

## Revelation 7 – The 144,000

### I. God Seals His People (1-3)

#### A. Judgment is Held Back For A Time (1)

1. “After this” is not a temporal marker but refers to the next sequence of John’s vision
  - a. The sealing of God’s people seems to occur before the full judgment is released
  - b. The sealing of God’s people in chapter 7 will answer the last question in chapter 6, “Who can stand?” as the wrath of the Lamb is poured out
2. Four angels are seen standing on the four corners of the land
  - a. Four corners doesn’t mean John saw the earth as flat
  - b. “Four corners” may refer to the four points on the compass, but almost always refers to the whole of something
    - i. Used in judgment for the whole of the land of Israel in Ezekiel 7:1-2 “The word of the Lord came to me: “And you, O son of man, thus says the Lord God to the land of Israel: An end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land.”
    - ii. Also used to describe the whole earth – Isa. 11:12, God promises to gather his people from the four corners of the earth
    - iii. Depends on the context as to whether it is translated earth or land.
3. Four angels are holding back the four winds
  - a. These are the judgments that are promised in chapter 6
  - b. Remember the four judgments were based on Zechariah’s portrayal of the four horsemen in Zech. 6
    - i. When Zechariah asks the angel what these four groups of horses are he is told, “These are going out to the four winds of heaven, after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth.” (Zech. 6:5)
    - ii. Zechariah is told that these horsemen are the four winds
    - iii. We also see that the four winds are associated with judgment when God promises judgment on Elam in Jeremiah 49:36 – “And I will bring upon Elam the four winds from the four quarters of heaven. And I will scatter them to all those winds, and there shall be no nation to which those driven out of Elam shall not come.”
4. We see here an interlude in the Judgment scene
  - a. God holds back the judgment for a set time

- b. Something must happen first before God's judgment will be poured out in its fullness
  - c. God is ultimately in control. Judgment only comes at His command
- B. And Angel Appears With God's Seal (2a)
  - 1. He comes from the rising of the sun (the east)
    - a. Is there significance? Some think so.
    - b. God's activity often comes from the east – Isa. 41:1-4; 46:11; Eze. 43:1-3
  - 2. The angel carries the seal of God
- C. The Angels Commands Judgment to Wait Until God's People Are Sealed (2b-3)
  - 1. The Angel commands the four angels to hold back judgment until the servants of God are sealed
    - a. What is this seal?
      - i. Differing Views
        - Some say protection from physical harm
        - Some say protection from demonic activity
        - Some say protection from losing faith / salvation (i.e. conquering through perseverance)
      - ii. Based on Ezekiel 9:1-9
        - God determined judgment on Jerusalem
        - God first commands an angel to place a mark on the foreheads of "men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst." – Ezekiel 9:4
        - In the context of Ezekiel, the sealing of the faithful, came before the glory of God departing the Temple, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.
        - The mark symbolized God's protection over them through the judgment to come.
      - iii. Based on Exodus 28:36-38
        - Aaron's high priestly garments to be worn before the Lord included a sign on the turban, at the forehead that read "Holy to the Lord"
        - "You shall also make a plate of pure gold and shall engrave on it, like the engravings of a seal, 'Holy to the LORD. "You shall fasten it on a blue cord, and it shall be on the turban; it shall be at the front of the turban. it shall be on Aaron's

forehead, and Aaron shall take away the iniquity of the holy things which the sons of Israel consecrate, with regard to all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.

- The Seal symbolized his holiness before God

iv. Based on Deuteronomy 6:6-8

- All God's people were sealed with the law of God on their hand and their forehead (which is also where we will see the "mark" of the beast later)
- These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. "You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

v. Some View the Seal as the Holy Spirit

- 2 Co. 1:22 who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.
- 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
- Ephesians 4:30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

b. Later in Chapter 14, these same people are said to have the name of the Lamb and the name of the Father written on their foreheads

c. The Seal is protection from the wrath of God

- i. All men either have the seal of the lamb, or the mark of the beast

## II. The Vision of The Sealed People (4-17)

### A. John Hears the Number of The Sealed (4-8)

1. John hears that 144,000 of Israel are Sealed (4)
2. John hears the number of each tribe (5-8)
3. Differing Views

a. They are the ethnic Jews at the end of history after the church has been raptured. – if they have the lamb's

name on them and trust in Christ aren't they the church? Some say they just believe in the gospel of the kingdom and not necessarily in Jesus (blasphemy)

