.e., forever and ever, [cp., 20:10]), **in His temple,** (i.e., "at His throne" or "in His presence," as there is no literal temple in heaven). **And He** (God the Father), **who sits on the throne** (of the universe), **will dwell among them,** (spread His tent over them, figuratively speaking; meaning they shall be residents of God's throne).

¹⁶ **"They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat** (as was the case while they were on the earth);

¹⁷ **"for** (the reason being is that), **the Lamb** (Jesus Christ), **who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd** (watch over and care for), **them and lead them to living fountains of waters** (were every need will be quenched). **And God** (the Father), **will wipe away every tear** (of pain, sorrow and suffering), **from their eyes,**"(that our joy, worship, service and fellowship may be perfect and uninhibited for all eternity).

F APPLICATION:

There is precious little in this life that is certain or permanent. In the previous chapter, we found that even the mountains and islands are not permanent! The mountains will be moved and the islands will sink. What does that say to us about our jobs, houses or finances!?

How true Matthew 6:19-20 is when God says, ***"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."***

We need to set our "hopes on those things which will endure for eternity. The Word of God is forever settled in Heaven. The throne of God is set and secure. God's purposes and program are fixed; nothing can unsettle them. The church cannot be overcome. The foundations of the earth will move, but if we build upon Christ, our foundation, we shall not be moved."⁹

Over View

7:1-8

Jews

Numbered—144,000

Sealed on earth

7:9-17

Gentiles from all nations

Not numbered, nor could be

Standing in heaven before God¹⁰

⁹ Benson, *Revelation: The Grand Finale of History*, p. 39

¹⁰ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, [Online] Available: Logos Library System.

Revelation 7 fits in. God may use the sealed 144,000 Jews to share His Word with the world, resulting in the salvation of multitudes.

Redemption (Rev. 7:1–17)

It is important that we contrast the two groups of people described in this chapter.

F APPLICATION:

 INTERPRETATION:

 COMMENTARY:

NOTES:

Matthew 24

False Christ's (vv. 4–5)

Wars (v. 6)

Famines (v. 7a)

Death (vv. 7b–8)

Martyrs (v. 9)

Worldwide chaos (vv. 10–13)

Revelation 6

White horse rider (vv. 1–2)

Red horse—war (vv. 3–4)

Black horse—famine (vv. 5–6)

Pale horse—death (vv. 7–8)

Martyrs under the altar (vv. 9–11)

Worldwide chaos (vv. 12–17)

Matthew 24:14 introduces the preaching of the Gospel of the kingdom throughout the whole world, and this may well be where