

Revival in the Midst of Tribulation

Text: Revelation 7:1-17

Introduction:

1. Revelation 7 is a pause, an interlude, a parenthesis that lies between the 6th and 7th seal judgments. John does this from time to time in the Book of Revelation. He puts the break on and explains another aspect before moving on with the progression of judgments. "It describes the sealing of the 144,000 Jewish Evangelists and the resulting multitude of saved people that come out of the Great Tribulation because of their witness." (Cloud)
2. This chapter answers the question of 6:17 concerning who will 'stand' in the tribulation. We find angels standing above the earth (Vs. 1), Jewish evangelists standing on the earth and Gentile saints standing in heaven (Vs. 9)
3. We are introduced to 2 important groups of people in this chapter:
 - Sealed Jews
 - Saved Gentiles
 - Note: Neither of these two groups are the church. They are tribulation saints.
 - Walvoord: "Revelation 7 does not advance the narrative but directs attention to two major groups of saints in the tribulation."
4. A great, global revival will take place on earth during the tribulation period after the rapture of the church. In this passage we see God bringing revival in the midst of tribulation.
5. The ministry of the 144,000 is the key theme of this chapter. Let's break it down into three sections:

I. The Imprinting of the 144,000 (Vs. 1-4a)

A. The Angels of the Sealing (Vs. 1-3)

1. The Restraining Angels (Vs. 1)
 - a. "four corners" = the four points of the compass. Language intended to convey the worldwide nature of these angels' responsibility.
 - b. "four winds" = the winds symbolize the judgment of God. There is a pause in the outpouring of God's wrath, a "lull in the storm". "The forces of nature are held in check while the Jewish saints are sealed." (Cloud)
2. The Rising Angel (Vs. 2-3)
 - a. "from the east" = the place of the rising of the sun
 - b. "seal of the living God" = a seal was "usually a signet ring that an oriental monarch affixed to give validity to official documents"

Revelation Series

or to mark his property (Gen. 41:42; Dan. 6:17)." (Thomas) It functioned in a similar way to an autograph or signature today.

- c. Rev. 14:1 reveals it is the "Father's name" that is written on their foreheads.
- d. Note: It is interesting that the devil mimics this idea with his own mark on the forehead (13:16-18)
- e. "cried with a loud voice" = the angel's instruction to the four angels. They are restraining the coming trumpet judgments which particularly affect the earth, sea and trees (See 8:7-9).

B. The Aim of the Sealing (Vs. 4a)

A seal symbolized 3 things:

- 1. **Power** (authority) – e.g. like when the governor general signs legislation into law.
- 2. **Possession** (ownership) – e.g. like you writing your name on something that belongs to you. (See Song 8:6)
- 3. **Protection** – e.g. like the sealing of the den of lions by Darius or the tomb of Christ by Pilate (Dan 6:17; Matt. 27:66).
- 4. Application: As believer's we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. Only God has the power to do that and when He does, we become His protected possession.
- 5. Eph. 1:13-14 *"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were **sealed** with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."*

II. The Identity of the 144,000 (Vs. 4-8)

A. Their Nationality (Vs. 4)

- 1. Many false doctrines and ideas have been built around the 144,000. For example:
 - a. The SDAs claim it will be the faithful of their communion, who will be found observing the Jewish Sabbath at the Lord's return.
 - b. The JWs believe it represents a special group within their church that will be the only ones who have the privilege of going to heaven.
- 2. But there is no reason to be in confusion concerning their identity. Just read the chapter! The 144,000 are Jews! Israel always means Israel throughout the whole Bible. Not one time is the word 'Israel' used to refer to the church!
- 3. Walvoord: "The prevalent idea that the church is the true Israel is not sustained by any explicit reference in the Bible, and the word Israel is never used of Gentiles and refers only to those who are racially descendants of Israel, or Jacob...It would be rather

Revelation Series

ridiculous to carry the typology of Israel representing the church to the extent of dividing them into twelve tribes as was done here, if it was the intent of the writer to describe the church.”

4. They are unmarried men who are the first fruits unto God and the Lamb out of Israel in the last days (Rev. 14:1-5). It appears their primary function is the preaching of the Gospel of the kingdom before the Second Coming of Christ.
5. Matthew 24:14 *“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached **in all the world** for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”*

B. Their Numbering (Vs. 5-8)

There are a couple of interesting observations about the list of tribes:

1. Judah is mentioned first – Christ came from the line of Judah.
2. Dan is omitted – possibility because he was the first into idolatry.
3. Ephraim omitted but Joseph mentioned who was father of both Ephraim and Manasseh.
4. **Question:** Some object that the tribes of Israel have been lost. They were scattered but not lost and they are not lost to the Lord. He knows which tribe each Jew comes from. On the human side with the rapid advancement of technology it is very possible they will eventually be able to identify which tribe an individual Jew is from.

