



Revelation 7 Study Guide

Revelation 7 has two scenes—7:1–8 and 7:9–17. And both describe God’s protection and comfort for his people. The numbering in 7:1–8 indicates that God knows each individual. The vision of the great multitude emphasizes the international scope of God’s people and the vastness of their number.

Rev. 7 forms an “intermission” between the sixth seal (6:12–17) and the seventh seal (8:1). It is like a dramatic pause, which keeps the reader waiting for the final act that will unfold with the seventh seal.

There is much confusion about the 144,000. It helps to remember that those who believe in Christ the Jewish Messiah are the true Jews (3:9; 5:10). The 144,000 are identified later, in 14:4, as those “who follow the Lamb wherever he goes”—i.e., the followers or disciples of Christ. In agreement with the symbolical, visionary character of Revelation as a whole, the numbers, most likely, are symbolical.

We will examine the preserved church militant in 7:1-8 and the numberless church triumphant in 7:9-17.

(Before we proceed, let me reiterate something I stressed and explained in the beginning of Revelation 6. This book doesn’t solely predict what will occur in the lead-up to the Second Coming of Christ. It also reveals what transpired during the past 19 centuries of church history, what is happening in our lives today, in our current era, and what will unfold in the days and years before Jesus returns. The book of Revelation uses symbolic and vivid imagery to illustrate the course of events throughout the history of the church, the ongoing struggle between good and evil, and the battle between Christ and those opposed to His kingdom. This spans from Jesus’ first coming to His second coming. Therefore, what we find in

Revelation 7 isn't limited to the future; it also encompasses what God has accomplished in the past and continues to do in the present for all his redeemed people.)

1. THE PRESERVED CHURCH MILITANT (7:1-8 – VISION #1)

Situated between the opening of the sixth seal and the opening of the seventh seal, it addresses a pressing question posed at the end of Revelation 6: "Who shall be able to stand?" (6:17). This question lingers in the minds of believers, anticipating the survival of the church in the face of persecution and the day of judgment.

The first vision—found in 7:1-8—assures John and the readers of a preserved church militant on Earth. The concept of “sealing” is central to this passage, as verse 3 tells us: "Have sealed the **servants** of our God on their foreheads" (emphasis ours, ESV).

First, though, in Revelation 7:1, the reference to the "four corners of the earth" and the "four winds of the earth" underscores the cosmic scope of this vision. The number four in Revelation consistently symbolizes the entire earth and its inhabitants (similar references can be found in Ezekiel 37:9, Jeremiah 49:36, Daniel 7:2, 8:8, 11:4, Zechariah 2:6, and 6:5). The fact that these four winds need to be restrained to prevent them from causing harm to the earth suggests that they are likely evil, wicked, rebellious angelic (demonic) beings whom God is utilizing to bring judgment upon the world, as seen in Jeremiah 49:36.

Three essential aspects of this sealing deserve our attention.

1. The Sealed: Symbolic and Spiritual

Revelation 7:4-8 of the Bible are often misunderstood and misinterpreted. And, as a result, many interpretations have emerged, including:

1. Some believe the 144,000 are Jehovah's Witnesses who will reign in heaven.
2. Others think they are select Sabbath worshipers (Seventh-day Adventists).
3. There's a view that they represent preachers following Melchior Hofmann in 1533, which didn't come to pass.
4. Some see them as the church, representing all the redeemed throughout history.
5. Another interpretation is that they are literal Jews saved and chosen for special service during the Great Tribulation.

Will the argument ever stop about who the 144,000 servants in Revelation 7 really are? Maybe not, but I hope these facts below will help us understand them better. In Revelation 7:4, it says that 12,000 are chosen from each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

- **Some interpret the 144,000 as a Jewish remnant saved after the rapture, who serve as evangelists during the Great Tribulation.** However, this perspective depends on a classic 7-year tribulation reading of the book and raises questions about God's treatment of Gentile believers. Will he only protect those who are of ethnic Israel?

