

**Sealed and Saved**  
 Revelation 7:1-17  
 Rev. Brian Bill  
 April 25-26, 2026

The *Babylon Bee* is a Christian satire website known for its humorous, often tongue-in-cheek perspective on news, politics, culture, and religion. This week, Bryan LaBerge sent me a post entitled, “Life Hack: In Lieu of Reading Book of Revelation, Just Go Outside and Watch it Happen.” Here’s part of what it says.

*Have you ever wished you could experience the Bible firsthand? Have you ever found the book of Revelation to be confusing and challenging to understand? A game-changing new life hack aims to solve both of these problems at the same time! In lieu of sitting down to read one of the more enigmatic and symbolic imagery-filled books of the Bible, thousands of people are opting to just go outside and watch it happen right before their eyes. That’s right, you too can watch events from the book of Revelation unfold in front of you just by stepping out of your house...no more sitting and poring over difficult-to-comprehend texts about horsemen and dragons and trumpets and bowls of wrath. You can watch it for yourself in living color!”*

While The Babylon Bee might joke about watching the world fall apart, it is essential to read Revelation because our passage for today gives us an unshakable anchor for our souls. Here’s a succinct summary: *Those saved and sealed by the Lamb on earth will join people from every nation to sing before the throne in Heaven and be satisfied forever by the Shepherd.*

Last weekend, we considered six seal judgments in Revelation 6 and learned this truth: *As the hoofbeats of judgment approach, only those saved by the Lamb will stand.* Jeff Henderson sent me a note this week pointing out how the seal judgments parallel the “birth pains” described by Jesus in Matthew 24. This chart helps to capture this.

SUMMARY OF SIX SEALS				
Seal No.	Revelation 6	Key Theme	Sign	Matthew 24
(1)	2	Deception	White Horse	4-5
(2)	3-4	Destruction	Red Horse	6-7
(3)	5-6	Deprivation	Black Horse	7
(4)	7-8	Death	Pale Horse	7
(5)	9-11	Declaration	Martyrs	9
(6)	12-17	Dread	Cosmic Signs	29

For the sake of time, I'll just read Matthew 24:29 which corresponds with the sixth seal: ***“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”*** Here's what Revelation 6:12-13 says: ***“...and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.”***

The content of the Book of Revelation flows chronologically, except for the five times when the chronology pauses. The commentator Donald Grey Barnhouse described it like a rest someone might take when climbing a mountain. As the individual pauses, he surveys where he's been and where he's headed. The first break is triggered by the question found in Revelation 6:17: ***“And who can stand?”*** Before moving on to seal #7, chapter seven answers that question by focusing on Jewish evangelists who stand to witness in verses 1-8 and Gentile believers who stand to worship in verses 9-17.

One pastor writes, *“Based on Revelation 7, there is coming upon the earth before the Lord returns the greatest spiritual awakening the world has ever seen. The greatest time for evangelism and the harvest of souls is yet future.”*

Here's an outline which flows right from the text.

- Sealed for safety on earth (1-8).
- Saved for singing in Heaven (9-12).
- Satisfied by the Shepherd in eternity (13-17).

**1. Sealed for Safety on Earth.** Listen to Revelation 7:1: ***“After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree.”*** I'm reminded of Habakkuk 3:2, where the prophet makes this request of God: ***“...in wrath remember mercy.”*** This pause in the seal judgments is intended to showcase God's mercy as the four angels hold back the horrors associated with the upcoming trumpet judgments.

