

REVELATION 7:1-8

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Revelation chapter 7 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Now chapter 7 opens up on the heels of chapter 6, obviously.

And in chapter 6 we saw Jesus open six of seven seals that were upon the scroll or the title deed to the earth and as each seal was opened there was a corresponding judgment from God that will be poured out upon a Christ rejecting world.

And let me say this, because we have a break between the sixth and seventh seal judgments. The seventh seal contains the seven trumpet judgments, Revelation 8:1–11:19. And the seventh trumpet, Revelation 11:15, contains the seven bowl judgments, Revelation 16:1–21.

Now in our study we saw that by the time we reached the fourth seal, by the time this seal is opened, we saw how $\frac{1}{4}$ of the earth's population will be destroyed, over 2 billion people!

And, by the time we get to the sixth seal judgment there will be great earthquakes such as this earth has never seen before. The sun will become dark, and the moon will be red like blood.

There will be stars falling from heaven hitting the earth, the sky will split or recede as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every island and mountain will be moved out of its place!

You would think that by this time sinful man would fall on his knees and repent of his sin before a holy and righteous God, but that is not the case. We are told in Revelation 6:15-16,

“And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!’”

Notice how we see people from every walk of life, a variety of backgrounds, it encompasses everyone who refuses to fall upon the Rock, Jesus Christ and thus, they call for the mountains and the rocks to fall upon them and hide them from the presence of God!

Now, why would they want to hide from God's presence?

In Isaiah 59:1-2 we are told, **“Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.”**

Also, in Isaiah 64:6 we are told, **“But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.”**

And, just in case you had any doubt about your righteousness, The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“For we have all become like one who is unclean [ceremonially, like a leper], and all our righteousness (our best deeds of rightness and justice) is like filthy rags or a polluted garment; we all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away [far from God's favor, hurrying us toward destruction]. [Lev 13:45,46.]”** (Isaiah 64:6)

You see, no one can stand before a holy and righteous God in their own righteousness, which are like filthy rags before Him!

Paul reminds us in Romans, **“There is none righteous, no not one . . . There is none who does good, no, not one . . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”**

Romans 3:10, 12, 23.

It is hard to argue with that, even though some try to. They feel that they are good, not perfect, but good. But the Bible says that none are good, not even one and we all fall short of the glory of God because God demands perfection and none of us make it, not even one!

Thus, as Revelation chapter 6 closes, John makes this interesting point as these unrepentant sinners cry out, “**For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?**” Revelation 6:17.

As we move into Revelation chapter 7 tonight, we will see who can stand before God, not in their own righteousness, but in the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed into our lives by faith.

In fact, John will describe two groups of people here in Revelation chapter 7 who will be able to stand before God. We will look at one group tonight and then the next group, which I believe comes out of this first group next time!

One more point before we get to our text this evening. John has given to us a sweeping description of what those last seven years, or the Tribulation Period will be like. Yes, with the sixth seal opening we are not at the end of the Tribulation Period, not yet.

We still have the trumpet and bowl judgments to come, but we are getting close to the end at this point, the last half of the seven-year Tribulation Period and it has been devastating for those who are dwelling upon the earth.

Now here in Revelation chapter 7 John is going to take a pause and will fill in some of the details of this period of time. It is kind of a breather after seeing all that is coming upon the earth dwellers!

Chapter 7 forms a parenthetical section between the sixth seal judgment in Revelation chapter 6 and the seventh seal judgment in Revelation chapter 8.

So with that said, let's begin reading in Revelation chapter 7, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us this evening as we look at this first group of people who will be able to stand before God!

REVELATION 7

VERSE 1

John opens up with that phrase, "**After these things**" and the idea here is after the sixth seal John saw these things.

And then John speaks of the "*four corners of the earth*" and for those who love to bash the Bible and our faith, they look at things like this and they mock us for believing in a flat earth, since John spoke of four corners.

First of all, I don't think that John believed that the earth was flat. Not at all. God even said it was a sphere in Isaiah 40:22, and we will look at that verse in a minute.

But it is amazing at how many people actually believe that is what John is saying here - that the earth is flat!

Even William Barclay in his commentary on the book of Revelation comes to this faulty conclusion. Again, it is hard to understand how anyone can come to that conclusion, but, like I have said, even Bible believing Christians can. Case in point.

