

The Sealed And Saved

Revelation 7:1-17

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First I want to back up one verse to Revelation 6:17 from our text today. The question is asked: "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" The awful judgments of chapter 6, the first six seal judgments, end with this question.

I'm often asked the question, "After the rapture of the church when it is 'caught up' to heaven and the tribulation begins on earth, will there be anyone else saved?" If you missed the rapture, can you be saved? Will anyone come to faith, be saved and go to heaven during the time of the tribulation? The answer to those questions is in chapter 7.

I'm not encouraging anyone to put off repenting now and do it later. Rather, do it now, go up in the rapture and miss the tribulation. Don't waste your time. Don't wait for the Antichrist; be ready for Jesus Christ. But if you should miss the rapture, God will still show mercy during this time.

Now in chapter 7, we will see two groups that are mentioned. The first saved group is the 144,000 Jews, mentioned in verse 4; and the second group is a great multitude from the Gentile nations, mentioned in verse 9. The group of 144,000 sealed Jews is discussed in verses 1-8, and the multitude from the Gentile nations, who will be saved, is discussed in verses 9-17.

I believe that the greatest revival of saved souls is in our future. I don't believe the Bible teaches that it will happen before the rapture. As a matter of fact, the Bible indicates that before the rapture, just the opposite will happen; there will be an apostasy. Churches will be falling away from the faith, "which was once for all delivered to the saints." You need to know your Bible in these last days. You need to be discerning. Not everyone who says they are a believer or who preaches from the Bible is preaching the true, orthodox, Christian faith. So we need to know what the Bible teaches, because there will be apostasy.

After the rapture, the Antichrist will be revealed, and he makes a covenant with Israel for seven years, which is during the time of the tribulation. Many people will see their need for Jesus. Many people will realize they missed the rapture, because they're in the tribulation, and will turn to God and be saved.

In the Old Testament book of Habakkuk 3:2, Habakkuk cries, "O Lord...in wrath remember mercy." That's a great description of Revelation 7. God, in His wrath, will remember mercy.

Now I want to remind you that Revelation 7 is a parenthetical chapter. It's a pause that goes into detail of what happens at the beginning of the tribulation.

In verses 1-8, we have the first group, the sealed of Israel or a restored remnant. We'll look first at the scene in verses 1-3. John says, "After these things I saw..." The Apostle John is on the

island of Patmos, and he is given a vision of what is going on. He says he 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..."—so there are five angels mentioned in verses 1-2—"...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.'"

In this scene in verse 1, notice that John says, "I saw four angels." Angels are mentioned in the book of Revelation about 67 times. A fascinating study would be to go through the book of Revelation and note all the references to angels. Sixty-seven times in 22 chapters we have a reference to angels. Angels are spirit beings created by God. When He created them the Bible doesn't say. It is commonly believed that He created them before Genesis 1:1. Scriptures indicate that when God "created the heavens and the earth," that angels were singing and worshipping God. And angels are not eternal; only God is eternal, but they are spirit beings.

Satan, who we know as the devil, was created as an angel. His name was Lucifer. He was the angel who oversaw worship in heaven. He was filled with pride and rebelled against God. That's where sin started, in the heart of Lucifer. It is one of the great mysteries of Scripture, how sin started in the heart of Lucifer. We don't know how that came about; it's just revealed to us in Scripture. When he rebelled against God, he was kicked out of heaven and other angels followed him in his rebellion. Those are fallen angels and what we know today as "demons." So there are spirit beings: good angels that didn't rebel with Lucifer and fallen angels that did rebel with Lucifer. But God is over them, in control of them and He is sovereign, sitting on the throne.

Verse 1 says that these four angels are "standing at the four corners of the earth." Some accuse the Bible of being unscientific, saying that there are not four corners of the earth. It's a figure of speech referring to north, south, east and west. It's not intended to be a scientific statement. The Bible doesn't teach that the earth is flat or square; it's just a figure of speech referring to the four quadrants of north, south, east and west.

These four angels holding the wind back is kind of a symbol of God's wrath to be poured out on the earth. Remember in chapter 6 that the wicked men of the earth say, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" So God's wrath will be poured out but He stops or suspends this judgment in verse 1. So the angels are temporarily holding back God's judgment.

