

### Revelation 7:1-17

At this point in the Tribulation, we are introduced to an important swing which begins to turn things toward Israel. This is a very important part of the Great Tribulation for much of it has to do with the regathering of the Jews as a prelude to giving them their land.

In the book of Revelation, there are what we would call some major parenthetical interludes. In the book of Revelation, there are certain parts that don't seem to be connected, but they truly are.

Gary Cohen in his book *Understanding Revelation* says there are three main reasons for these interludes:

- 1) To show that God's grace and mercy are still operative even during the worst times of Tribulation judgment.
- 2) To show the wickedness of the satanic empire and its defiance of God.
- 3) To show the final righteousness judgment comes before the coming of Jesus Christ.

Now there are three main interludes in the next Tribulation chronology:

- 1) The first interlude appears in **chapter seven** and features two visions that separate the sixth seal judgment from the seventh seal judgment.
- 2) The second interlude appears in **chapter ten** and is the interlude between the sixth trumpet judgment and the seventh trumpet judgment (10:1–11:14).
- 3) The third interlude appears in **chapter seventeen** and occurs after the seventh bowl judgment just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Now all three of the interludes focus their attention on the reign of Jesus Christ (7:17; 11:15-16; 17:14). So all of these interludes are pauses in the Tribulation that point to the fact that Jesus Christ will come and take over the world.

Now **chapter seven** breaks down into two main Visions:

#### Vision #1 – Revelation 7:1-8

The easiest way to analyze this first vision is by a question/answer format. We would like to ask and answer six questions:

**QUESTION #1** – What is the theme of **verses 1-8**?

The obvious theme of the first 8 verses is the sealing of the 144,000.

**QUESTION #2** - When will this sealing take place?

**Revelation 7:1** begins with the prepositional phrase “after this” (μετα τουτο). **What this means is that this takes place after the first six seal judgments have occurred.**

**We may conclude that this sealing of the 144,000 occurs after the sixth seal judgment (Revelation 6:12) but before the seventh seal judgment (Revelation 8:1).**

Daniel classifies the entire seven year Tribulation as being the “seventieth week” (Daniel 9:27). We know from Daniel’s prophecy that in the middle of the Tribulation things dramatically change for Israel and the Antichrist turns viciously against her (Daniel 9:27). This specifically happens in **Revelation 12** in which the final 3½ years or 1260 days are left (Revelation 12:6). So we may assume that this sealing event occurs as we are moving toward the end of the first 3½ years of the Tribulation. This would be the time that Jesus referred to as being just after “the beginning of birth pangs” (Matthew 24:8).

**QUESTION #3** – Who are the agents involved in this sealing?

It is quite evident that the agents used in this sealing are the angels . In **Revelation 7:1**, the angels are responsible for controlling the wind, which eventually will do great damage to the earth (**7:2**). It is also clear that an angel is involved in this sealing process (**7:2**). The pronoun “another” (αλλον) means another of the same kind. This angel is apparently higher ranked than the other four because he tells them what to do. By virtue of the fact that he rises from the “east” (“the rising of the sun”), it is another indicator that God’s program is swinging back toward Israel. We may assume that when this happens in the Tribulation, the program of God swings right to the Middle East.

Now the message that the angel gives to these four angels is that they are not to damage the earth, sea or trees until the 144,000 have been sealed.

**QUESTION #4** – What does the seal mean?

The idea of sealing a bondservant on his forehead was an idea not foreign to the people of John’s day. A sealing was a mark which made a statement about a person or a mark of ownership . It was a brand given to cattle, slaves and deserting military men. The Roman military literally branded a man on his forehead in John’s day.

**God’s seal is certainly a protective sign of ownership .** If we look at **Ezekiel 9:4-8**, the seal meant that the one who was identified by the seal would not experience and was immune from the devastation of God’s ferocious judgment when He poured it out.

**QUESTION #5** – What is the purpose of the sealing at this point in Revelation?

As we have already stated, the seal is a sign of protective ownership. This is critical at this point in the Tribulation for two prophetic reasons:

**Prophetic Reason #1** - Keeping with the Old Testament, there must be a literal group of Jews who receive a literal kingdom. For example, according to Zechariah we know that one third of Israel will survive the Tribulation and will be brought safely into her land (Zech. 13:8).

