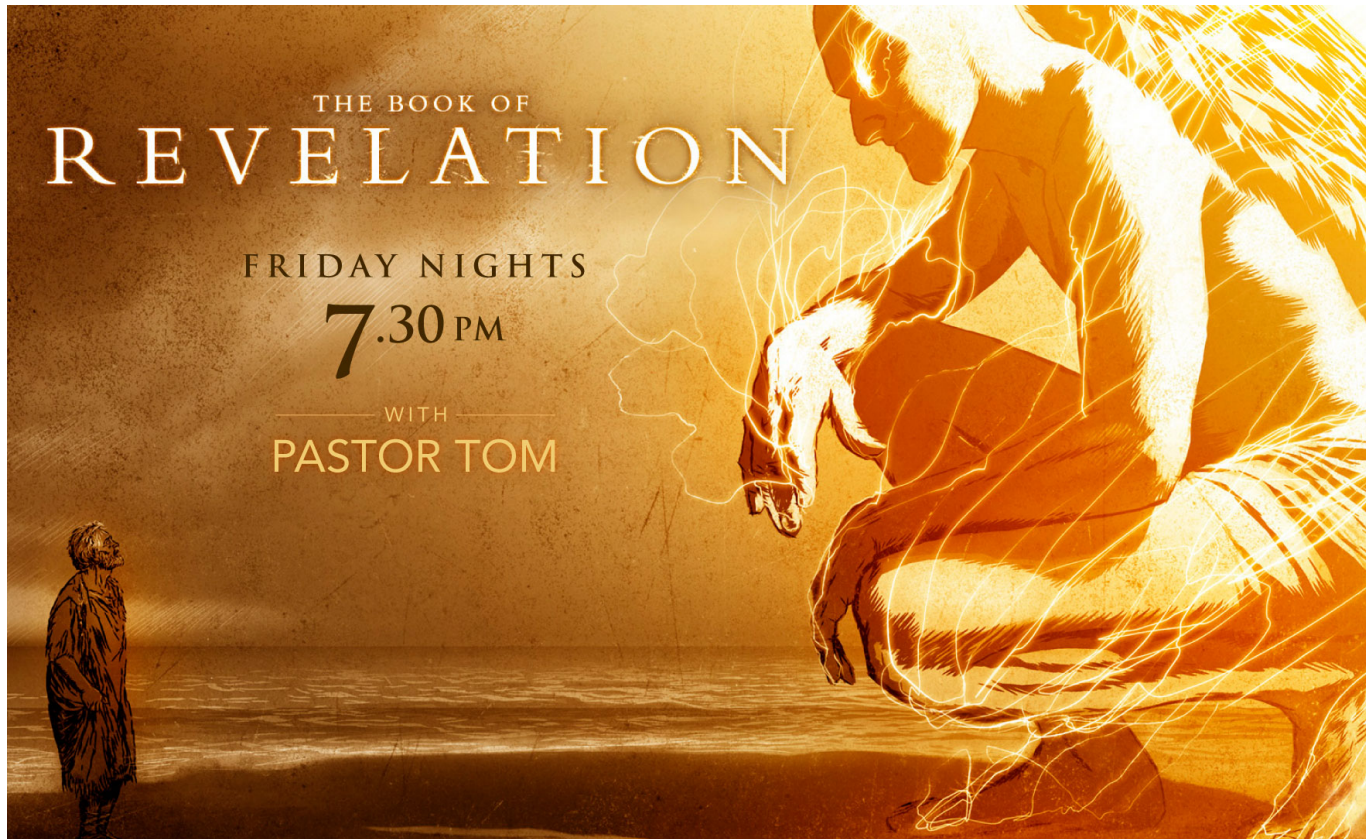


CHAPTER 7





Understanding the Book of Revelation | Chapter 7

WITH PASTOR TOM

THE 144,000 AND THE GREAT MULTITUDE

The 144,000.

Revelation 7:1-3: Holding back judgment until the servants of God are sealed.

After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then 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 granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

Four angels standing at the four corners of the earth: "the four points of the compass." The idea is that these angels effect the entire earth.

Holding the four winds of the earth: These winds were a destructive force of God's judgment, as they often are in the Old Testament.

The four winds of the earth may refer back to the four horsemen of Revelation 6:1-8, after the pattern of Zechariah 6:1-8. In that passage, four chariots with horses of the same colours of Revelation 6:1-8 go out to all the earth, and are called the four spirits of heaven.

Another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: Another angel had a seal, and he sealed the people of God. In the ancient world, such seals were familiar. A king or a property owner could use a seal to show ownership or authenticity.

Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads: These servants of God will receive a protective seal on their forehead, containing God's name in some manner (Revelation 14:1).

The servants of our God: We are not told what exactly their service is, but the 144,000 are sealed for a specific and unique purpose. However, the general idea of being sealed is not limited to them.

Jesus was sealed; God the Father has set His seal on Him. (John 6:27)

We are sealed with the Holy Spirit as a down payment of our eventual total redemption. Paul wrote: God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

This sealing of the Holy Spirit belongs to every believer when they are saved: having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. (Ephesians 1:13)

Revelation 7:4-8:

And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed:

- of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed;
- of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed;
- of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed;
- 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;
- 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;
- 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.

One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: This is their general identification. They are of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Ethnically, they are Jewish, and there are 144,000 of these chosen ones.