But then in verses 2-3, we see the sealing of God's servants. "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..."—back in verse 1—"...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.'" So we see that God is completely, absolutely, totally in control. So God suspends the judgment, in verse 1, and then He seals His servants, in verses 2-3.

Then notice verse 3: “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” The word “servants” is the Greek word “doulos,” which means “bond slave” or “bond servant.” It is a servant who chooses voluntarily to serve his or her master. As a result, they are given a ring in their ear identifying them as the property of their master. They voluntarily give themselves as the property of their master and to serve them out of love.

When Paul the apostle referred to himself as “a servant of Jesus Christ,” he used the same Greek word—“doulos” or a “bond slave.” He chose to live for Jesus; Paul was His slave. So we, as Christians, also are known as the “bond slaves” or “doulos” of Christ.

So verses 2-3 refer to servants that will be sealed during this time of tribulation.

It’s interesting that when the Antichrist comes on the scene, he will put a mark on people’s right hand or forehead. No one can buy or sell without this mark. We kind of see the stage being set today for a cashless society. You know right now that when you go to some stores, they want credit card only; they don’t want to touch your money. And masks are required. During the tribulation, it will be a mark that will be required. They’re not just going to take your temperature; they’re going to see if you have the identifying seal of the Antichrist.

So before all this takes place, God is going to seal His servants. And it’s a marvelous thing what God is going to do. What is the significance of the sealing? Ownership and security. If I were to summarize in two words what the seal is all about, it speaks of ownership and security. In the ancient world, when you would write a letter, you would put it in an envelope, put a drop of wax on it and take your signet ring and seal it. That’s your signet seal; you own it and it’s secure. Only two people could break the seal—the sender and the receiver. So God seals His servants during this time.

It’s interesting in the Old Testament that God sealed certain people in a time of judgment. I think of Noah, when God put him in the Ark. I believe in the story of Noah and the ark. There was a literal man named Noah, he actually built a real boat and there was a flood that came on the earth and destroyed all mankind. God did it with a flood, and next time He’ll do it with fire. But when Noah got in the ark with his family, God sealed them in; He shut the door and sealed the door. The judgment came down, but they were safe in the ark.

There is also the story in the Old Testament of Rahab. The Israel spies went to Rahab, a harlot and a Gentile, and said if she put down a scarlet cord from her window, when the Israelites attacked Jericho, all who were in her house would be spared. So God sealed Rahab and her household. Then God destroyed Jericho with its people.

Then there is the story of the Passover, when God had the Israelites take the blood of a lamb and put it on the doorposts and on the lintel of their homes so that when the angel came through the land of Egypt to destroy the first-born, he would see the blood and pass over that house. That was God’s seal and mark.

God marks and seals believers today. The Bible says, in Ephesians 4:30, that, as a Christian, “You were sealed for the day of redemption” by the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 1:13 it says, “You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

Let me give you some doctrine on the Holy Spirit. When you are saved, the Holy Spirit convicts you of your sin; He convinces you that you are a sinner. Then when you believe in Jesus Christ and put your faith in Him, He regenerates you. It means He gives you new life. When He does that, He also then indwells you; every Christian has the Holy Spirit living inside them. Your body is “the temple of the Holy Spirit.” So not only does He convict you, regenerate you and indwell you, but He also seals you.

This is nonexperiential. You don’t feel sealed. “Ooh! I just got sealed with the Holy Spirit!” No; you don’t feel it. But when you get saved, you are sealed with the Holy Spirit. God stamps you. He owns you. It speaks of ownership.

But it also speaks of security. The strongest evidences that a true believer is secure in their salvation and cannot be lost is the sealing of the Holy Spirit. I emphasize that point, because so many people miss that. There are all these questions about whether or not you can lose your salvation. God says that “You were sealed for the day of redemption.” It’s a done deal. What begins with grace ends in glory.

But you have to ask yourself, “Have I been sealed with the Holy Spirit?” Only two people could break the seal of a letter—the sender and the receiver. In our case of salvation, only God can break the seal, because He’s the sender and the receiver. And Romans 8 indicates that He has no plan to do that.

So they are sealed, but how many are sealed and who are they? Verses 4-8 tell us. “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.”