**Prophetic Reason #2** - Keeping with the New Testament, there must be a literal group of Jews who preach the gospel or make it known to the entire world before Jesus Christ returns (Matthew 24:14).

These 144,000 are selected by God for two basic purposes:

- 1) To proclaim the Kingdom of God (Matthew 24:14).
- 2) To receive the Kingdom of God (Matthew 24:21-22).

**QUESTION #6** – Who are the ones who are sealed?

The only answer and interpretation that is contextually correct is that they are Jews!  
There are three facts we may observe right from this passage that proves this point:

**(Fact #1)** - They are from the East. **7:2**

**(Fact #2)** - They are specifically said to be “sons of Israel.” **7:4**

**(Fact #3)** - The Jewish twelve tribes are literally and specifically named. **7:5-8**

One does not need to be a brilliant theologian or exegete to clearly see who these 144,000 are. We also learn from **Revelation 14:1-5** that they are probably single Jewish men who will have no time for marriage or even thoughts of it during the final 3½ years of the Tribulation.

When we compare the listing of the twelve tribes in the first book of the Bible, Genesis (49) with this one in the last book of the Bible, Revelation, we may note that there are two main differences:

**(Difference #1)** - There is a difference in order - Reuben begins Genesis and Judah begins Revelation. Gad is number eight in Genesis and is number three in Revelation.

This is probably due to the fact that One from the line of Judah is controlling the Tribulation, and also Reuben lost his position because of gross immorality (Genesis 49:3-4). Immorality can cost a believer rewards in heaven.

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**(Difference #2)** - There is a difference in content - Dan is missing from the list in Revelation and Joseph's son Manasseh is added to the list.

We know from Judges 18:1-2 that Dan and Ephraim promoted idolatry (Deuteronomy 18:30-31), and it is very possible in view of the warning in Deuteronomy 29:16-21 that God blotted out their land inheritance as a fulfillment of His Word. Also those who are not named in the seal would be subject to the terrible things of the Tribulation.

Jewish rabbis taught that Dan's elimination meant that the Antichrist would be Jewish from the Tribe of Dan. They based their view on what was predicted in Genesis 49:16-18 and Jeremiah 8:16. However, as far as we may determine, the Antichrist will be non-Jewish. It would be possible to perhaps link one from this tribe to the false prophet.

On the basis of Ezekiel 47:13-14 and Ezekiel 48:1-2, we do know that ultimately Dan will receive some kind of inheritance when Jesus Christ distributes land during the Millennium, which means that God is always faithful to His Word even to those who have not been faithful to Him.

Obviously, God is not going to seal any from the tribe of Dan during the Tribulation and use them for His prophetic purposes.

### **Vision #2 – Revelation 7:9-17**

Immediately after the sealing of the 144,000, the scene shifts from earth to heaven and there is a tremendous worship service that takes place there. There are several observations we want to make:

**Observation #1** - The believers at this service are so numerable that they cannot be counted.  
**7:9a**

**Observation #2** - The believers at this service are from all different nationalities. **7:9b**

These are believers from every nation and tribe and represent every language. They all recognize the importance of this moment and the importance of Israel in the program of God.

**Observation #3** - The believers are worshipping God at a very special place. **7:9c**

They are all standing "before the throne of God."

**Observation #4** - The believers are wearing white robes . **7:9d**

**Verse 14** identifies these who are wearing white robes as those who came out of the Great Tribulation who had trusted Jesus Christ.

What this means is that this innumerable company of people believed on Jesus Christ after the Rapture and were killed either through martyrdom or the other Tribulation judgments during the first 3 plus years of the Tribulation.