Of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed: Though only God may know their tribal ancestry, there are 12,000 from each tribe.

Of the tribe of: In this listing of the tribes, the tribe of Dan is left out. Some think this is because Dan is the tribe of the Antichrist, based on Daniel 11:37 and Jeremiah 8:16. This may or may not be the case, but without doubt, Dan was the tribe that introduced idolatry into the nation of Israel (Genesis 49:17; Judges 18:30).

There is a wonderful redemption for the tribe of Dan. Dan is the first tribe listed in Ezekiel's millennial role call of the tribes (Ezekiel 48).

Who are these 144,000?

Most Bible scholars either regard the 144,000 as the church or as converted Jews, who are still identified as Israelites in some manner.

They are called the children of Israel (Revelation 7:4).

Their tribal affiliation is specific (Revelation 7:4-8).

They seem to be protected and triumphant through the period of God's wrath, meeting with Jesus at Mount Zion at His return (Revelation 14:1).

They are celibate (Revelation 14:4).

They are the beginning of a greater harvest (Revelation 14:4).

They are marked by integrity and faithfulness (Revelation 14:5).

It is best to see the 144,000 as specifically chosen Jewish people who come to faith in Jesus, protectively sealed throughout the tribulation as a sign.

They are the beginning harvest of the salvation of Israel (Romans 11:1, Romans 11:26, Matthew 23:37-39).

“They are not a part of the Church proper; for their repentance comes too late for that. They are a superaddition to the Church — a supplementary body.

The Great Multitude.

Revelation 7:9-10: More worship at the throne of God.

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

A great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues: The diversity here is evidence that the Great Commission will be fulfilled before the end, even as Jesus promised (Matthew 24:14).

We will not all be the same. We will be individuals.

There is individuality in heaven. Abraham — you will know him; Isaac, you will know him; and Jacob, you will know him. They will be out of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue.

Standing before the throne and before the Lamb: Again, John saw everything in heaven in reference to the throne of God. “This is a peculiar subject of their joy: that God has a throne, that he sits upon it, and that he ruleth over all things, and all things do his bidding. The central thought of heaven, then, is divine sovereignty. Clothed with white robes: These robes remind us not only of the covering righteousness of Jesus, but also of priestly service.

Palm branches: These remind us of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (John 12:12-16), where Jesus was also praised as Savior and King. The word Hosanna means "save now!"

Palm branches were emblems of victory. It shows this great multitude celebrates a great victory.

Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb! Having an emblem of righteousness (white robes), they worship God for salvation. They recognize that God is the source of salvation, and no one else. Salvation isn't something we earn, it is something God gives.

Sometimes believers on earth take their salvation almost for granted. This isn't true of this great multitude in heaven.

Revelation 7:11-12: All heavenly creatures join in worship.

All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying:

"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom,
Thanksgiving and honour and power and might,
Be to our God forever and ever.
Amen."

All the angels... the elders and the four living creatures... worshiped God: As the great multitude worships God, the others in heaven are compelled to join their voices in praise. All created beings around the throne join in.

Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honour and power and might: As these other created beings hear the worship the great multitude brings to God, they see more clearly the power and wisdom and majesty of God. They can

worship God all the more by seeing the salvation He brought to the great multitude.

Revelation 7:13-14: The identity of the great multitude.

Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Then one of the elders answered: It was important that John knew the identity of this great multitude. But he didn't know that he should ask, so one of the elders prompted him to ask.

These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation: This vast multitude, from every tribe and tongue and nation, are those rescued for God's kingdom in the period of the great tribulation.

They had trouble on the earth during the great tribulation. This was a time of great tribulation for this multitude. This leads many to believe that most, if not all, of these are martyrs from the great tribulation.

Even in this time of judgment and wrath on the earth, many are saved.

Those 144,000 servants of God: are evangelists who help reap this huge harvest for the kingdom during the great tribulation.

Washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: Those saved in the great tribulation are saved just like everybody else, by the blood of the Lamb. Even if they are martyred, their martyrdom does not save them. Only the work of Jesus can cleanse and save.

They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Not one of them became white through his tears of repentance, not one through the shedding of the blood of bulls or of goats. They washed their robes nowhere but in the blood of the Lamb.

White by blood: we don't think of things being made white by the application of blood. But the blood of Jesus cleanses us: Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (Isaiah 1:18)

Revelation 7:15-17: What this great multitude does, and how it is blessed.

Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

They are before the throne of God: In heaven, the redeemed enjoy the immediate presence of God. They can come right into the throne room and be with God.

These saints knew affliction on earth, and they triumphed over it. But it wasn't their affliction that saved them. It was Jesus and their relationship of faith with Him.

And serve Him day and night: In heaven, the redeemed serve God.

He who sits on the throne will dwell among them: In heaven, God will dwell with His people. This is the ultimate fulfillment of King David's great desire in Psalm 27:4: One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple.

The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them: In heaven, the redeemed will know the loving care and nurture of their Saviour. He will also provide for their every need.

Jesus does shepherd us now, and He is close to us and cares for us now.

God will wipe away every tear from their eyes: In heaven, the redeemed will know no more sorrow or pain.

We also understand from this that every tear will only be wiped away in heaven. On this earth, we have our share of pain and tears to endure and bring to God.

God will wipe away all tears resulting from their suffering on earth.