The question is always asked, “How many are sealed?” One hundred and forty-four thousand. I want to point out that when God says “one hundred and forty-four thousand,” that’s exactly what He means—144,000. Doesn’t God say what He means and means what He says? So why all the confusion about the 144,000? The number can’t be expanded and the number can’t be decreased; if God says 144,000, then that’s how many are sealed.

What is their identity, verse 4? They are “all the tribes of the children of Israel.” There are

12,000 from each of twelve tribes. These are not Jehovah's Witnesses. These are not Seventh Day Adventists. They're not your television preacher on TBN right now. They are not from a cult. They are Jews living during the tribulation period.

Why did John go into such detail in verses 5-8 on how many from each tribe? Because he wants us to know that these are the remnant of Israel. There is no such thing to God as 10 lost tribes; He knows who they are. The genealogical records of the Jews have all been lost; today they really don't know what tribe they're from. But God knows, and God is going to seal them. Whether the seal is a physical sign on their forehead, I don't know. And it's also a work of the Holy Spirit.

And this is not the church. It is not spiritual Israel that is now the church. I don't believe in replacement theology, that the church replaces Israel, that God's promises and covenant to Abraham are gone and they're now being fulfilled in the church. It's so important when you're studying Bible prophecy to keep these three groups in their proper categories.

Group number one is the Gentile nations. Group number two is the church, the ecclesia. Jesus said, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." And the church is not Israel, and Israel is not the church. Group number three is the nation of Israel. You need to keep these three groups in their proper category and God's purpose and plan for each one separate. When you're studying prophecy, make sure you understand which group is being addressed and dealt with. If not, you're going to convolute and confuse the entire prophetic word. It's so very important.

Another question I want to answer is, "Why Israel?" Why would God seal 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each of 12 tribes? Now I understand that there is an issue about Dan being omitted and Levi, in verse 7, being included. Then in verse 8, Joseph is listed as a tribe, but there is no mention of Ephraim. Then there is Manasseh in verse 6. I am aware of all the different reasons why people think this is happening, but God doesn't tell us why. And if God doesn't tell us why, then we don't know why. So it's a waste of time to speculate why. But what we do know is that God has chosen His covenant people.

Let me give you four reasons why God has sealed these Jewish people. Number one, they are God's chosen, covenant people. God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him, that in his seed, "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." Abraham would have the Messiah come through his lineage. And from him would come Isaac, Jacob and the fathers. Then God made a covenant with David called the Davidic Covenant. So the Jews are covenant people.

The second reason God chose this Jewish group is because they had God's Word, the Scriptures. They were to write it and they were to preserve it. We have the Jewish nation of Israel to thank for our Bible, even the New Testament and epistles. Most of the 66 books that were penned by human authors were from Israel.

Thirdly, the Jews had God's Messiah, the Christ, Jesus, the Messias, the Anointed One.

So the Jews are God's chosen, covenant people; they were given God's holy Word, the Scriptures, and they would write it, preserve it and transcribe it; and they gave us the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, was Jewish.

Fourthly, they were to be God's light to the nations. God has chosen the nation of Israel not to be like other nations but to be a light to other nations. That's another reason for God's choice during this time.

In Daniel 9 and in Romans 8, 9 and 10, in this prophetic section of Scripture, Israel is God's time clock. All of history and all of Bible prophecy revolves around the nation of Israel. It's no accident that Israel exists today as a nation, that Jews are still an ethnic group of people in the world today. Hitler tried to extinguish them but he failed, because God preserved and protected them. And the Jews preserved, protected and kept the Scriptures.

So God's time clock is the nation of Israel. During the time of the first half of the tribulation He will seal with His Spirit 144,000 Jews, who I believe will preach the Gospel.

Years ago, Hal Lindsey, in his commentary on the book of Revelation, *The New World Coming*, called these 144,000 "Billy Grahams" that will be released on the earth. I would call these 144,000 "Paul, the apostles" released on the earth. If you get a Jew who comes to Jesus, you have an evangelist; they're going to share their faith and the Gospel.

Now the group we're going to see in verses 9-17, the "multitude" of those in heaven who were saved during the tribulation, will no doubt be saved because of the witness of these 144,000 Jewish people. In Matthew 24:14, Jesus, in His Olivet Discourse, said, "This Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."

