

REVELATION CHAPTER SEVEN

144,000 Sealed – The Great Multitude in White Robes

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Rev 02/08/21

- I. **Revelation 7:1 (NASB)** *After this I saw four angels standing at the **four** corners of the earth [land], holding back the **four** winds of the earth [land], so that no wind would blow on the earth [land] or on the sea or on any tree.*
- A. “four”
1. connotes all-inclusiveness
 - a. as in our expression, “the four corners of the earth”
 - b. eventual destruction was going to be total
- B. “angels”
1. takes four angels to restrain the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse
- C. “four winds”
1. refers to the four horsemen (first four seals)
 - a. **Zechariah 6:2-7 (CSBBible)** The first chariot had chestnut horses, the second chariot black horses,³ the third chariot white horses, and the fourth chariot dappled horses — all strong horses.⁴ So I inquired of the angel who was speaking with me, “What are these, my lord?”⁵ The angel told me, “These are the **four** spirits of heaven going out after presenting themselves to the Lord of the whole earth.⁶ The one with the black horses is going to the land of the north, the white horses are going after them, but the dappled horses are going to the land of the south.”⁷ As the strong horses went out, they wanted to go patrol the earth, and the LORD said, “Go, patrol the earth.” So they patrolled the earth.
 - i. “spirits” = “winds”
- D. “winds”
1. in Scripture is associated with the coming of God and the actions of his angels
 - a. either to bless or to *curse*
 - i. bless
 - A/ **Genesis 8:1 (CSBBible)** God remembered Noah, as well as all the wildlife and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water began to subside.
 - ii. *to curse*
 - A/ **Genesis 41:27 (HCSB)** The seven thin, sickly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the **east wind** are seven years of famine.
 - B/ **Exodus 10:13 (CSBBible)**¹³ So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the Lord sent an **east wind** over the land all that day and through the night. By morning the east wind had brought in the locusts.
 - C/ **Exodus 15:10**¹⁰ “Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.”
 - D/ **Psalms 18:10-12**¹⁰ “And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.¹¹ He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.¹² At the brightness *that was* before him his thick clouds passed, hail *stones* and coals of fire.”

- E/ **Psalm 107:25,26** “²⁵ For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. ²⁶ They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.”
- F/ **Psalm 135:7,8** “⁷ He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasures. ⁸ Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast.”
- G/ **Psalm 147:17,18** “¹⁷ He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? ¹⁸ He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, *and* the waters flow.”
- H/ **Psalm 148:8** “⁸ Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word:”
- I/ **Hosea 13:15-16** “¹⁵ Though he be fruitful among *his* brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. ¹⁶ Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.”

2. meaning

- a. God will not destroy the Christians during the siege of Jerusalem
- i. it was unthinkable at that time that Christianity could even exist apart from Judaism
- A/ with all the judgments predicted to fall on Jerusalem, Christians might think they were going to be toast, too

D. “land,” “sea”, “tree”

1. looking ahead to judgments in first and second trumpets (DT)

- a. trumpet judgments being held off till Christians can be sealed
- b. Scriptures
- i. **Revelation 8:7 (CSBBible)** ⁷ The **first** angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire, mixed with blood, were hurled to the earth. So a third of the earth [land] was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.
- ii. **Revelation 8:8 (CSBBible)** The **second** angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain ablaze with fire was hurled into the sea. So a third of the sea became blood,

II. **Revelation 7:2 (NASB)** *And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth [land] and the sea,*

A. “angel”, “rising of the sun”

1. reference is to Christ

- a. “the Sun of righteousness who has risen with healing in his wings” (Mal 4:2)
- i. **Malachi 4:2 (CSBBible)** ² But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, and you will go out and playfully jump like calves from the stall.
- b. **Ezekiel 43:1-2 (CSBBible)** He led me to the gate, the one that faces east, ² and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice sounded like the roar of a huge torrent, and the earth shone with his glory.
- i. Gill
- A/ “[Christ] is said to “come from the way of the east”; which agrees with him in his character as the rising sun of righteousness; and with his incarnation, when as the day spring from on high, from heaven, he visited us, was born in the east, where his star appeared...”

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2. from the *east* is where God’s actions in history traditionally came

a. Scriptures

i. **Isaiah 41:2** “² Who raised up the righteous *man* from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made *him* rule over kings? he gave *them* as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow.”

A/ most say reference is to Abraham (Gill)

ii. **Isaiah 46:11** “¹¹ Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it.

A/ commentators split (Gill)

1/ Cyrus, Nebuchadnezzar, Abraham

b. I think this might be a little too imaginative

B. “seal”

1. Jesus has the ability to mark someone as belonging to God or not

III. **Revelation 7:3 (NASB)** saying, “do not harm the earth [land] or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.”

