

Revelation 7 • The Sealed & the Multitude

Introduction

Chapter 6 details the results of the Lamb breaking the first six seals on the very special, sealed book first presented in chapter 5, and chapter 8 details the results of the breaking of the seventh seal and all that follows with the judgments of the 7 trumpets and 7 bowls. Here, in chapter 7, we have an interlude between the sixth and seventh seal, a break between the first 6 judgments and all that are to follow. This break is best understood in the light of other biblical examples of similar circumstances. Was everyone “judged” in Sodom and Gomorrah? To be sure, God’s judgment fell on those places but His faithful were provided a way of escape. Did Israel experience all of the judgments God brought on Egypt when He sent Moses to bring them out to Him? The first 3 plagues fell on everyone, but the next 6 befell only the Egyptians—God distinguished His own in this manner. The final plague—symbolizing final judgment—was avoided only by the blood of a lamb (representing the blood of Christ) and celebrating Passover with unleavened bread (representing being pure, free from sin). A repeated pattern throughout Scripture is God providing a way out for His followers, and His establishment of a remnant to continue His work. The similarities are multiplied in chapter 7.

¹After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. ²And 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 and the sea, ³saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.”

[Read v.1-3]

Q: What is the gist of what’s going on?

A: God has mandated a break in the carrying out of His final judgments to do something special concerning His followers. He is making a differentiation between those who believe and follow Him and those who do not.

Q: What term is used to describe His followers? What does it mean?

A: “Bond-servants”. It’s a type of slave in ancient times that describes someone who gives himself up to another’s will to be used in service however the one they serve sees fit; it’s akin to a contract that’s voluntarily entered into in order to pay back a debt that one cannot repay through normal means. It has great application in describing how we voluntarily come into the Master’s service to repay the debt of sin He’s paid for us, now serving **HIS** will and not our own.

Q: Why is this significant in its use to describe those that are about to be sealed?

A: Because those about to be sealed are Jews; therefore it describes Jews who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. It speaks of spiritual revival in Israel proper and marks a distinction between Israel in the End Times and the church.

Note: Although “the mark of the beast”—Satan’s seal upon his followers—gets much of our attention, note that sealing followers is **FIRST** mentioned in relationship to God’s actions. It speaks of Satan’s repeated design to counterfeit the works and actions of God.

⁴And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

⁵From the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed,

from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand,

from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand,

⁶from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand,

from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand,

from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand,

⁷from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand,

from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand,

from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand,

⁸from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand,

from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand,

from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.

⁹After 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; ¹⁰and they cry out with a loud voice, saying,

[Read v.4-8]

Q: Which tribe is missing from this list? Why do you think that is?

A: The tribe of Dan is missing. In fact, ever since Dan left its originally-assigned lands in southern Israel and moved to northern Israel—introducing idolatry along the way to the other tribes—it has been absent from Scripture after being destroyed/carried away by Assyria. Its absence here may be a result of that behavior, or that behavior itself may have been a foreshadowing of events to come. Some believe that the antichrist comes from Dan based upon information provided about the character and nature of Dan in the Old Testament.

*“Dan shall be a serpent in the way,
A horned snake in the path,
That bites the horse’s heels,
So that his rider falls backward.
—Genesis 49:17*

*From Dan is heard the snorting of his horses;
At the sound of the neighing of his stallions
The whole land quakes;
For they come and devour the land and its fullness,
The city and its inhabitants.
—Jeremiah 8:16*

*“As for those who swear by the guilt of Samaria,
Who say, ‘As your god lives, O Dan,’
And, ‘As the way of Beersheba lives,’
They will fall and not rise again.”
—Amos 8:14*

Q: What is unusual about the tribe of Levi in this list? What might that represent?

A: Up until this point, Levi was always left out of the lists of the tribes of Israel because, as the priesthood, they were designated as belonging to God; they were not considered nor treated like the other tribes.

Having them listed as just another tribe—along with all the tribes’ designation in v.3 as “bond-servants”—probably indicates that as followers of Christ, **ALL** of Israel are in effect priests, a designation often given to believers throughout the New Testament. It indicates their role as followers of Christ, not just citizens of a nation.

Point: Many other supporting Scriptures make clear that Israel has a very specific role to play in the End Times. This is **not** an allegory or symbolism referring to the church, but a literal event that will happen to 144,000 Jews.

[Read v.9-12]

Q: What are the 2 main identifying characteristics of the multitude according to v.9? What might they signify?

A: “...clothed in white robes and palm branches were in their hands”. This signifies their purity from sin through Christ, and their acknowledgment of Christ as King. In other words, they are believers.

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“Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

¹¹And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying,

“Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

¹³Then 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?”

¹⁴I 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.

¹⁵For 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. ¹⁶They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; ¹⁷for the 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.”

Q: How is this group differentiated from those sealed in the verses above?

A: Those sealed are specifically identified as belonging to **JUST** Israel; the multitude comes from every nation on the earth.

Q: What is the difference between these 2 groups' actual, physical location?

A: The sealed are on earth, the multitude are in heaven.

Q: What is the key word that stands out in the multitude's praise to God?

A: “Salvation”. It is identifying this multitude as those who have been saved by God through Christ the Lamb.

Q: How would you describe the reaction of those in heaven to the appearance of the multitude?

A: Praise. They provide an opening and closing “amen”—an affirmation of “so be it”—to the salvation of God brought to fruition in the multitude.

[Read v.13-17]

Q: Make application of v.13-14 in the question to, and response of, John. What does this teach us about how to approach and understand the things that God reveals to us?

A: Don't assume you know the answer. Allow God the opportunity to provide the correct interpretation of what He reveals to you. And He will reveal it clearly.

Application: How does this apply in our general study of the Bible? How does it apply specifically to prophecy as a whole and the book of Revelation in particular? How often do we take what is presented to us and go back to the Source to ask **HIM** what it means?

Q: So what is the clear statement assigning meaning to the identity of the multitude?

A: “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation...”

Q: Going back to the opening example of Israel and Egypt in the Exodus, what does this speak of specifically here in Revelation?

A: It indicates that the remaining judgments will fall only on those remaining on the earth; His church has been spared all that comes next.

Q: Why are the sealed still on earth?

A: They are God's remnant, remaining to do His will and preach His gospel. It's the fulfillment of the original intention of Israel's role on earth.

Overall Application

- Do you believe that the church will be “raptured” away and not have to undergo **ANY** of God's final judgments? Based on this passage, why is that probably incorrect?
- Does this make you excited or scared? Why?
- What are the attributes of the multitude that we need to imitate most?
- What do we have to do to ensure our membership as part of the multitude?

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