At this point, another angel shows up from the east in verses 2-3: ***“Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, saying, ‘Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.’”***

Seals were very common in that culture and were often affixed using a signet ring pressed into wax to demonstrate ownership and authenticity. This seal comes from the ***“living God”*** and was given to protect His people from wrath ***“until we have sealed the servants of God on their foreheads.”***

In the Old Testament, seals marked possession and were a sign of protection. In Genesis 4:15, the Lord ***“put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.”*** Ezekiel 9:4 describes how God set apart those who were striving for purity: ***“And the LORD said to him, ‘Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.’”*** Song of Solomon 8:6 celebrates the exclusive covenant of marriage: ***“Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm...”***

Saved believers in the New Testament are sealed and secure as we read in 2 Corinthians 1:22: ***“And who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”*** The word ***“guarantee”*** refers to a down payment that legally obligates the giver to deliver the rest. The Holy Spirit isn’t just a seal of what we *were*; He’s the guarantee of what we *will fully receive*. Ephesians 1:13 says we are ***“sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.”*** Let’s linger for a bit on this point because too many of us struggle with the security of our salvation. If you’re saved, you’ve been secured with at least three seals.

- **A seal of possession.** When God seals you, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says He marks you as His very own possession: ***“...You are not your own, for you were bought with a price...”***
- **A seal of protection.** 1 Peter 1:5 says God will guard you: ***“who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”***
- **A seal of preservation.** Ephesians 4:30 says we are preserved all the way to glory: ***“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”***

We’ll learn about the mark of the Beast later in our study but it’s important to note that Satan is a counterfeiter. Because God seals His saints, Satan also utilizes a mark of ownership on those he has claimed according to Revelation 13:16-18: ***“Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell***

***unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name...and his number is 666.”***

In verse 4 we learn how many God will seal and where they come from: ***“And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel.”*** We see another reference to this number in Revelation 14:1: ***“Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.”***

This group has been the subject of much discussion and disagreement. Here are some of the views I’m aware of:

- Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that 144,000 of their followers will reign with Christ in Heaven. One practical question you could ask someone who claims to be part of the 144,000 is which tribe they belong to.
- Some believe this number refers to those who worship on Saturdays, often associated with Seventh-day Adventists.
- Others believe the number is symbolic for the redeemed of all ages.
- My understanding is that these are 144,000 Jewish evangelists who will proclaim the gospel during the Tribulation.

Because the text specifically lists 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, the most natural reading is that these are literal Jewish believers whom God seals and sends out for gospel purposes.

<sup>5</sup> ***12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed,  
12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,  
12,000 from the tribe of Gad,***  
<sup>6</sup> ***12,000 from the tribe of Asher,  
12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali,  
12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,***  
<sup>7</sup> ***12,000 from the tribe of Simeon,  
12,000 from the tribe of Levi,  
12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,***  
<sup>8</sup> ***12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,  
12,000 from the tribe of Joseph,  
12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.”***

But this list raises some additional questions.

**Q: Why is the order of the tribes different from other biblical lists?**

A: There are at least 20 lists of the tribes in the Bible, and they vary depending on the purpose. We see this in lists related to inheritance, census, military order, and genealogy. This list in Revelation 7 may emphasize spiritual service rather than land inheritance.

**Q: Why is the tribe of Judah listed first?**

A: Normally Reuben, as the firstborn, would head the list. However, because Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, comes from the tribe of Judah, Judah is listed first (see Genesis 49:10). John MacArthur suggests that Reuben may have been moved down the list because of his sexual misconduct (see 1 Chronicles 5:1).

**Q: Why is Levi included and Dan omitted?**

A: The tribe of Levi is included even though they did not receive a land inheritance because they served as priests. Dan is omitted, likely because of their long association with idolatry (see Judges 18). Some also suggest, based on Genesis 49:17, that the Antichrist would arise from this tribe. Having said that, we see God's heart for redemption and restoration because the tribe most associated with idolatry gets first position in the millennial inheritance in Ezekiel 48.

**Q: Why does Joseph appear instead of Ephraim?**

A: Ephraim was often linked with idolatry in the Old Testament, so the name Joseph may be used here to represent that branch of the family.