In regard to the four corners of the earth he wrote, "*This vision is expressed in conceptions of the world which were conceptions for the days in which John wrote. The earth is a square, flat earth; and at its four corners are four angels waiting to unleash the winds of destruction.*"

Now let's think that through, what Barclay is saying and see if John just made a mistake.

First of all, what are we told in II Timothy 3:16-17, "**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**"

So, if all Scripture is breathed from the mouth of God, don't you think the creator of the heavens and earth would know what He created, if it was round or flat?

Of course He would and thus, William Barclay and those who follow his line of reasoning have come to this faulty conclusion, John did not believe the earth was flat!

How can I prove that?

Simple, let the Word of God speak for itself and then you tell me if God knew the earth was round and for that matter, if those that read the Scriptures would also know this truth when the rest of the world at that time did believe some bizarre concepts about the earth.

In Proverbs 8:27 we are told, "**When He prepared the heavens, I was there, When He drew a circle on the face of the deep.**"

And in Isaiah 40:22 we are told, "**It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.**"

The shape of the earth is a sphere, it is round, not flat and God not only told us, but He should know, He created it!

If that is true, and it is, then what does John mean when he speaks of the four corners of the earth?

He is speaking of the entire earth from north to south and east to west.

You may remember several years back the Marines had a slogan that stated, ***“Our Marines are stationed on the four corners of the earth.”***

Now, in hearing that do we really think that they believed the earth is flat? Obviously they did not believe that the earth was flat, but they were saying that the Marines are on duty all over this world.

We also see that these four angels are holding back the wind from blowing throughout the earth.

The Greek word for **“holding”** is KRATEO, (krat-eh'-o) and it carries with it the idea of these winds struggling to break free from their restraint and these angels are restraining them from going forward.

Now, is this speaking literally of the winds not blowing across the land, which would turn off the essential engine of the earth's atmosphere?

I don't believe so for this is not a judgment here.

Then what do these winds speak of?

I believe these winds are speaking of judgment and God's judgment is being held back for a time.

Do the Scriptures support that line of reasoning?

I believe they do.

In Jeremiah 49:36 we see this illustration for us regarding wind being a judgment, as we are told, **“Against Elam I will bring the four winds From the four quarters of heaven, And scatter them toward all those winds; There shall be no nations where the outcasts of Elam will not go.”**

And in Jeremiah 51:1 we are told, **“Thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, Against those who dwell in Leb Kamai, A destroying wind.’”**

And so these are winds of judgment that are being held back from blowing upon the earth for a time.

But, once they are let go, look out because devastating destruction will blow upon the land, and we will see that as we come to Revelation chapters 8 and 9 as the trumpet judgments are sounded!

Now, why do these angels hold these judgments back?

Let’s read on and see.

VERSES 2-4

John tells us that God’s judgment will be held back until the servants of God are sealed, what does that mean?

The word **“sealed”** comes from the Greek word SPHRAGIZO, (sfrag-id’-zo) and it represented the signet ring of kings or other officials that was used to stamp wax on documents or other items affirming that it was not only theirs, speaking of ownership, but also protection.

This seal is not only showing that these are God’s people, but that He will protect them as well!

Also, in the Old Testament we saw Rahab placing a scarlet cord in the window as a seal of her protection against the Israelites coming in and killing her and her family as they entered the city of Jericho. This seal saved them through this invasion!

Also, remember when the angel of the Lord came through Egypt to kill the firstborn of each family, both Jew and Egyptian or Gentile. But if they placed the blood of the lamb on the door it was a seal of protection and the angel of the Lord passed over that house and spared the firstborn of that family.

There is another illustration of this in the Old Testament book of Ezekiel. In Ezekiel chapter 9 as God is preparing to pour out His wrath, His judgment on the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and specifically Jerusalem for their iniquity, we are told starting in verse 1, **“Then He called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, ‘Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each with a deadly weapon in his hand.’ And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen and had a writer’s inkhorn at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar. Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer’s inkhorn at his side; and the LORD said to him, ‘Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.’ To the others He said in my hearing, ‘Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary.’ So they began with the elders who were before the temple. Then He said to them, ‘Defile the temple, and fill the courts with the slain. Go out!’ And they went out and killed in the city. So it was, that while they were killing them, I was left alone; and I fell on my face and cried out, and said, ‘Ah, Lord GOD! Will You destroy all the remnant of**

Israel in pouring out Your fury on Jerusalem?’ Then He said to me, ‘The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great, and the land is full of bloodshed, and the city full of perversity; for they say, “The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see!” And as for Me also, My eye will neither spare, nor will I have pity, but I will recompense their deeds on their own head.’ Just then, the man clothed with linen, who had the inkhorn at his side, reported back and said, ‘I have done as You commanded me.’”