**Observation #5** - The believers have palm branches in their hands . **7:9e**

These palm branches are a sign that victory belongs to Jesus Christ. The fact that people from all nationalities are holding these palm branches indicates that they are fully aware that Jesus Christ is the King of the Jews, and that the program of God is about to swing back to Israel and will ultimately lead to Jesus Christ entering Jerusalem as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

**Observation #6** - The believers are emotional and verbal . **7:10**

In fact, the word “cry out” is one that literally means a loud, vengeful scream . At the throne of God, this massive group is crying out for vengeance and is acknowledging that salvation and deliverance come from God the Father and God the Son.

**Observation #7** - The angels, elders and living creatures also worship . **7:11-12**

The emphasis of the worship is that this is a marvelous, true moment that glorifies God because He is about to fulfill all of His promises to Israel.

**Observation #8** - One of the twenty-four elders questions John about this. **7:13-14**

Dr. Charles Ryrie says this is proof that God is completely aware of the inner thoughts of men. John was wondering who these people were, because he realized they were not part of the Church, so an elder asks John to identify them. John says, “I don’t know; you tell me.”

Now the specific answer to this is that these are those who are worshipping before the throne who have come out of the Great Tribulation during the first six seal judgments and they recognize the importance of the sealing of the 144,000 Jews.

Their right to stand before this throne and worship God was not due to the fact that they died, but due to the fact that they had been washed in the blood of the Lamb. Keep in mind that some of these believers were martyred. However, it was not their martyrdom that earned them heaven; it was the fact that they had been washed in the blood of the Lamb.

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**Observation #9** - The elder gives three results of being washed in the blood of the Lamb. **7:15-17**

**(Result #1)** - Every believer has an eternal residence. **7:15a**

These believers are living at the throne of God. They are not burning in hell but worshipping in heaven.

**(Result #2)** - Every believer has eternal responsibility. **7:15b**

Since their arrival, they are so overwhelmed with the privilege of being in heaven that they serve God day and night.

**(Result #3)** - Every believer has eternal resources. **7:16-17**

Every one of these believers is comforted in heaven. Things that perhaps killed them on earth in the Tribulation - hunger, thirst, heat - are no longer a threat.

They have access to all of God's blessings and are cared for by the Lamb. The wiping away of the tears (articular) are the specific tears which were caused by the Tribulation sorrows.

### Revelation 8:1-13

As we come to the eighth chapter of Revelation, we come to the beginning of the most ferocious part of the Great Tribulation. At this point, Jesus Christ breaks the seventh and final seal which contains the most ferocious and final judgments of God.

This seventh seal actually contains the seven trumpet judgments, four of which are found in this very chapter, and it also contains the seven bowl judgments. This seventh seal is the finale of God's wrath in which God will pour out and fill up His final and fierce level of wrath on this God-mocking, Christ-rejecting world.

The first four trumpet judgments occur in chapter 8. The fifth and sixth trumpet judgments occur in chapter 9. There is a parenthesis in chapters 10–11:14. The seventh trumpet judgment occurs in chapter 11 (11:15-19) and it will include the seven bowl judgments.

We may observe that the first four trumpet judgments will be judgments against nature. The fifth and sixth trumpet judgments will be judgments specifically against man, and the seventh trumpet judgment, which includes the seven bowl judgments, are more judgments against both nature and man.

### Revelation 8:1-6

There are five observations we want to make as we come to this seventh seal judgment:

**Observation #1** - The seventh seal is broken by Jesus Christ . **8:1a**

Jesus Christ is controlling and authorizing every one of these terrible Tribulation judgments. He is certainly not portrayed here as the “gentle Jesus”; He is the “judgmental Jesus.”

**Observation #2** - The seventh seal judgment features a half hour of silence . **8:1b**

It is interesting that in all the other seals, once the seal was broken, John saw something or heard something (6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12). However, when this seal is broken the thing that stands out is that John doesn't hear anything for a half hour.

In the Old Testament, there are certain references to the fact that when these events occur there will be moments of unusual silence (Habakkuk 2:20; Zephaniah 1:7; Zechariah 2:13).

The Greek word “silence” is one that literally refers to an absence of all noise. The specific location of the silence is in heaven. Let us keep in our minds that to this point in the Tribulation, heaven has been a place of tremendous action and activity and earth has been a place of roaring wrath. Now there is an eerie silence that occurs after Christ breaks open the seventh seal.