- b. They are Jewish Christians in Jerusalem in the first century as impending judgment approached on Jerusalem
  - c. They are the same as the great multitude mentioned next in this chapter.
4. Why 144,000? (12 squared x 1000)
- a. God's people are always associated with the number 12
    - i. There were 12 sons of Jacob, 12 tribes of Israel, 12 apostles of Jesus,
    - ii. 1000 was a basic military division of God's people in the Old Testament (Num. 10:2-4, 35-36; 31:1-5, 48-54; 2 Sam. 18:1; 1 Chron. 12:20; 13:1; 15:25; 26:26; 27:1; 28:1; 29:6; 2 Chron. 1:2; 17:14-19; Ps. 68:17)
    - iii. The city of God, New Jerusalem is described in multiples of 12 and 1000.
      - There are 12 gates, 12 foundations, on which are ascribed the names of the 12 tribes and the twelve apostles, 12 precious stones in each foundation
      - The city itself is a perfect cube, in height, width, and length, 12000 stadia. Rev. 21:16 The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles (12,000 stadia); its length and width and height are equal.
      - Rev. 21:17 – the wall of the city is 144 cubits – 12 squared
      - These are the dimensions of the perfect Jerusalem from heaven, so here we have the perfect Israel of God listed in military units, numbered by tribe.
  - b. Are they literally Jews from these tribes?
    - i. Many people say that for Old Testament prophecies to be fulfilled, these must be actual biological descendants of these tribes
    - ii. The problem with this view is that the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are omitted from this list
    - iii. The only restoration prophecy in the Old Testament that actually lists the tribes of Israel includes Dan and Ephraim (see Eze. 48)

- Most likely, Dan is omitted because they were associated with idolatry in Judges 18:16-19; 1 Ki. 12:28-30
- Likewise, Ephraim is also associated with idolatry in Hosea 4:7
- Of course this is just speculation
- iv. Instead of Dan and Ephraim, Joseph and Mannassah are substituted in the Revelation list
- v. Therefore, even if we were to take the numbers and the tribes literally, they would exclude two tribes from Old Testament Israel
- 5. These Represent the Perfect Israel as she was always meant to be. Chaste, pure, sealed by God and in covenant with Him.
- B. John Sees the Multitude of the Sealed (9-10)
  1. John sees a great multitude (9a)
    - a. John heard the number given, but now turns and sees a multitude no one can number
  2. The multitude is from every tribe and nation (9b)
  3. John Sees the Appearance of the Multitude (9c)
    - a. Clothed in White Robes
    - b. Palm Branches in their hands
  4. John Sees the Worship of the Multitude
    - a. They worship God on the Throne
    - b. They worship the Lamb
- C. The Heavenly Court Worships God At the Sealing (11-12)
- D. John is Told the Characteristics of The Sealed (13-17)
  1. The Description of the Sealed (13-15a)
    - a. The Elder asks the Multitude's identity (13)
    - b. They Came out of the tribulation (14a)
      - i. Reference to Daniel 12:1 – protection of Israelites as they pass through unprecedented time of distress
      - ii. Only other place in New Testament "Great Tribulation" is used is the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:21, Mrk 13:19)
      - iii. Refers to the "hour of testing" found in Rev. 3:10
  - c. They have been washed in the Lamb's blood (14b)
    - i. It is salvation by grace through faith that is referenced
    - ii. They have trusted in Christ and persevered in their faith despite persecution and trial
  - d. They serve God because they are cleansed (15a)
    - i. They serve God – most don't think of "heaven" like this
    - ii. They are able to serve because they have been cleansed

2. The Protection of the Sealed (15b-17)
  - a. They Enjoy God's Presence because they are cleansed (15b)
    - i. He will "tabernacle" over them
    - ii. Jesus "tabernacled" with us in John 1:14 (usually translated as dwelt)
    - iii. Jesus spoke of the fulfillment of feast of tabernacles in John 7:37-39
  - b. They neither hunger or thirst or heat (16)
    - i. Fulfilled Restoration prophecy of Isa. 49:8-13
  - c. The Lamb will Shepherd them to life (17a)
  - d. God will wipe away their tears (17b)
    - i. Fulfilled Isa. 25:8