

Chapter Sixteen

The Sealing of the 144,000

(Revelation 7:1-8)

John MacArthur states: “The previous chapter of Revelation (**6**) looked at a time of unprecedented disaster, unrelieved terror, and unimaginable slaughter that lies ahead for the world. Commonly known as the Tribulation, it will be the time when Jesus Christ takes back the earth from the usurper, Satan. That action is symbolized in the book of Revelation by His unrolling of a seven-sealed scroll. As He breaks each seal, a new divine judgment is poured out on the earth. The judgments of the first five seals were severe. But the disasters associated with the sixth seal (the beginning of the Day of the Lord) will far surpass those of the first five seals. And the judgments of the seventh seal, which contains the even more intense trumpet and bowl judgments, will be the worst of all.

The world will refuse to acknowledge that the disasters of the first five seals are God's judgment—despite the warnings from believers that they are. But the events of the sixth seal will be so horrific that all will be forced to acknowledge them as the judgment of God. In their terror, amid their futile attempts to hide from the terrible presence of God the Father and the Lamb, people will cry out, "The great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (**6:17**).

Chapter 7 forms a parenthetical section (completing a thought that was started) between the sixth (**6:12-17**) and seventh (**8:1**) seals to answer that question, introducing two groups who will survive the fury of divine judgment. The first, those described in verses 1-8, are the Jewish evangelists who will be preserved on earth. They will survive the holocaust of divine wrath unleashed by the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments. God will also protect them from the murderous efforts of Antichrist and his henchmen to wipe out believers in the true God. Having survived the wars, famine, unprecedented natural disasters, disease, rampant, unchecked sinfulness, and savage persecution of the Tribulation, they will enter the millennial kingdom alive. The second group to escape divine fury (**vv. 9-17**) are those who will be martyred and thereby ushered into the blissful rest of heaven, where they will be preserved. After the horrific events of the sixth seal, and before the opening of the seventh seal in **chapter 8**, the Holy Spirit provided this chapter as an interlude for the reader to catch his breath. It is also a reminder that in the midst of His wrath, God will remember mercy (cf. **Hab. 3:2**).”¹

¹ MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Revelation 1-11.

I. THE 144,000 SEALED ON EARTH (7:1-8)

I. THE ANGELS RESTRAINED. (7:1-3)

Revelation 7:1-3 (NKJV) ¹ After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. ² Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, ³ saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

A. John saw four angels at the four corners of the earth. (7:1)

1) Holding the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the earth, sea, or any tree. **(Wind is often associated in scripture with God's judgment)**

Jeremiah 49:36(NKJV) ³⁶ 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.

Daniel 7:2(NKJV) ² Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea.

Hosea 13:15(NKJV) ¹⁵ Though he is fruitful among *his* brethren, An east wind shall come; The wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness. Then his spring shall become dry, And his fountain shall be dried up. He shall plunder the treasury of every desirable prize.

B. John saw another angel ascending from the east. (7:2-3)

1) Crying with a loud voice to the four angels granted to harm the earth and sea.

2) Instructing them not to harm the earth, sea, or trees until the servants of God were sealed on their foreheads. **(With the seal of the living God, as a King with his signet ring, affirming its authenticity and security)**

II. THE 144,000 SEALED. (7:4-8)

Revelation 7:4-8 (NKJV) 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: ⁵ of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand *were* sealed; ⁶ of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the

tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand *were* sealed; ⁷ of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand *were* sealed; ⁸ of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand *were* sealed.

A. John “heard” the number of those sealed

B. Those sealed were 12,000 each of the tribes of Israel: **(This is not the Church)**

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1. Judah | 7. Simeon |
| 2. Reuben | 8. Levi |
| 3. Gad | 9. Issachar |
| 4. Asher | 10. Zebulun |
| 5. Naphtali | 11. Joseph |
| 6. Manasseh | 12. Benjamin |

C. Dan is omitted probably because of his idolatry. **(Deut. 29:18)**

D. Ephraim is omitted, probably because he defected from the ruling house of Judah **(Isaiah 7:17)** and he was consumed with idolatry **(Hosea 4:17)**, Joseph takes his place.

E. Rueben forfeited his birthright as punishment for sexual misconduct with his father’s concubine. **(1Chronicles 5:1)**

The tribal records were lost when Rome sacked Jerusalem in A.D. 70 but God knows who belongs to each tribe.

II. THE GREAT MULTITUDE IN HEAVEN (7:9-17)

I. JOHN SEES A GREAT MULTITUDE (7:9-12)

Revelation 7:9-12 (NKJV) ⁹ 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, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *Be* to our God forever and ever. Amen."

A. Which none could number, from all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues. **(7:9 a-d) This group is not the 144,000. The 144,000 came from the twelve tribes of Israel**

B. Standing before the throne and before the Lamb. **(7:9 e,f)**

1) Clothed with white robes. **I believe these people are part of the martyred believers from (Rev. 6:9- 11)**

2) With palm branches in their hands

C. Crying with loud voices: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" **(7:10)**

D. Angels, the elders, and the four living creatures also join in with praise. **(7:11-12)**

1) Falling on their faces before the throne and worshipping God. **What is going to be our eternal occupation in heaven?**

2) Ascribing blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might to God. **To give God continual eternal praise for He is worthy (Ref. Matthew 6:9)**

II. THE GREAT MULTITUDE IDENTIFIED (7:13-17)

Revelation 7:13-17 (NKJV) ¹³ Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" ¹⁴ And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. ¹⁶ They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; ¹⁷ for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

A. Asked by one of the elders who were these in the white robes? **(7:13)**

B. John responds with "Sir you know" and the elder identifies the great multitude: **(7:14)**

1) Those that come out of the great tribulation. **Answers 7:9**

2) Who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. **Holiness and purity**

3) Who are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple. **Their continuous occupation of serving him**

C. The elder describes their future blessedness: (7:15-17)

1. The One on the throne will dwell with them. **Protector**

2. They shall not hunger nor shall they thirst anymore; the sun nor any heat strike them. **Provider**

3. The Lamb will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of water

4. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes