

## WEEK 8: CHAPTER 7

### INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 7

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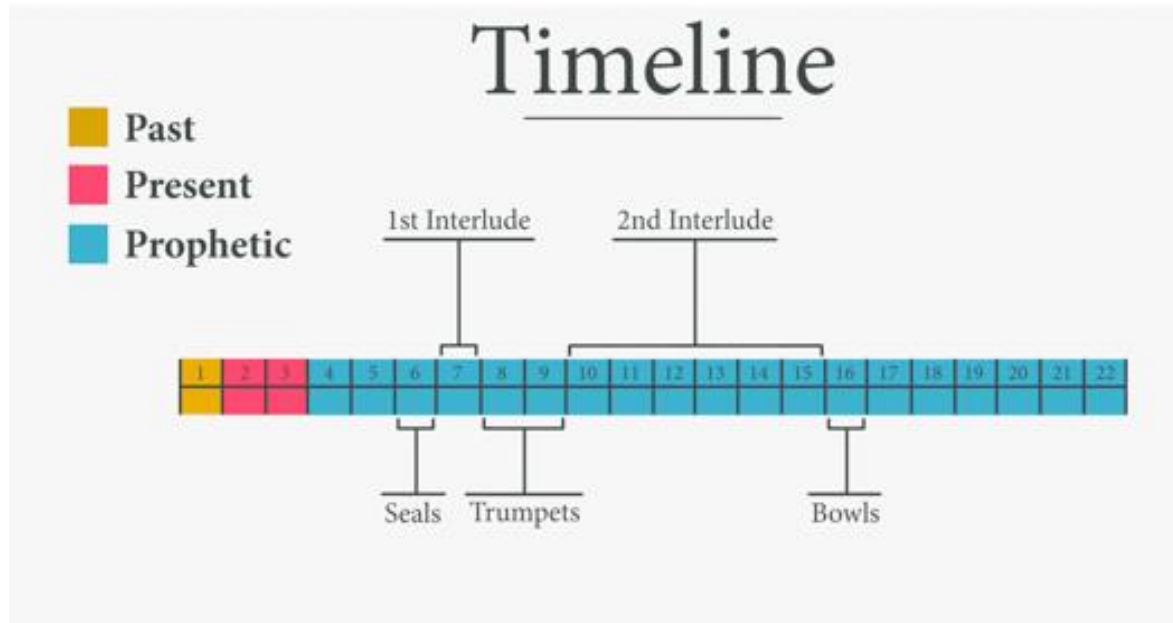


Chart found at: <https://www.credocourses.com/2015/05/11/the-first-6-seal-judgments-of-revelation/>

- Chapter 7 is our first interlude or parenthetical section in Revelation.
- This chapter gives us more information about what is taking place during the opening of the 7 seals.
  - This is evident from chapter 8:1 when the Lamb breaks the 7<sup>th</sup> seal.
  - In other words, while history moves forward, we get to see a glimpse of what's going on.
- “In contrast to chapter 6 which seems to give the chronological sequence of major events of the great tribulation, chapter 7 does not advance the narrative but directs attention to two major groups of saints in the tribulation. The opening portion of the chapter pictures the 144,000 representative of the godly remnant of Israel on earth in the great tribulation. The latter part of the chapter describes a great multitude of martyred dead in heaven, those who died as a testimony to their faith from every kindred, tongue, and nation.”  
(Walvoord)
- It seems that Revelation 7 answers the question which was posed at the end of chapter 6...**verse 17** “...for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”
- We can also think of the question, *will anyone be saved after the rapture of the church?*
- This is a logical and important question.

- I do believe that Paul is talking about the Holy Spirit in **2 Thessalonians 2:7** “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.”
  - The point is that the Holy Spirit is the One restraining the lawlessness from coming and when He (the Holy Spirit) is taken out of the way...lawlessness will follow.
  - This always leads to the question of salvation...if the Holy Spirit is not active in the church and through God’s people...how are people going to be born again?
  - “The answer, of course, is that the Holy Spirit is removed from the world in the same sense in which He came on the day of Pentecost. People were saved before the day of Pentecost when the Spirit of God came to indwell the church, and it should be clear from other Scriptures that the Holy Spirit is always omnipresent. He has always been in the world and always will be, in keeping with the divine attribute of omnipresence. Though the special ministries which are characteristic of the present dispensation may cease, there will be the continued ministry of the Spirit in a similar way to that which existed before Pentecost.” (Walvoord)
- Those Jews and Gentiles saved after the rapture and during the tribulation are not the church. While they are called saints throughout Revelation, they are distinct from the church.
- “These parenthetical passages, simply, contain explanatory matters about things that will transpire, but were not contained in the revealing of the seal, trumpet and vial judgments. However, understanding the reason for these parenthesis-interruptions is necessary in order to bring the reader up to date on what else is taking place during the revealing of these judgments in the Revelation.”<sup>1</sup>
- We can easily say that Chapter 7 is a pause for the reader to regain their focus on what’s going to take place.
- The judgments are not in focus, the wrath of God is not being brought into view...what we do see is that in the midst of total and complete destruction; the Lord God is still saving souls. He is still in control and He is still keeping and fulfilling His promises.

## CHAPTER 7:1-3 ~ THE FOUR ANGELS

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**Revelation 7:1-3** “After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. {2} And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, {3} saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.”

- Pretty simple scene in heaven for John to understand.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.netbiblestudy.com/00\\_cartimages/Revelation-lesson%206.pdf](http://www.netbiblestudy.com/00_cartimages/Revelation-lesson%206.pdf)

- There are four angels who are standing at the four corners of the earth.
  - This speaks of cardinal directions...NSEW...not that the earth is flat.
  - They are instructed by a 5<sup>th</sup> angel who is ascending from the East. This angel tells them not to do any harm. This would be the sense of holding back to the wind.
  - Often times in Scripture, the 4 winds are associated with God’s judgment.
  - **Hosea 13:15** “Though he flourishes among the reeds, An east wind will come, The wind of the LORD coming up from the wilderness; And his fountain will become dry and his spring will be dried up; It will plunder his treasury of every precious article.”
  - **Daniel 7:2** “Daniel said, ‘I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.’”
- “The implication is that the judgment of God is impending and that prior to its infliction on the earth, God wants to set apart and protect His servants.” (Walvoord)
- There is a “merciful pause” to what is taking place during the judgments.
- The ultimate reason for this is to seal the 144,000 and perhaps show John the “bigger picture.”
- It is very significant that there is so much specific detail to names, places, people groups, time, etc. in Revelation. This means that the Lord wants us to know something *exactly*.
- Just like John **seeing** 4 angels holding back the wind and then seeing another angel coming from the East.
- He then **heard** what the angel was saying so clearly that he was able to write it down.
- This is not an ecstatic vision where things are blurry, and John can’t tell reality from fiction.
- The Lord is showing him real future events that are going to take place.
- One of those very important and timely events is the sealing of the 12 tribes of Israel.
- “There are many precedents in Scripture for such a protection of God’s own. When God sent the flood upon the earth, He separated Noah and his family from the rest of the human race and the flood did not hurt them. When God destroyed Jericho, He protected Rahab and her household. Wicked though she was, she had put her trust in God, and God protected her from the judgment that fell upon Jericho. In a similar way in the time of great tribulation protection will be given to this group of 144,000 Israelites. The matter is so significant to God that the names of the tribes and the number to be saved from each are given in detail.” (Walvoord)

## CHAPTER 7:4-8 ~ THE 12 TRIBES SEALED

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**Revelation 7:4-8** “And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: {5} from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, {6} from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, {7} from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, {8} from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.”

- Thinking back to **verse 3**, two things to point out...they are going to be sealed and they are bond-servants.
- This seal is going to be the mark of God on them. This seal or mark is showing who their master and protector truly is.
  - **Revelation 14:1** “Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.”
- We don’t know exactly what this seal is going to look like, but it is going to show the onlooking world that these 144,000 thousand Jewish believers are God’s own possession.
- Some point to the practice of a ruler using a signet ring to mark their own very special property. This could be what John is referring to, but not too much information is given.
  - **On a side note**, when we’re born again, we too have God’s seal.
  - **Ephesians 1:13** “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise...”
  - Just like our modern church age, during the Tribulation, Satan nor any other foe will be able to harm those who are sealed with the protection from God.
- Also, these 144,000 are called “bond-servants of our God.”
- To be a bond-servant of God means that you are born again and redeemed. It means that you are in a right relationship with God the Father through faith in Jesus Christ.
  - **Galatians 1:10** “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”
  - **Romans 1:1** “Paul, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.”
- *This sealing is not for their salvation but because they are already God’s redeemed children.*
- This sealing is also, as I said, to show their protection during their role in the Tribulation.

- In **Revelation 14:1-5**, these 144,000 are characterized as morally pure and blameless before the Lamb.
- “It had been previously prophesied that Israel would repent and turn back to God (Zechariah 12:10; Romans 11:25–27), and the 144,000 Jews seem to be a sort of “first fruits” (Revelation 14:4) of that redeemed Israel. Their mission seems to be to evangelize the post-rapture world and proclaim the gospel during the tribulation period. As a result of their ministry, millions—“a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language” (Revelation 7:9)—will come to faith in Christ.”<sup>2</sup>
- These 144,000 thousand Jews take the gospel message to the whole earth and will seemingly survive the full 7 years of the Tribulation.
  - **Matthew 24:14** “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.”
- Speaking of the 144,000... Walvoord states, “The fact that the twelve tribes of Israel are singled out for special reference in the tribulation time is another evidence that the term “Israel” as used in the Bible is invariably a reference to the descendants of Jacob who was first given the name Israel. Galatians 6:16 is no exception. *The prevalent idea that the church is the true Israel is not sustained by any explicit reference in the Bible*, and the word *Israel* is never used of Gentiles and refers only to those who are racially descendants of Israel or Jacob.” **In other words, Israel is not the Church!**
- When reading these verses, even the phrase *from the tribe* points to a very specific meaning. Today, Jews may not know what tribe they are from but that doesn’t mean that God doesn’t know. He keeps track of all His children.
  - “The mention of the twelve tribes of Israel is likewise a refutation of the idea that the tribes of Israel are lost, as well as of the theory that the lost tribes are perpetuated in the English-speaking people of the world. Obviously none of the tribes are lost as far as God is concerned. Though genealogies have been lost, a modern Jew can be assured that he belongs to the seed of Abraham; and God knows into which tribe he should be classified.” (Walvoord)
- Walvoord continues, “The remnant of Israel as portrayed here in the book of Revelation should not therefore be taken as meaning the church. It would be rather ridiculous to carry the typology of Israel representing the church to the extent of dividing them up into twelve tribes as was done here, if it was the intent of the writer to describe the church. It is rather a clear indication of God’s continued purpose for the nation Israel and their preservation through this awful time of trouble.”
- Some teach even today that the 144,000 is a symbolic number for all of God’s people for all time.
- 12 tribes (OT) x 12 apostles (NT) x 10 x 10 x 10<sup>3</sup> = 144,000. Math works but the logic is not even close.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/144000.html>

<sup>3</sup> 10 is the number for completeness and 3 is the number for God (the Holy Trinity)

- Is the number 144,000 a real number of born again Jews who are going to be sealed?
- “The question has also been raised whether the “12,000” in each tribe means literally 12,000. There seems to be indication that more than 12,000 from each tribe actually will be saved. The point of this Scripture is that in any event 12,000 in each tribe are made secure. There will be other Israelites saved besides these 144,000, but many of these will die martyrs’ deaths and give up their lives for their faith. The 144,000 are those who are delivered from their persecutors and brought safely through this terrible time of tribulation.” (Walvoord)
- To quote a leading covenantalist regarding the 144,000, “So a final reason for thinking the 144,000 refer to all of God’s redeemed people is because the list is highly stylized. So go back to chapter 7, look at verses 5-8; 144,000, 12 times 12 times 10 cubed times 1,000. Twelve being the number of completeness for God’s people representing of course, 12 tribes of Israel. And it wasn’t by accident that Jesus chose 12 apostles, and 1,000 being a generic number suggesting a great multitude. So we would say, 12 times 12, times a bajillion, 144 bajillion, but they just say 144,000. It’s a way of saying all of God’s people under the Old Covenant and under the New Covenant. This is a holy army.”<sup>4</sup>
- **There are three issues with the list of tribes:**
- Levi is included in the list and was not given an allotment originally.
  - This may be because there is an end to the actual allotment of land and this is for spiritual service.
  - This could also be because the mission these 144,000 are on is evangelistic in nature.
- Joseph is named and not Ephraim (usually Ephraim and Manasseh)
  - While not 100% sure, we do know from **Hosea 4:17** “Ephraim is joined to idols; Let him alone.”
  - They were known not only for idolatry but also partnerships with heathen nations (Hosea 12:1).
- There is no mention of the tribe of Dan.
  - Perhaps this is because King Jeroboam built a golden calf for the tribe to worship instead of going to Jerusalem for the feasts. (1 Kings 12:25-33)
  - They were also very unhappy with their allotment of land and were steeped in idol worship. (Judges 18:1-31)
  - There is also a prophecy from Israel (Jacob) over his sons. He says about Dan in **Genesis 49:17** “Dan shall be a serpent in the way, A horned snake in the path, That bites the horse's heels, So that his rider falls backward.”
  - Some have taken *a serpent in the way* to mean they became a tool of satanic deception.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://clearlyreformed.org/sermon/who-are-the-144000/>