Ezekiel 9:1-11.

Before God poured out His judgment upon the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem, He sealed His own, a seal of protection.

What is interesting to me is that the “**seal**” or “**mark**” is the Hebrew letter TAV, which is a small “t” or a small cross.

That is our seal folks, going to the cross and allowing the blood of Christ to cleanse us from our sins indicating that we belong to God, and we are protected by Him.

What is interesting is that we know that Satan is a counterfeit and what God does Satan tries to copy it to deceive people and he does a great job deceiving people.

What is my point?

My point is this. In Revelation 13:16-17 we read of another mark or seal.

We are told, “**He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.**”

The Greek word for “**mark**” here is CHARAGMA, (khar’-ag-mah) and it speaks of a scratch or a stamp. Satan is a counterfeiter and thus, as God seals His people Satan comes along with one that is a fake mark, a counterfeit mark. And his mark is not one of protection but bondage, persecution, destruction and it will identify the person with the Antichrist!

Satan loves to copy the good things of God such as the Holy Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – one God manifested in three distinct persons.

And along comes Satan with his unholy or satanic trinity: Satan, the Antichrist and the false prophet!

Don’t be fooled by his lies. Jesus said in John 10:10, “**The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.**”

Now, who are these 144,000 saints of God that are sealed during the Tribulation Period?

It is funny the number of groups who claim to be the 144,000. Let me give you a few examples and you will see what I mean.

There are the Jehovah Witnesses. They feel that they are this group. Now they had to change their beliefs some because their view was that as soon as their number hit 144,000 that they would all be taken to heaven.

Then, they hit that number and went beyond it and lo and behold they got a new revelation. And this said that only the first 144,000 would live in heaven and the rest would live in God’s Kingdom on earth. Foolishness and unscriptural.

We also see that historical Mormonism also claimed to be the 144,000. Why do they feel this way? I guess because they claim to have Jewish roots, but they don't! There is no evidence for what they believe, what they teach, the book of Mormon is a joke, it is a fairy tale, and they are not the 144,000!

And there was Ellen G. White and the Seventh Day Adventists who claim to be the 144,000.

And there was Herbert W. Armstrong and his Worldwide Church of God who claimed to be the 144,000. Now you have to love his plan, it sounds like prosperity teachers today. If you would give double or triple tithes, you had a good chance of making into that inner circle of 144,000! They are not the 144,000 no matter how much money they give!

Let's not make this difficult. Listen again to what is said here in Revelation 7:4, "**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.**"

I am not sure how clear God can be. He tells us that all those who were sealed come from the tribes of Israel.

But many take that symbolically or they say that Israel has forfeited the promises of God because they have rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah, and now the Church is Israel!

There is no such Scriptural support for that, none at all!

You will never find the Scriptures referring to the Church being Israel. And the Church is made up from people from all over the world, or, as Revelation 5:9 says, "**Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.**"

Thus, to say this is the Church and not the children of Israel is a big mistake, it is not Scriptural! I will deal with this more as we read on, but keep in mind that this is speaking of the Jewish people and not the church.

But just to add a few more things.

Robert L. Thomas wrote that there is *“no clear-cut example of the church being called ‘Israel’ [that] exists in the NT or in ancient writings until A.D. 160. . . . this fact is crippling to any attempt to identify Israel as the Church in Revelation 7:4.”* (Robert L. Thomas, Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary, p. 476).

And Seiss tells us, *“They are not part of the church proper; for their repentance comes too late for that. They are a superaddition to the church – a supplementary body – near and precious to Christ, but made up after the proper church has finished its course.”*

Secondly, this last 7-year period of time known as the Tribulation Period or the Seventieth Week of Daniel deals not only with a Christ rejecting world but with the Jewish people and yes, Jews are getting saved today but one day, as a nation, they will turn to the Lord.