A. “Do not harm”

1. the trumpet judgments haven’t taken place yet

a. the Christians must be protected from the coming judgment

B. “sealed”

1. seal of the Spirit applied to righteous before 7 trumpets of wrath applied to the wicked

a. Scriptures

i. **Ephesians 1:13 (CSBBible)** In him you also were sealed in him with the promised Holy Spirit. when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed.

ii. **Ephesians 4:30 (CSBBible)** And don't grieve God's Holy Spirit. You were sealed by him for the day of redemption.

2. meaning

a. in Biblical world

i. a grant of authority and power

ii. a guarantee of protection

iii. mark of ownership

3. primary OT background

a. **Ezekiel 9:4-6 (CSBBible)** “Pass throughout the city of Jerusalem,” the Lord said to him, “and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the detestable practices committed in it.” 5 He spoke to the others in my hearing: “Pass through the city after him and start killing; do not show pity or spare them! 6 Slaughter the old men, the young men and women, as well as the children and older women, but **do not come near anyone who has the mark.** Begin at my sanctuary.” So they began with the elders who were in front of the temple.

i. the righteous are sealed so that they will not be destroyed in judgment of the wicked

ii. “mark”

A/ literally, Heb “tav”

1/ which was a “+”, a cross

a/ Bahnsen disputes this

iii. primary reference

A/ 70 elders of Israel slain because offering incense to idols (Ezek 8:10-11)

IV. **Revelation 7:4 (NASB)** And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

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A. “144,000”

1. obviously symbolic

a. 12 is number of Israel

i. the “12 tribes”

ii. squared

A/ a mathematical operation that produces a large number quickly

B/ = 144

1/ times 10 squared

a/ 10 & its multiples symbolize “many”

i/ Scriptures

A) **Deuteronomy 1:11 (CSBBible)** ¹¹ May the Lord, the God of your ancestors, increase you a thousand times more, and bless you as he promised you.

B) **Deuteronomy 7:9 (CSBBible)** ⁹ Know that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps his gracious covenant loyalty for a thousand generations with those who love him and keep his commands.

C) **Psalms 50:10 (CSBBible)** ¹⁰ for every animal of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.

D) **Psalms 68:17** ¹⁷ “The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand, *even* thousands of angels: the Lord *is* among them, *as in* Sinai, in the holy *place*.”

E) **Psalms 84:10** ¹⁰ “For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

F) **Psalms 90:4** ⁴ “For a thousand years in thy sight *are but* as yesterday when it is past, and *as* a watch in the night.”

ii/ note for millennium-is-in-the-future fans

A) notice how many times 1000 not used literally

b. some say can’t be literal, because 7:9 says they are “innumerable” (NASB: “no one could count”)

i. **Revelation 7:9 (CSBBible)** After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands.

ii. problem

A/ the “vast multitude” is probably a (Gentile) group separate from the (Jewish) 144,000

c. summary

i. Lots and lots of people of God will be saved from fall of Jerusalem

B. “tribe of the sons of Israel”

1. of course, its not the old Israel God has in mind

a. **James 1:1 KJV** ¹ James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.”

i. query: was James writing to *Jews*, or to *Christians*?

V. **Revelation 7:5-8** ⁵ *Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.* ⁶ *Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nepthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.* ⁷ *Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.* ⁸ *Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.*

A. [Chilton has interesting academic discussion on why the tribes are listed in this particular order]

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- B. the Jewish tribes stand for the *Jewish* Christians who were sealed from the disaster in AD 70
 - 1. they ended up at Pella, escaped from Jerusalem

VI. Revelation 7:9 (NASB) *After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;*

A. “great multitude”

- 1. this is a different group than the sealed 144,000 (Mounce)
 - a. evidence
 - i. the great multitude is uncountable, 144,000 is countable
 - ii. John “heard the number” (Rev 7:4) of 144,000, but he didn’t see them
 - A/ we can assume the 144,000 weren’t in heaven where John would see them
 - B/ but he “beheld” (cf. “looked,” v9) the “great multitude”
 - b. options as to who the vast multitude is
 - i. Jews of Diaspora who went through the “great tribulation” AD 30-66
 - ii. Gentile believers who came into the church after the Jews did

B. “every nation all tribes and peoples and tongues”

- 1. options
 - a. refers to the Diaspora
 - i. Jews from all over the Roman Empire who migrated to Rome
 - A/ **Acts 2:5 (CSBBible)**⁵ Now there were Jews staying in Jerusalem, devout people from every nation under heaven.
 - b. refers to Gentile Christians

C. “white”

- 1. symbol of righteousness

D. “palm branches”

- 1. well-known symbol of the restoration of God’s people to Paradise
 - a. like when Jesus came into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday
- 2. John meant to remind of how the people of the Old Jerusalem welcomed Jesus as Messiah
 - a. here, the people of the New Jerusalem welcome the Messiah