## CHAPTER 7:9-17 ~ TRIBULATION SAINTS AROUND THE THRONE

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**Revelation 7:9-17** “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; {10} and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." {11} And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, {12} saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen." {13} Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" {14} I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. {15} "For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. {16} "They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; {17} for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”

- In these 9 verses you have the throne mentioned 7 times. John’s focus is back on the throne room of God.

### **Who are they? (v. 9)**

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- John now sees that it is not just the Jewish remnant who is brought into heaven.
- There are also Gentiles who have been saved in the tribulation.
- He sees “...a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands...”
- Some believe that through the evangelistic outreach of the 144,000 sealed Jews, there will be the greatest revival the world has ever seen.
- God’s grace is continuing to flow out to a world that is under His judgment.

### **What are they doing? (vv. 10-12)**

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- These murdered tribulation saints from all over the world are worshipping God who is on the throne and the Lamb of God.
- Similar to the scene from **chapter 5**, all nations are praising the Lord together for what He has done and for who He is.

## **Where did they come from? (vv. 13-14)**

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- These saints came out of the great tribulation. They were murdered for their witness and faithfulness to Jesus Christ.
- “This passage clearly teaches that many Gentiles will be saved during the tribulation. The command to preach the gospel to every nation throughout the world (Matt. 24:14; 28:19-20) will have its ultimate fulfillment in this way before Christ comes back to establish His millennial kingdom. The concept sometimes advanced that the rapture cannot occur because all the world has not heard the gospel is a faulty conclusion. The requirement that all the world hear the gospel pertains not to the rapture but to the coming of Christ to set up His kingdom.” (Walvoord)
- Speaking of the martyred saints, “Others will be the object of special persecution by the world ruler. They will be hounded to death much as the Jews were in World War II. Because they will not worship the beast, they will be under a death sentence (Rev. 13:15). Those who accept Christ in that time may be faced with the solemn alternative of either renouncing their faith in Christ and worshiping the beast or being slain. The result will be multiplied thousands of martyrs.” (Walvoord)
- How did they get there? **Verse 14** “...they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” It is only through the sacrifice of Christ that anyone is saved and with Him forever.

## **The heavenly bliss of the martyred saints (vv. 15-17) (Walvoord)**

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- **Verse 15** starts with “For this reason...” and it points back to **verse 14** and the shedding of Christ’s blood.
- “The wonderful blessing of the martyred saints in the presence of the Lord is spelled out in these verses. They are described as being before the throne of God, that is, in a place of prominence and honor. Their special privilege is further defined as serving the Lord day and night in His temple. This expression is highly significant, for it indicates that heaven is not only a place of rest from earthly toil but also a place of privileged service.” (Walvoord)
- The image of God *spreading His tabernacle over them*, “God’s presence will become their canopy of shelter to protect them from all the terrors of a fallen world and the indescribable horrors they have experienced on the earth during the time of tribulation.”<sup>5</sup>
- **Verse 17** points us to **Psalms 23** and shows us again the picture of the true Shepherd, the Lamb of God.
- **Chapter 7** ends with peace, tranquility and calmness. It is a good picture for us that in the storms and trials of our life, Christ is our peace, He is our Shepherd who watches over us and leads us to true life.

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<sup>5</sup> MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Re 7:15.