III. The Impact of the 144, 000 (Vs. 9-17)

The great multitude in heaven are clearly the fruit of the ministry of the 144,000. We observe a number of things about this multitude:

A. The Sum of the Multitude (Vs. 9a)

1. This is undoubtedly the greatest revival in human history!
2. Isn't it merciful of God that at the darkest time in human history, His love and saving grace will be shown to multitudes?
3. 2 Peter 3:9 *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**”*

B. The Source of the Multitude (Vs. 9b, 14a)

1. “all nations...” = this revival is global in its reach. Every people group is represented. This reveals the heart of God who loves the world (John 3:16).
2. “out of great tribulation” = these are clearly not church age saints but tribulation saints. They are in heaven as they have lost their lives on earth, likely martyred by the antichrist (compare with Rev. 6:9)

Revelation Series

3. Question: Does this mean it is safe to wait till after the rapture to be saved (to delay)? The answer is an emphatic 'no' for two reasons:
 - a. Now is the day of salvation (2. Cor. 6:2). God's Word doesn't allow us to defer our decision for Christ. Many put off a decision for salvation because they are afraid of the consequences.
Consider! If you won't be saved today when the consequences are so minor, what makes you think you will be willing to be saved in the tribulation period when the possibility of dying for your faith will be nearly 100%!
 - b. If you reject Christ's offer of salvation today and miss the rapture, 2 Thess. 2:8-12 indicates you will likely be deceived by antichrist and damned for eternity.

C. The Standing of the Multitude (Vs. 9c)

1. Before the throne – in God's presence
2. Clothed in white raiment – symbolic of their imputed righteousness. We also note that in heaven, white robes are the standard attire of the saints. The people of God are modest and well covered. There won't be any leg shows in heaven!
3. Palms in their hands – symbolic of joy, thanksgiving and triumph. Palms were used in the feast of tabernacles in thanksgiving for the harvest (Lev. 23:39-41) and this feast looks forward to the harvest of souls in the end of the age. Palms are also featured in John 12:13.

D. The Song of the Multitude (Vs. 10-12)

1. The theme of their song (Vs. 10) – it is a salvation song. Salvation is all of God and they praise Him for it.
2. The Amen to their song (11-12) – the song of the multitude triggers this response from the angelic host surrounding the throne. Notice that the redeemed are again pictured as the inner circle around the throne with the angels forming the outer circle. They long to understand more of what salvation means (1 Peter 1:12).
 - a. The posture of their worship (Vs. 11) – they fall on their faces in awe and reverence.
 - b. The points of their worship (Vs. 12) – they worship God with a seven-fold ascription of praise:
 - i. 'Blessing' = God is the source of all blessings and is worthy to be praised for salvation, the greatest of all His blessings.
 - ii. 'glory' = God is glorious and His glory radiates from His Person
 - iii. 'wisdom' = God is all-wise and His plan of salvation reveals His matchless wisdom.
 - iv. 'thanksgiving' = denotes gratitude. What thanksgiving we owe God for His unspeakable gift of salvation!

Revelation Series

- v. 'honour' = God is exalted and worthy of all reverence.
- vi. 'power' = God is Omnipotent, all powerful. His power is manifested in His ability to save and transform sinners!
- vii. 'might' = God is mighty, He has all strength.

E. The Specifics of the Multitude (Vs. 13-17)

These saints are:

1. Cleansed (Vs. 14)

- a. So dark was the stain of our sin, it took the sinless blood of Gods' only begotten Son to cleanse us. There is only one cleansing agent for sin and that is the blood of Jesus Christ!
- b. What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus!
- c. The blood of Christ has the power to wash and whiten you!
- d. Psalm 51:7 "**Purge** me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: **wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**"
- e. 1 John 1:9 "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

2. Comforted (Vs. 15-17)

They are enjoying...

a. God's Divine Presence (Vs. 15)

- i. They are before the throne of God, serving Him. Notice the 'therefore'. The only reason they are standing before the throne of God in heaven is because they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb.
- ii. God dwells among them. What intimate fellowship!

b. God's Divine Provision (Vs. 16-17)

- i. The removal of pain and suffering (Vs. 16)
- ii. The comfort of the shepherd (Vs. 17) The picture is reminiscent of Psalm 23.

Conclusion:

1. Have you been washed in the blood?

If you are willing to repent and ask Jesus Christ to be your Saviour, this prayer might help you put this into words:

"Dear God, I admit that I am a sinner and I deserve Hell. I believe You love me and died for my sins, was buried and rose again. Right now, I repent from my sin and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour from sin. Help me to grow and live as a Christian from now on. Amen!"

2. Are we allowing the Lord to revive us in our times of distress and difficulty?