VII. Revelation 7:10-12 (NASB)¹⁰ *And they cried out in a loud voice: Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!*¹¹ *All the **angels** stood around the throne, the elders, and the four living creatures, and they fell facedown before the throne and worshiped God,*¹² *saying: Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*

A. “they” (v10)

- 1. the “great multitude” of Jewish believers are added to the praise throug
 - a. others in the praise throug
 - i. the 4 living creatures
 - A/ representing all the physical creation
 - ii. the 24 elders
 - A/ representing the old covenant and new covenant saints of God
 - iii. the angels
 - A/ **Revelation 5:11-12 (CSBBible)**¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels around the throne, and also of the living creatures and of the elders. Their number was countless thousands, plus thousands of thousands.¹² They said with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!

VIII. **Revelation 7:13-14 (NASB)** *Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?” (v14) I said to him, “My lord, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

A. “These”

1. the “great multitude” are in white robes

B. “great tribulation”

1. the same Great Tribulation predicted in Matt 24:21

a. **Matthew 24:21 (HCSB)** For at that time there will be great tribulation, the kind that hasn’t taken place from the beginning of the world until now and never will again!

i. Matthew’s “great tribulation” had to take place within one generation of Jesus

A/ **Matthew 24:34 (CSBBible)**³⁴ Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things take place.

C. “come out”

1. the “great multitude” were ones who were martyred and in heaven (Mounce)

a. the ones under the altar at the fifth seal (Mounce)

i. **Revelation 6:9 (CSBBible)** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered because of the word of God and the testimony they had given.

2. options as to who came out of the “great tribulation”

a. Jewish Christians martyred AD 30-66

i. they came out of the “great tribulation” by dying in the great tribulation, going to heaven

ii. Scriptures

A/ **Acts 22:4 (CSBBible)**⁴ I [Paul] persecuted this Way to the death, arresting and putting both men and women in jail,

B/ **Matthew 10:17-18 (CSBBible)**¹⁷ Beware of them, because they will hand you over to local courts and flog you in their synagogues.¹⁸ You will even be brought before governors and kings because of me, to bear witness to them and to the Gentiles. [spoken to 12 apostles]

C/ **Luke 21:11-12 (CSBBible)**¹¹ There will be violent earthquakes, and famines and plagues in various places, and there will be terrifying sights and great signs from heaven.¹² But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you. They will hand you over to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name.

D/ **Luke 21:16 (CSBBible)**¹⁶ You will even be betrayed by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends. They will kill some of you.

b. Gentile Christians of all ages who flock into the kingdom

i. “came out” means “resulting from”

A/ then, “vast multitude” would be Gentile Christians

B/ the Jewish believers (144,000) survived the great tribulation

1/ thus resulting in the “vast multitude” of Gentile believers

C/ Thayer’s

1/ “to come into being, arise, come forth”

IX. **Revelation 7:15-17 (NASB)** *For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread his tabernacle over them. (v16) “They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun bear down on them, nor any heat; (v17) for the*

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Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”

- A. “they”
 - 1. the 144,000 Jewish Christians plus the “great multitude” of Jewish Christians
 - B. “day and night”
 - 1. like the Levite singers in the service of the Temple
 - a. **1 Chronicles 9:33 (HCSB)** The singers, the heads of the Levite families, stayed in the [temple] chambers and were exempt from other tasks because they were on duty day and night.
 - b. **1 Chronicles 23:30 (HCSB)** They are also to stand every morning to give thanks and praise to the Lord, and likewise in the evening.
 - c. **Psalms 134:1 (HCSB)** Now praise the Lord, all you servants of the Lord who stand in the Lord’s house at night!
 - C. “spread his tabernacle”
 - 1. “spread his tent” (NIV)
 - a. shelter (HCSB), protect (Good News)
 - 2. illustrates a major theme of Revelation
 - a. Christians will be delivered from the persecution of the Romans and apostate Jews
 - D. “hunger no longer, nor thirst,” “nor will the sun bear down on them, nor any heat,” “guide them to springs of the water of life”
 - 1. this passage reflects language of Isaiah 49
 - a. a passage which gives the promise of salvation of the world as well as Israel
 - 2. **Isaiah 49:10 (CSBBible)** They will not hunger or thirst, the scorching heat or sun will not strike them; for their compassionate one will guide them, and lead them to springs.
 - a. 3 parallels
 - i. no hunger nor thirst
 - ii. no heat nor sun shall strike them
 - iii. followers will be led to springs of water
 - b. fulfilled in Christ and his followers (Gill)
- E. “tear”
 - 1. futurists might say that this can’t refer to the new covenant now in the church age
 - a. possible response (DT)
 - i. if there are tears to be wiped in the final state, how can it be the final state?