In fact, Paul makes this very clear in Romans 11:25-27, **“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.’”**

This will happen and it will occur during the Tribulation period for Jesus tells us in Luke 13:34-35, **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’”**

I believe it will be the Jewish people who call upon the Lord to return and He will. We see that in Isaiah 63:1-6, where we are told, **“Who is this who comes from Edom, With dyed garments from Bozrah, This One who is glorious in His apparel, Traveling in the greatness of His strength? ‘I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.’ Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? ‘I have trodden the winepress alone, And from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, And trampled them in My fury; Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, And I have stained all My robes. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, And the year of My redeemed has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, And I wondered That there was no one to uphold; Therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; And My own fury, it sustained Me. I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, Made them drunk in My fury, And brought down their strength to the earth.”**

First of all, we need to keep in mind that this prophecy is related to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and it is describing **“the day of vengeance of our God.”** In other words, the Tribulation Period!

And notice that the people are asking who this is who is coming from Edom, from Bozrah with these dyed garments and we see that they are dyed with or covered in blood!

This is speaking of Jesus Christ and the reason I can be so sure is that this person answers the question that is asked by the people and says, “**I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.**”

There is no doubt about who this is speaking of. It has to be the Lord Jesus Christ because He alone speaks in righteousness, and He alone can save!

Man has been trying to save himself ever since sin entered this world in the Garden of Eden and he continues to try today. But it is only God who saves or as Peter said, “**Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**” Acts 4:12.

Keep in mind that Edom was named after Esau, Jacob’s older brother and as you look at the Scriptures Edom is a type of the flesh. Bozrah was one of the capital cities in Edom. This area known as Edom is located southeast of the Dead Sea and the Edomites were one of the perennial enemies of Israel, even though they were family, and God said that He will judge them for coming against His people.

What I want you to also notice is that He is coming from Bozrah, from Edom and I believe He is returning to Jerusalem. The Lord makes His way from Lebanon to the wilderness of Kadesh to Bozrah and then returning to set His feet on the Mount of Olives. It is the Valley of Megiddo moving southward to Edom and then back to Jerusalem!

And the distance from Lebanon southward is 200 miles! Revelation 14:20 says, “**And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses’ bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.**”

Why does the Lord go to Bozrah, why He goes to Edom?

I think it is because the Jewish remnant fled to Petra from the Anti-Christ and Petra is located in the area of Edom.

When they see the Lord, they want to know why His clothes, His glorious apparel is stained red like grapes that are trampled in the winepress.

And He tells them that His wrath has been poured out and this is speaking of the Battle of Armageddon. Not really a battle for the Lord.

Notice the picture that is being painted for us here. Those who have rejected the Lord, those who have turned their backs on Christ are likened to grapes that have been placed in a winepress and crushed with their blood staining the Lord's garments.

Again, many have a hard time with this picture, but Revelation chapter 14 shows us that this is the Lord, and it is the Lord who will crush the wicked!

In Revelation 14:14-20 we are told, **“Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, ‘Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.’ So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, ‘Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.’ So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was**

trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs." Revelation 14:14-20.

As we have seen, for almost 200 miles there are the remains of lives that have been crushed by God's wrath with their blood either flowing or being splashed some 4 to 5 feet up on the horses' bridle.

Now some of you might be thinking that it is this angel that is doing this and not the Lord. Hang on because in Revelation 19:11-21 we are told who is judging the people of this world and it is not an angel, but it is the Lord!

Listen to what we are told beginning in verse 11 of Revelation chapter 19, **"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, 'Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.'** And I saw the **beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him**

who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.” Revelation 19:11-21.

So we can clearly see it is the Lord who treads this winepress of the wrath of God upon prideful man who rejects the living God!

Notice again that it is the “**day of vengeance**” and the “**year of My redeemed**” in verse 4. I like that. It is a day of wrath and a year of His grace or to put it more accurately, His wrath is but for a moment, but His grace is everlasting, but you can reject it if you want and sadly, many do.

I do realize that there is a growing number of Christians who say that God has forsaken Israel, He is done with them but as you read the Scriptures, this everlasting covenant that God made with them is just that, everlasting. It is based on God’s faithfulness and not theirs!

Again, remember what Paul said in Romans 11:26-27, “**And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’**”

Yes, God’s wrath will be poured out, but He is also coming back for His people, the nation of Israel, and those who have turned to Him during the Tribulation Period.