I believe that the rapture could happen at any moment. We don't have to reach the whole world with the Gospel before the church is "caught up" in the rapture. But before the Second Coming, God will see fit to spread the Gospel to the whole world. There will be two witnesses, and we don't know who they will be; they might be Moses and Elijah, but we don't know for sure. They will come to preach the Gospel. There will be a mighty angel flying around the earth preaching the Gospel. So many people will be saved.

This leads me to the second group, in verses 9-17. We have the saved of all nations. First we had the sealed of Israel, or the 144,000; now we have the saved of all nations, in verses 9-17. Now notice in verse 1, "After these things I saw..." then in verse 9, John says, "After these things I looked..." This is an indication of the two sections of chapter 7. So John says that he saw and beheld. And what did he see? "...and behold, a great multitude which no one could number..."—that means there is a lot of people—"...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." This is clearly a reference to tribulation saints—we'll see that later in the chapter—who were saved during the tribulation, their souls are in heaven, as they are gathered around

the throne.

Notice it is “a great multitude which no one could number.” This is a great soul harvest that happens before the Second Coming. This is not Israel and it's not the church. The church was “caught up” in chapters 4-5 to heaven. These are tribulation saints that we'll see in verses 13-14.

Secondly, this group comes from “all nations.” They come from “all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues.” The Gospel of Jesus Christ is universal. This is why Jesus gave us the great commission. Which is not “the great suggestion,” by the way. It's to do what? To go into all the world and preach the Gospel. That's the commission of the church. Then one of the Gospels says, “...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” We go to preach the Gospel. That's the commission that Jesus gave. Go where? Into all the world. So there will be this great soul harvest during the time of the tribulation.

John 3:16 says, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” There's only one way to get to heaven, and that's through Jesus Christ. That's the message that needs to be preached to the whole world.

Notice also in verse 9 that this “great multitude” is “standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” So they're in heaven, before God's throne and before the Lamb, Jesus Christ, and they're “clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands.” Now this is not the church and it's not Israel; it's the tribulation saints. These are the people who get saved after the rapture. They get saved by believing in Jesus Christ.

The fact that they have “white robes” means that they are redeemed, they are righteous. They have palms in their hands, so they are rejoicing and victorious. I like that. So they are dressed in the righteousness of Christ, they're waving palms and rejoicing victoriously and they are saved “by grace through faith.”

God saves everyone the same way during the Old Testament, the New Testament and the tribulation. It doesn't matter. There's only one way God saves sinners: that's “by grace through faith.” In the Old Testament, they had to believe God's promises of a coming Messiah. If it's after the Cross, we have to look back by faith and believe and trust Jesus Christ. By grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Now notice the message these saints have, in verses 10-12: that they are saved and what they begin to sing. “Crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’ All the angels...”—there are angels once again—“...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 honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.’” What a scene this is in heaven!

So in chapter 6, we have the wrath of God, and now in chapter 7, we have the mercy of God. In

chapter 6, we go from tribulation to chapter 7, where we have salvation. So chapter 7 is a parenthetical chapter that breaks from the judgments of God. God is going to show mercy during the tribulation period. How wonderful that is.

What did they sing? They sang a song of salvation, verse 10: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" They sang a song of worship, verses 11-12. "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." The word "worship" means "to ascribe worth." So here they are in heaven, prostrate, worshipping God on the throne.

When we get to heaven, just like the tribulation saints, we're going to sing a song of salvation. We're going to sing a song of redemption. We'll sing a song as we worship God and bow down before Him in praise. So all heaven joins in and God turns their suffering and sorrow into joy.

Now notice, in verses 13-17, the meaning or significance. "Then one of the elders answered, saying to me..."—John is speaking—"...'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?'" So John is seeing this whole scene in heaven, and one of the 24 elders, which I believe represent the church, asked him, "Who are these...and where did they come from?" I like John's answer. "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.'" So these are tribulation saints. They probably were martyred and died during the tribulation, but they believed in Jesus Christ and were saved.