**Q: Why are there exactly 12,000 from each tribe?**

A: This consistent number emphasizes God's sovereignty and order. According to Hebrew thinking, twelve represented governmental completeness (twelve tribes, twelve apostles, and twelve gates in the New Jerusalem). Multiplying by 1,000 intensifies the completeness. It's God's way of saying "*I have accounted for every single one.*"

The unusual order, the omission of some tribes, and the inclusion of others remind us that God is intentionally shaping this list to show that He has a specific, sovereign plan for Israel during the Tribulation.

This key passage reinforces the biblical truth that God is not done with the nation of Israel. The apostle Paul makes this point clearly in Romans 9-11, where he explains God's continuing plan for ethnic Israel.

- In Romans 9, Paul emphasizes God’s sovereign choice in redemptive history. Though many ethnic Israelites rejected Jesus as the Messiah, and still do, God’s promises to Israel have not failed because His purposes are rooted in His sovereign calling (Romans 9:6).
- In Romans 10, Paul expresses deep sorrow for Israel’s unbelief but affirms that salvation is still available to them through faith in Christ. Israel’s problem is not lack of opportunity but lack of faith: **“They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge”** (Romans 10:2).
- In Romans 11:1, Paul explicitly asks, **“Has God rejected his people?”** and answers emphatically, **“By no means!”** Then he points to himself as an example: **“For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.”** This chapter explains several key truths:
  - **A remnant remains.** Just as in the days of Elijah, God has preserved a believing remnant among Israel (Romans 11:2–5).
  - **Israel’s hardening is partial and temporary.** Their rejection of the Messiah opened the door for Gentiles to receive the gospel while making Israel jealous (Romans 11:11-12, 25).
  - **Future restoration is promised.** Paul declares that **“all Israel will be saved”** when the Deliverer comes from Zion (Romans 11:26), resulting in a future Jewish turning to Jesus Christ the Messiah.

These chapters help us see that the sealing of the 144,000 Israelite evangelists in Revelation 7 fits within God’s broader redemptive plan. While the gospel is now going out to all nations, God has not abandoned His covenant people. Instead, He is working out a plan that will ultimately display His mercy to both Jews and Gentiles, as Paul concludes in Romans 11:36: **“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.”**

Next, John sees another vision which complements the first but is different. We move from the numbered tribes of Israel on earth to an innumerable multitude around the throne in Heaven. Speaking of an innumerable multitude, it reminds me of a small glimpse of that joy we experienced this week at our 47th Awana Awards Night. Awana is all about belonging, becoming, and believing as this ministry partners with parents to intentionally disciple children. Here are a few highlights:

- 196 kids signed up.
- A total of 108 books were completed across the clubs.

- An average of 35 verses were memorized per individual during the Awana year, depending on the age.
- Awana kids gave to food pantries, raised money for local missionaries, donated socks, and gave money to Pregnancy Resources.
- Some gave their heart to Jesus, one person was baptized, and one went on an overseas mission trip.

Let's express our appreciation to Marcy and Tiffany and the 56 Awana leaders who served this year.

Speaking of an innumerable number of people, on the very next day, over 200 senior saints attended SecondWinders. I love being part of a church with hundreds of kids and hundreds of senior saints.

*Those saved and sealed by the Lamb on earth will join people from every nation to sing before the throne in Heaven and be satisfied forever by the Shepherd.*

**2. Saved for Singing in Heaven.** Verses 9-10 bring us comfort knowing the global Great Commission will be accomplished: ***“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”***

In apocalyptic literature, the verb **“looked”** often introduces something unexpected. The word **“behold”** can be translated as **“lo and behold!”** and is used to get our attention. The phrase **“great multitude”** emphasizes an **“enormous crowd, an immense throng of people,”** so many that **“no one could number”** them. This is the final fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham and passed along to Isaac in Genesis 26:4: ***“I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.”***

Warren Wiersbe writes: **“You cannot read the Book of Revelation without developing a global outlook.”** John uses four different terms to describe this enormous crowd of worshipers. Before listing them, notice how he uses the word **“from,”** which means, **“out of every nation, out of all tribes, out of all peoples, out of all languages.”** This refers to representatives from every group, not necessarily every individual in that group.