The times of the Gentiles will be over, and Gentiles will look up to the Jewish people instead of persecuting them. The Lord will put an end to all this misery and pain and set up His Kingdom where righteousness will flow from.

One more point before we move on and it has to do with punishment, God's wrath. Some Christians think that God can pour out His wrath upon His children; I don't see that in the Scriptures.

Spurgeon sums it up like this, *“You will hear one say, that such-and-such a good man was punished for his transgressions; and I have known believers think that their afflictions were punishments sent from God on account of their sins. The thing is impossible; God has punished us, who are his people, once for all in Christ, and he never will punish us again. He cannot do it, seeing he is a just God. Afflictions are chastisements from a Father's hand, but they are not judicial punishments. Jesus has trodden the wine-press, and he has trodden it alone: so we cannot tread it.”*

I hope that clears that up for you!

Let me show you why I believe that this sealing of these Jewish believers occurs prior to the start of the trumpet judgments.

They are sealed prior to the winds of Judgment blowing upon the land.

Now when do we see these winds of Judgment begin to blow upon the earth?

In Revelation chapters 8 and 9 as we see judgment once again being poured out upon the earth in the trumpet judgments. These judgments will be upon the earth, upon the sea, upon the vegetation in cataclysmic ways!

Remember, God will not only protect them from the wrath of the Antichrist and his forces but also these judgments from God that are coming upon the land.

In Revelation chapter 14, beginning in verse 1 we are told, **“Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. . . . These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.”** Revelation 14:1, 4-5.

You see, not one was lost, God protected those whom He has sealed and now they are standing on Mount Zion in victory!

And we are told that these are the **“firstfruits”** or the initial fruit of the Tribulation Period.

I believe these 144,000 are saved through the ministry of the two witnesses mentioned in Revelation chapter 11, and we will deal more with these men when we get to Revelation chapter 11. But I believe they are Moses and Elijah.

Now, if you still have doubts about who these 144,000 are, let’s read on for God makes it very clear to us!

VERSES 5-8

I am not sure why this is so confusing for people to understand. Remember what we read back in Revelation 7:4, **“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.”**

And if you still don’t get it, God goes through and names the various tribes in which these witnesses will come from, the tribes of Israel!

Now some may argue that you can't take this literally, it is symbolically representing the church.

Let me ask you this. If this is to be taken symbolically, if this is not speaking of the Jewish people and twelve thousand from each tribe, why doesn't it say, "*like the tribe of Judah*" and so on?

Because this is not to be taken symbolically and thus, the Holy Spirit has John write, "**of the tribe of Judah**" and-so-on, listing the twelve tribes of Israel. That should be very clear that this is to be taken literally.

Ethnically, they are Jewish, that is who they are identified with, the children of Israel, 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes. And it does seem redundant to repeat this over and over again, but God wants us to be very clear who they are.

But again, people will change things to make it fit their own theology.

A sad example is in Genesis chapter 1, the creation story as the Lord said, "**evening and morning were the first day**" and the second day and the third day and-so-on.

Again, God repeats Himself so we don't miss what He is saying, and yet some still do. They try to tell us that a day was millions of years, but that is not what the Scriptures are saying, a day is a day!

The foolishness of man and how much better it is to believe that God means what He says and says what He means!

And in regard to these sealed 144,000 I have seen Christians who will reject the fact that this is speaking of the Jews, and they believe it is the church. Why do they do that? Because it will fit with their theology, as I have said!

What do I mean?

I mean if you believe that the church is going through any part of the Tribulation Period, then they would have to be sealed. The problem here is that this sealing doesn't happen until the Tribulation Period has already started and the trumpet judgments are about to sound. And not only are they going to be sounded, but this protection by God will help them endure through all the trumpet judgments.

Again, does that mean that at that last trumpet, as some would have you believe, that the church is raptured, so we do go through most of the Tribulation Period?

Not at all!

This trumpet that is sounding is one of judgment, not calling us home. The voice like a trumpet is not a wrath sound, but a love call to His Bride, the Church and we are called before the Tribulation Period even begins.

I know that I cover this a lot, but there is such an attack on the Rapture of the church today that I want you to clearly see what the Scriptures are saying.

And, as we have seen, before the Antichrist is revealed, the church is called home. We see that in II Thessalonians 2:1-4.

And the kicker is what the Lord is saying here, you can't change it to make it fit your theology, this is Israel and not the church!

