**The Sealed of Israel – Revelation 7:1-17**

There is a pause between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals; judgment halts for a brief time while God seals 144,000 Jews who will carry His message to the ends of the earth. We are not specifically told that these Jews will be God’s ambassadors, but we assume that this is why He seals them. We have seen that the day of God’s wrath is about to come (Rev 6:15–17); so God brings a lull in the storm and extends His mercy to Jew and Gentile alike. We see here two groups of redeemed people. Both Jews and Gentiles!

**(Rev 7-1)** 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.

**Four Angels**- Supernatural being that attends upon or serves as a messenger of a superior supernatural entity an ‘angel’

“Four corners of the earth” (7:1). This phrase was used in the ancient Near East to mean “the whole world.” It does not imply a belief that the earth is flat, any more than our use of “sunrise” indicates we believe the sun revolves around the earth.

**(Rev 7:2-3)** 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.”

**Seal** (חוֹתָם, *chotham*; /σφραγίς, *sphragis*)-A small, engraved object used to make an image in soft clay or wax indicating ownership, authority, or authenticity—much like a modern signature.

**SEALED** (verb.) to be or become designated and made secure as a sign of authentication or ownership.

The winds of heaven speak of God’s judgment, and the judgments here are specifically on the earth, sea, and green vegetation. It may be that these four angels holding the four winds are also the angels who blow the first four trumpets, for the judgments are similar (Rev 8:6–12). The angel from the east holds the seal of God. A seal signifies possession and protection; note 9:4. Today, the Christian is sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13–14). This sealing happens the instant the sinner trusts Christ, and it assures the believer of eternal life and an inheritance in heaven. The sealing angel commands the angels of the winds to hold back their judgment until His servants have been sealed and thus protected from the judgment to come.

**(Rev 7:4-8)** And I heard the number of those who were sealed. **One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tries 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 Multitude from the Great Tribulation**

These sealed servants are all Jews: there are 12,000 each from twelve tribes of Israel. It is unfortunate that some well-meaning Christians have taught that the 144,000 are symbolic of the church (the new Israel), because the church is no longer on earth at this point in history. The 144,000 are true Jews who will be alive on earth at this time.

 They will probably be won to Christ through the ministries of Moses and Elijah, the two witnesses who will preach during the first three and one-half years of the Tribulation (Rev 11:1–12). These Jews will probably be God’s chosen missionaries—144,000 “Apostle Paul's” who carry the Gospel to all nations! This event will fulfill Christ’s prophecy of Matt. 24:14; the result will be the salvation of a multitude of Gentiles (7:9). When you think of the multitudes that Paul won during his ministry, you can begin to imagine what 144,000 such missionaries would do!

**(Rev 7:4-8)** The 144,000, the specific identification of this number as Israelites, and their makeup from 12 specific tribes, makes it difficult to believe these are “the new Israel” composed of the “completed church composed of Jew and Gentile.” Such an allegorical interpretation is made even more unlikely by reference in Rev 7:14 to “the Great Tribulation,” which is so significant in O.T. prophecy and predicted by Jesus in Matt. 24.

**(Rev 7:9)** 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,

“Every nation, tribe, people, and language” (Rev 7:9). This verse is a favorite text of some missionaries who argue from it that the Gospel must be heard by all peoples before Christ can return. This application falls short on two counts. Theologians agree that those who die in infancy are covered by the blood of Christ.

Thus, those from every nation, tribe, people, and language are already represented among the saved. Secondly, the text identifies this “great multitude” as those who “have come out of the great tribulation” (v. 14). “Wearing white robes”. In Rev (7:9), white robes typically represent the saved, clothed in righteousness by Christ.

The vision of the 144,000 sealed against the effects of trial is replaced by that of *a great multitude that no-one could count*, standing before God and the Lamb in the glory of the kingdom. A. M. Farrer considered that this contrast gives expression to two complementary themes of the Scriptures: on the one hand that God knows the number of his elect, and on the other, that those who inherit the blessing of Abraham are numberless as the stars. Their *white robes* signify purity and resurrection glory, the *palm branches* victory and joy after war.

**(Rev 7:10-12)** 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.”

**Revelation 7:10** Contains the first words spoken in heaven by an assembly of redeemed people. (The worship in Rev. 5:13 is offered by all created beings.) Their first praise is for full salvation. Salvation from sin. Salvation from all sorrow and sadness. Salvation from the trials that they endured. Such salvation is wholly God’s; they cannot take credit for it. God Almighty on his throne, by his sovereign grace, and Jesus the Lamb by his redemptive work have provided full salvation.

**(Rev 7:13-14)** 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.

This is the second and last time that one of the elders spoke directly to John. The first time was to quieten his tears by identifying the one worthy to open the scroll of God (5:5). Now an elder asked a two-part rhetorical question about the multitude in white robes: Who are they, and where did they come from? Of course, the answer escaped John so he prudently replied,? “Sir, you know.”

The elder answered the “where” part of his question first. They have come out of the great tribulation. The words have come are more correctly translated “are coming” (present tense in Greek). This crowd has been arriving in heaven from earth and has continued to increase throughout the period of tribulation. There is no indication that these are martyrs, though some surely must be. The blessings promised in verses 15–17 imply they have gone through great personal loss.

The Great Tribulation is the final time of suffering that the earthly Jesus predicted would happen before his return: “There will be great distress [Greek thlipsis, tribulation], unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive” (Matt. 24:21–22). As Revelation 8–16 describes the unleashing of the trumpet and the bowl judgments, we can see that Jesus’ words are not an exaggeration.

The elder next answers the “who” part of his question. These are redeemed humans, described with an image not found elsewhere in Scripture, although often found in contemporary hymnals. The symbolic portrait of Christians as those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb is meant to be strange and unnatural. How could washing clothes in blood make them white? This is supernatural washing. Israelite rituals of sprinkling animal blood for purification are the background (see Heb. 9–10). Consider also 1 Peter 1:18–19: “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” First John 1:7 is also similar: “The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”

**(Rev 7:15-17)** 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.”

**7:15 *they stand in front of God’s throne and serve him day and night in his Temple.*** It is because of God’s action in the Messiah, the Lamb, that Gentiles not only join Israel, whose place is to stand before God’s throne, but also share the priestly role to serve God Day and night in his Temple. Gentiles are clearly part of the kingdom of priests created by the Messiah (1:6; 5:10).

 In addition, God’s promise that he would live among Israel and “shelter them” (see Exod 29:45; 1 Kgs 6:13) is now extended to Gentile believers.

**Rev 7:16–17** The vision concludes its presentation of the Gentiles as participants in God’s restored kingdom by including the Gentiles in a collage of promises that had been given to Israel. Woven together here are promises found in Isa 25:8; 49:10; Ezek 34:23.