A lot of people think that during the tribulation, the Holy Spirit will not be on earth. The Bible doesn't really teach that. God is going to seal 144,000 by His Spirit, I believe. He uses the angels to do that. And then He is going to use them to witness to Christ. Then the people who will believe this multitude of people from Gentile nations will be saved by the work of the Holy Spirit. You can't be saved without the Holy Spirit. They're going to be born again, indwelt and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Now they're not a part of the church, but the Holy Spirit will be alive and active on the earth during this time.

Then starting in verse 15, "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." So they're saved, they're singing a song of salvation and they're singing about their service as they serve God before the throne.

In closing, in verses 16-17, they are now being shepherded by God in heaven. Now watch for the repetition of the word "shall." The King James translation says, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

I'm so glad that this chapter is in the Bible. If it went right from the seals to the trumpets to the bowls, it would be very difficult to get through the book of Revelation. God gives us this

interlude, the suspension of judgment. He seals 144,000, which is His plan and purpose for Israel. And then He saves, maybe through their witness, "a great multitude which no one could number." So I believe more people will come to Jesus Christ during the tribulation than at any other time in history. When they see all these cataclysmic things happening, many people will turn to the Lord and will be saved.

But notice that they will be shepherded by God: no more hunger or thirst, no sun or heat; they won't go through the tribulation anymore. God will feed them or "shepherd them." What we have here is an amazing picture: the Lamb becomes the shepherd. He's the Lion and the Lamb, but now He's the shepherd. He's our Good Shepherd. So He feeds them or shepherds them. It's the same word for "pastor." Then He will "lead them to living fountains of waters," verse 17, so they have abundant joy in heaven.

Then in my favorite verse in closing, He comforts them. "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Isn't that great?

The Jewish people used to keep tears in a bottle. It was one of their customs. They would cry into a little bottle, mark the bottle and keep their tears. The psalmist asked God, "Put my tears in Your bottle." But when we get to heaven, they'll be no more crying, because "There shall be no more death, nor sorrow...no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Some of the greatest verses in the Bible on heaven are found in the book of Revelation.

I believe that the end of Revelation 7 alludes to Psalm 23. What a beloved psalm that is. David said, "The Lord is my shepherd." And Jesus said, "I am the Good shepherd" or literally, "I am the shepherd, the Good One," because there's also a bad one. Psalm 23 continues, "I shall not want." The Living Bible has "I have everything I need." "He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." I have rest and restoration and righteous paths. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." What a beautiful word! If the Lord is your shepherd, you have everything you need in life and in death.

So even these people who missed the rapture and are in the tribulation period will turn to the Lord and be saved, and the Lord will lead them, guide them, shepherd them and provide for them.

Now I want to close with two overarching lessons from Revelation 7. First, we see God's purpose and plan for the remnant of Israel. God always has a remnant. When Elijah complained to God and said that everyone had apostatized and turned away from Him, there was no one loving and serving Him, God said, "I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal." God always has His true remnant, and He knows who

they are. And God has a purpose and a plan for Israel; that's why they're still in existence today.

Secondly, God's plan is to bring revival to all nations. Even in wrath, God will remember mercy. Isn't our God amazing? He'll show mercy during this time, so people can be saved.

If God has spoken to you through this message today, and you're not sure you're a child of God—maybe you don't know that if you died today, you would go to heaven, you've never really trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior—I would like to lead you in a prayer right now inviting Christ to come into your heart and to be your Savior.

So as I pray this prayer, I want you to repeat it out loud, right where you are, after me. Make it from your heart, inviting Christ to come in and be your Lord and Savior. Let's pray.

"Dear Lord Jesus, I'm sorry for my sin. I pray that You'll forgive me and come into my heart and make me Your child. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit, and help me to live for you all the days of my life. I believe in You. I receive You as my Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name. Amen."

If you prayed that prayer and you meant it, God heard that prayer and God will and does forgive your sins.

We'd like to help you get started growing in your walk and relationship with Jesus Christ. God bless you.

If you just prayed with Pastor John to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, we are so excited for you, and we'd like to send you a Bible and some resources to get you started in your relationship with the Lord. Simply click on the Contact link at the top of the page and tell us something like, "I prayed to accept Christ." We'll get your Bible and resources mailed out to you right away.

God bless you and welcome to the family of God.