Now there are others who have a problem with this list because it is different with the listing of the tribes of Israel in the Old Testament.

Folks, there is no standard way to list the twelve tribes of Israel. In fact, in the Old Testament there is at least nineteen different ways to list them, maybe more.

Sometimes they follow the order of birth – Genesis 29:32-35:18.

Other times they follow the order of Jacob blessing them – Genesis 49:3-27.

Then there is the order of their encampment – Numbers 2:3-31.

There is the order of the census before the invasion of Canaan – Numbers 26:4-51.

There is the order of blessing and cursing – Deuteronomy 27:12-13.

There is the order of Moses' blessing – Deuteronomy 33:6-25.

There is the order of “the princes” – Numbers 1:5-15.

There is the order of inheritance – Joshua 13:7-22:34.

There is the order by the wives and concubines – I Chronicles 2-8.

And there is the order of the gates of the city – Ezekiel 48:31-34.

And those are just a few. So there is not just one way to list the twelve tribes of Israel. It all depends on what is being described and what God is trying to say through the listing.

What is interesting to me is that here in Revelation chapter 7 we see two of the tribes left out, Dan and Ephraim and I believe there is a reason for that.

In Deuteronomy 29:18-21 God said that He would separate those who go into idolatry from the rest of the tribes of Israel.

In Judges 18:30 we see that Dan is the first tribe to go into idolatry as they entered the land of Canaan, and they lead the other tribes into idolatry.

That is the reason I believe that the tribe of Dan is not sealed with the other tribes here in Revelation chapter 7, they brought idolatry into the land.

Now what about the tribe of Ephraim?

Keep in mind that both Manasseh and Ephraim were sons of Joseph, who received a double portion of the inheritance from his father Jacob.

Levi was not given an inheritance or a portion of the land and thus, they are not listed many times with the rest of the tribes.

For the tribe of Levi, the Scriptures teach that the Lord is their inheritance for they were the tribe of priests that ministered to the Lord.

So without Levite you would only have eleven tribes unless you inserted Manasseh and Ephraim for Joseph, which gives you twelve tribes.

Here in Revelation chapter 7 we see that the tribe of Levi is inserted and Joseph, but Ephraim is left out, why?

In Hosea 4:17-19 we are told, **“Ephraim is joined to idols, Let him alone. Their drink is rebellion, They commit harlotry continually. Her rulers dearly love dishonor. The wind has wrapped her up in its wings, And they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.”**

Ephraim also was into idolatry and again, I believe that is the reason that the tribe of Ephraim is not listed with the other tribes of Israel to be sealed.

And thus, we still have twelve tribes listed even without Dan or Ephraim being listed.

Now please don't come to the conclusion that our God is not gracious and merciful; He is very gracious, and He is very merciful to us.

Even though these two tribes are not listed as being sealed during the Tribulation Period, we see them mentioned in the Millennial Kingdom in Ezekiel chapter 48. God will restore them, and they will serve in His Kingdom.

What a great God we serve! He is a God full of compassion, mercy, forgiveness towards us, may we not lose sight of that fact!

Now, during the Tribulation Period what do these sealed saints of God do?

They are 144,000 J.W.'s, not Jehovah Witnesses, but Jesus witnesses that bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to a lost world.

Imagine 144,000 Paul the apostles on the loose!

How do I know they are witnesses or evangelists?

Listen to what we are told in Revelation 7:9-10, **“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!’”**

Look at the revival that breaks out during the Tribulation Period and how millions come to know the Lord! In the midst of this judgment, God’s grace and mercy comes shining through!

Next time we will look at this multitude that comes out of the Tribulation Period! I think it is important that we get a firm understanding of these things so that this book is not confusing to us.

Now let me deal with a subject that is growing in the church and it is called – ***REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY!*** And the idea here is that the church has replaced Israel because the Jewish people rejected their Messiah. Thus, all the promises that were made to Israel were forfeited by them and given to the church.

Replacement theology is also known as ***Reconstructionism*** or ***Kingdom Now*** teaching so if you read or hear someone speaking of those things, understand what they are saying. And I know I did touch on this, but it is a hot issue today and it is growing and growing in many churches today, especially in the big churches that many follow, and it is a wrong theology!

How did this happen?