Why the silence for a half hour? We believe there are three main reasons for it:

**(Reason #1)** - This is one last brief moment of grace in which God grants people a brief pause in Tribulation wrath to reflect on their relationship with Him. This especially should cause Israel to think seriously about things in view of what is about to hit her.

**(Reason #2)** - This signals to the whole world that something major is about to hit. People will be forced to wonder what will happen next.

**(Reason #3)** - This is God's final pause before He pours out His final wrath which contains the worst judgments of all.

What is interesting about a half hour silence interval is that time things in the Tribulation are broken down into very specific time intervals. Apparently the Tribulation will be so horrible that even a half hour break would seem to be a reprieve.

**Observation #3** - The seventh seal features seven angels who stand before God and are given seven trumpets. **8:2**

These are seven very special angels who are used to signal this final judgment. We do know from various passages that angels are connected to the judgment program of God (i.e. Matthew 13:40-43). They are each given a trumpet. Trumpets were used in Israel to announce feast days, ceremonial processions, war, and the coming day of the Lord. I believe that these trumpet judgments do have a clear connection, not just to the world, but to national Israel.

There is obviously a very ceremonial approach to this scene. This is very orderly and solemn. Judgment is highly organized at the throne of God. There is no out-of-control action; everything is completely controlled by God.

**Observation #4** - The seventh seal judgment features another angel who draws attention to the prayers of God's people. **8:3-4**

At the opening of the seventh seal, another of the same kind of angel offers up to God **"the prayers of all the saints."** Both nouns "prayers" and "saints" contain an article which grammatically means that these are specific prayers of specific saints.

The most probable interpretation of this is that this is the moment when all of the prayers for God to pour out His wrath in judgment are answered. The saints could refer to the Tribulation saints but also could refer to all saints of the Church Age. This is the moment when God's people realize that all of their prayers pertaining to God's vengeance and wrath are answered.



Four points about prayer may be seen:

- 1) Prayer is very important and sacred to God in the working out of His program.
- 2) God is a God who answers prayers in His time, not our time.
- 3) Just because our prayers are not answered immediately does not mean they will not be answered eventually.
- 4) Prayers concerning judgment are viewed as sacred incense by God (Psalm 141:2).

**Observation #5** - The seventh seal features an angelic reaction to the saint's prayers. **8:5-6**

What we may observe here is that angels may be used in close connection with answering the prayers of God's people. There are two immediate reactions of angels:

**(Reaction #1)** - One angel is angered in heaven and powerfully demonstrates it on earth.  
**8:5**

This particular angel is so moved by the prayers of God's people that even before the final judgment begins, He emotionally responds and fills the earth with evidence of pending judgment which includes thunder and sounds and lightning and an earthquake.

This happens after the one half hour break, so people on earth obviously know there is new action on the way.

**(Reaction #2)** - Seven angels prepare for action. **8:6**

The seven angels with the seven trumpets prepare to blow them. William Newell believes that these trumpet blasts will actually be heard on earth. By this point in the Tribulation, everyone on earth realizes this judgment is coming right out of heaven and it is very possible that when each angel blows his trumpet, people on earth will hear it. The fact is, every time the people on earth hear one of these trumpet blasts, they will experience total terror.

### **Revelation 8:7-13**

As we read through these verses, we may observe that the number "one third" shows up some thirteen times (**8:7, 7, 8, 9, 9, 10, 10, 11, 12, 12, 12, 12, 12**). The number three is the number of God, specifically the number of the Trinity. This is a number that is closely connected to the finale of the wrath of the entire Godhead.

We know that only one third of Israel will be saved when the Tribulation is done (Zechariah 13:9). We know that when these first four trumpet judgments are over, there are three "woe" judgments yet to occur (**Revelation 8:13**).

The trumpet judgments break down this way: **Judgments 1-4** are judgments against nature found in Revelation 8:7-13; **Judgments 5-6** are judgments against men found in Revelation 9; **Judgment 7**, which includes the bowl judgments, starts in Revelation 11:15 and is aimed at Israel, nature and men.