- **Nation.** This is the Greek word *ethnos*, from which we get ethnic groups. This word is used by Jesus in Matthew 28:19: ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”***
- **Tribes.** This word is used of family lineages or clans and is often translated as “*kindreds.*” Psalm 22:27 says, ***“All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.”***
- **Peoples.** This refers to groups united by a common cultural or social identity. Psalm 67:3: ***“Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.”***
- **Languages.** This refers to linguistic communities and goes back to how God divided people by language in Genesis 11. There are approximately 7,400 languages in the world today, with 3,100 of them having no Scripture at all.

Matthew 24:14 tells us that the Great Commission will be completed before Jesus returns: ***“And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”*** Since Heaven will be multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual, and multinational, I long for Edgewood to more fully reflect what Heaven will be like. The vision of a diverse multitude calls us to share the gospel with all people, from all places, languages, cultures, and backgrounds.

Revelation 6:17 asks the question, ***“And who can stand?”*** The answer is those who have been reconciled to God by the Lamb of God. The word ***“standing”*** means, *“to place before,”* and the tense indicates a permanent established position in the immediate presence of God the Father and God the Son.

We’re also told the redeemed will have ***“palm branches in their hands.”*** To the Jewish person, palm branches would make them think of the Feast of Tabernacles, which was a celebration of how God delivered His people from slavery in Egypt. Palm branches were also used in Roman culture to honor war victors. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the large crowd of people praised Him by waving palm branches and shouting, ***“Hosanna!”*** which means, *“Save us now!”* This was a common way to welcome a victorious King when he would return from battle.

Verse 10 describes the volume and the content of the people’s praise: ***“And crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and***

*to the Lamb!*” The phrase “*crying out*” is in the present tense, meaning it is a continuous shout.

The redeemed are not passive in their praise; rather, they cry out with a “*loud voice*,” which means, “*an intensely great and unified voice.*” This thunderous anthem is sung by everyone around the throne. Some of us struggle to sing here; but all of us will sing there, so we might as well start singing here! This salvation we will sing about is the only salvation, originating in God alone and accomplished by the Lamb alone for His glory alone.

Verses 11-12 tells us the gospel is glorious: “*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, saying, ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.’*”

The fulfillment of God’s global mission is not a maybe; it’s a guarantee. Among the redeemed remnant around the throne will be representatives from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages. The question before us today is if we’ll pray and partner with Him to help make it happen in our families, our neighborhoods and to the nations. Let’s flesh this out using our 4Gs.

- We gather to worship today because one day we’ll gather around the throne.
- We grow because one day we’ll become more like Christ as we bear His fruit and fulfill His mission
- We give because one day there will be those who heard the gospel because we sent missionaries and we supported various gospel ministries.
- We go with the gospel because one day we’ll see faces we’ve never met from distant lands as we cry out together: “*Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.*”

*Those saved and sealed by the Lamb on earth will join people from every nation to sing before the throne in Heaven and be satisfied forever by the Shepherd.*

**3. Satisfied by the Shepherd in Eternity.** Because the gospel is global and glorious, verses 13-17 give us insight into how believers will be shepherded by the Lamb in eternity.

Notice how John became an active participant in the vision when he was asked a question in verse 13-14: “*Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, ‘Who are*

*these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?’ I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’ And he said to me, ‘These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation...’*

Here are five things the Lord does...

- **He cleans us.** We see this in second half of verse 14: “...*they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*” The word “*washed*” denotes a completed cleansing like we see in Isaiah 1:18: “*Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.*” Just as sin revealed mankind’s nakedness, so the Savior clothes us with His righteousness, from head to toe!
- **He calls us to serve Him.** Listen to the first half of verse 15: “*Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple...*”
- **He comes to us.** The Lord is high and lifted up (Isaiah 6:1), and yet He also comes close to cover us. We see this in the second part of verse 15: “...*and He who sits on the throne will shelter them with His presence.*” The word “*shelter*” is tabernacle language, evoking God’s Shekinah glory dwelling over and covering His people, just as His glory filled the Tabernacle in the wilderness (Exodus 40:34–38).
- **He cares for us.** We won’t hunger or thirst or need air conditioning or sunscreen according to verse 16: “*They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.*”
- **He comforts us.** In a beautiful irony, the Lamb who was sacrificed is also the Shepherd who guides and guards us in verse 17: “*For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*” The tears of suffering, pain, loneliness, dying, and death will all be gone, but like the tears of a child brought suddenly from sorrow to delight, they may linger on our faces for a short time.

## Action Steps

1. **This week, pray specifically for Jewish evangelism and for the peace of Jerusalem.** Use the 144,000 as a reminder that God's covenant with ethnic Israel is unbreakable and will be fulfilled.
2. **Take one concrete step toward cross-cultural gospel witness this week by striking up a conversation with someone from a different background.** Consider attending the Unreached Prayer Night on Monday, May 4 to pray for North Korea. What about financially supporting an Edgewood member on the Mexico Team, the Kenya Team, or the Japan team? Many still need additional funding.
3. **Become a member of the Shepherd's flock through the new birth and rest in the shelter of the Shepherd.**

Since Revelation 7 is a rest stop on the way up the mountain, it's important to look back at where we've been and forward to where we're headed. Remember that climbers don't rest on the mountain because the climb is easy. They rest because the summit is worth it. That's where you're headed if you belong to Him.

If you know Jesus through the new birth, you are sealed, you are saved, and you will be satisfied, not because of anything you have done, but because of everything the Lamb has done for you. Because He is standing in your place, you too can stand...and you don't have to go outside to see it because it's all right here in this Book.

*Those saved and sealed by the Lamb on earth will join people from every nation to sing before the throne in Heaven and be satisfied forever by the Shepherd.*

Many years ago, a missionary was translating the Bible for a remote tribe that had never heard the gospel. When he finally translated the verse describing the great multitude from every tribe and language, the people were stunned and surprised.

One man asked, *"You mean our language will be there too?"* The missionary said, *"Yes. The Bible says every language will be represented."* The man sat quietly for a moment and then said, with tears in his eyes, *"Then God must have been thinking about us long before we knew about Him."*

That's the beauty of Revelation 7.

God was thinking about Israel.  
God was thinking about the nations.  
And God was thinking about you.

One day a countless multitude will stand before the throne, waving palm branches and crying out, ***“Salvation belongs to our God and to the Lamb!”*** And when that day comes, the only question that will matter is this: Will you be standing with the sealed and the saved and be satisfied by Him, or will you be trampled by the approaching hoofbeats when the seals, trumpets and bowls are unleashed on an unbelieving world?

If you’ve never trusted Christ, today can be the day you move from the crowd that faces judgment to the multitude that sings before the throne.

## **Invitation**

## **Updates**

I want to give a brief update about our search for a Young Adults Pastor and a Celebrate Recovery and Counseling Pastor. Our search consultant is coming to Edgewood this Tuesday to meet with the Deacons to present candidates for both positions. Please continue to pray for God’s provision, and that God gives wisdom on what steps to take next.

Our mission is to glorify God and make disciples of Jesus in our families, among our neighbors, and among the nations...and that includes taking the gospel to those in prison. Jesus said it like this in Matthew 25:35-36: ***“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”***

Thirteen guys are part of our ministry on Friday nights to the Rock Island County Jail and six guys are involved with a prison ministry called Kairos. Kairos utilizes a three-and-a-half-day retreat to create a Christian community inside prisons that can transform lives, decrease prison violence, and reduce recidivism. A team of three Edgewood members (Richard Willard, Mike Davis, and Cam Yoder) will be going to Western Illinois Correctional Center next weekend. We want to invite them up right now and pray for them. They’ll be out at the Missions Display after the service if you’d like to connect with them.

## **Prayer for Kairos Ministry**