This was not something that just happened, it has been around for a long time. Let me share with you what my pastor wrote. He said,

. . . one pastor gives a good overview of Church history to help us understand some important points -

“Following Constantine’s conversion in A.D. 312, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. At this point, Christian teachers, thinkers, and theologians said, *‘Uh-oh. We’ve been teaching the kingdoms of this world are going to fall - but now we’ve got a Christian in power in the person of Constantine.’*

So, Origen, a heavyweight Bible teacher and philosopher of the day said, *‘I think we’ve been reading the Scriptures wrong. All of the promises given to Israel are simply allegories and illustrations.’* And as a result, the power and potency, the effectiveness and impact of the church decreased steadily.

Origen left the scene and was followed by Augustine, who was such a gifted proponent of the case for the allegorizing of the Old Testament, that even in some of today’s King James Bibles, headings of the sections that speak of blessings upon Israel read *‘Blessings Upon the Church,’* while sections that speak of curses upon Israel read *‘Cursing’s Upon Israel’* (Micah 6–7).

Augustine was eventually followed by Martin Luther. And Luther, although a giant of the faith, was terribly wrong on one issue - He hated the Jews. That’s why many Protestant pastors supported Hitler well into his regime. . .

God is *not* through with the Jews (Romans 11). Because the promises He made to them were *unconditional*, they cannot be forfeited.”

- Pastor Phil Ballmaier, Revelation 7

And yes, the Mosaic Covenant was a bilateral covenant and thus, the Jews needed to keep that. But as you look at the other covenants that God made with the Jewish people, they are unilateral covenants or covenants that are based upon God's faithfulness and not man's, not the Jews! (We see that with the Abrahamic Covenant, Israel – the land Covenant, Davidic Covenant, and New Covenant).

Now if it is true, that the Jews can forfeit the covenant that God made with them, I don't think we have thought that through. Let me explain. You see, if that is true, if the Jews can forfeit the covenant that God made with them, we are in trouble because God has made a unilateral covenant with us as well, it is called the New Covenant.

And thus, along that reasoning, we can lose our salvation. But the Scriptures are clear on that. Our salvation is based upon the finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary and not upon our faithfulness.

If it was up to us, none of us would make it. And if you think you could, that is just plain pride, and pride will keep you out!

Again, and this is so clear, listen to what Paul says in Romans 11:25-27, and I know we have read these verses already, but just listen to what Paul is saying and you tell me if this is the church or Israel, the Jews.

He wrote, **“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.’”**

I think that is very clear, God is not done with Israel and if you think He is, then you are ignorant of what God has spoken in His Word.

There is no mistake about it, these 144,000 witnesses are Jewish, from the twelve tribes of Israel, and God makes that very clear!

In fact, in Jeremiah 31:35-37 the Lord says that if the sun, the moon and the stars cease to shine, if you can measure the heavens then Israel will be done, God will not save them, they will cease to exist. But that is not going to happen, and Israel will be saved just as God has said!

As I begin to close this evening, let me share with you this story about a group of people and what they were known for.

In ancient Corinth there used to be staged the Isthmian Games, the forerunner of the modern Olympics.

There were many events, but the one which received the most attention was the relay race.

The competitors lined up, side by side, at the starting line, each bearing a torch. In the distance waited still another line of men, and still farther on other lines.

When the signal was given, the men started to run, bearing their lighted torches.

When a runner reached his partner in the next line he would pass on his light, and-so-on from man to man until the finish line was reached.

With the famous relay race in mind, the Greeks coined a phrase: ***“Let those who have the light pass it on.”***

That is what we have seen here this evening, God raising up 144,000 Jewish witnesses who will evangelize the world for Jesus Christ.

They have the light, and they will pass it on to others during the Tribulation Period.

Folks, that is what the Lord is calling us to do.

Remember what we are told in Matthew 28:18-20, **“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”**

That is not a suggestion, but God is calling for us to get up and go out into all the world and share our faith. If you do, you will see fruit produced.

Even in the Tribulation Period these 144,000 Jewish witnesses who have been sealed by God will lead many to Christ.

Folks, the cross of Calvary does not change, for without it there is only death!

Paul said in Romans 1:16, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”**

May we never forget the power of the Gospel upon people’s lives!

Let me leave you with the words we heard in our last story, ***“LET THOSE WHO HAVE THE LIGHT, PASS IT ON!”***

May we do that!