- **The number 144,000 is likely symbolic, emphasizing completeness and representing all believers, whether Jew or Gentile, i.e., the church.** Thus, the 144,000 and the innumerable multitude in Revelation 7 refer to the same group viewed from different angles.
- **There are significant differences between the 144,000 in Rev. 7:4-8 and the great multitude in 7:9-17.** The 144,000 are specifically numbered, while the multitude is countless. The former is from Israel, while the latter is from all nations. They are also in different locations—with the 144,000 on Earth and the multitude in heaven.
- **The list of tribes in Revelation 7 doesn't match any of the various lists found in the Old Testament.** Judah is listed first here, which is only the case in the Old Testament when tribes are arranged geographically, moving from south to north. This might emphasize the importance of the messianic king from the tribe of Judah.
- **Dan and Ephraim are notably absent from the list.** Some believed that the Antichrist would come from the tribe of Dan, but these tribes are associated with idol worship. Instead, Joseph and Manasseh are mentioned, and the reasons for this substitution remain unclear.
- **The numbering of the 144,000 may evoke the Old Testament census,** symbolizing a Messianic army called to conquer through sacrificial death. They are adult males, similar to those eligible for military service.
- **The 144,000 are referred to as the "servants" of God,"** which in Revelation usually means all those from all time that have believed on Jesus. Just as Satan marks his followers, God marks his people.
- **The 144,000 in Revelation 7:4-8 seem to be the same group mentioned in Revelation 14:1-5.** They are described as having the seal of God on their foreheads and being redeemed from the earth and mankind, suggesting they represent all the redeemed throughout history.
- **In Revelation 14:4, the 144,000 are called "first fruits" to God and the Lamb,** indicating they represent the initial group of believers whose salvation foreshadows a larger harvest in the end times.
- **The 144,000 conquer their enemy as Jesus did—through sacrificial death.** Their deaths appear to be defeats, but they are actually victories, demonstrating that the battle against evil is won through faith and perseverance.

In short: The 144,000 individuals sealed are not to be taken literally as some believe. The 144,000 seem to be a symbolic representation of all believers. Their purpose is to emphasize the completeness of God's redeemed people. This number symbolizes the living church militant—the true Israel of God.

2. The Significance of Sealing

The act of sealing in ancient times signified several things: security, ownership, authenticity, and a guarantee. In the case of God sealing his people, it signifies his commitment to their security and protection. The Angel of the Covenant, Jesus, holds back the winds of persecution (Rev. 7:1), safeguarding his people, even though they may still face trials and persecution.

Sealing also denotes ownership. God affirms that his people belong to him, bearing his mark publicly. This authenticates them as his own—and permanently so! The seal guarantees their authenticity and secures their place in his family. It is a guarantee, a promise, and a first installment of the eternal inheritance that awaits them (See: Romans 8; Eph. 1; Eph. 4:30, etc.)

3. The Sealer: The Angel of the Covenant

Rev. 7:2 introduces the Angel of the Covenant ascending from the East, holding the seal of the Living God. This figure, unmistakably the risen Jesus, speaks with authority, holding the other angels back from harming the earth and its inhabitants until his people are sealed. He is the one who protects, seals, and secures his church. The loud voice and divine authority reveal Christ's supremacy and his role in the salvation and preservation of his people.

2. NUMBERLESS CHURCH TRIUMPHANT (REV. 7:9-17)

John's vision continues with a glimpse of a vast multitude standing before the throne of God. It's a numberless multitude, radiant in their white robes, symbolizing their purity obtained through the blood of the Lamb. As we gather for the Lord's Supper together at TVBC, we are reminded that we, too, belong to this glorious assembly—all by God's grace in Jesus Christ.

In heaven, Jesus stands at the center of the church triumphant. He not only holds back the winds of persecution (7:1) - but is the very heart of this triumphant church.

We Should Worship Because of What God Has Done (7:9-10)

John's vision reveals that this multitude comes from every tribe, nation, kindred, and people. And he witnesses an immense crowd that is so vast that it cannot be counted. This multitude comes from all corners of the world, representing various nations, tribes, peoples, and languages. This fourfold categorization highlights the universal nature of this gathering. In heaven, there is absolutely no trace of bias, discrimination, or racism. In every direction, as far as one can see, there is a massive assembly, akin to the countless stars in the sky (as mentioned in Genesis 15:5) and the grains of sand on the seashore (as in Genesis 32:12).

*Note their **location** – before the throne and before the Lamb. Now the question of 6:17 is answered as to who can stand in the wrath of the Lamb—it is the redeemed!

*Note their **clothing** – clothed in white robes of victory and purity, they stand before God in the attributed righteousness of the risen Jesus alone.

*Note their **instruments of worship** – palm branches of joy and celebration.

*Note their **confession** – they cry (continually) with a loud voice (7:2), saying “Salvation ...” Deliverance from sin and victory over Satan is ours because of Father on the throne and the Son (Lamb) at his side.

Heaven is a place of diversity, where language, social, and ethnic differences disappear. It's a beautiful reminder that in Christ, we are all one, marked by the blood of the Lamb.

Imagine the joy of joining this heavenly choir, singing praises to the Lamb who sits on the throne, surrounded by saints from every corner of the earth! The unity and love in this multitude are beyond comprehension, a foretaste of the eternal unity we will experience in heaven.

The Angels Worship God Because of Who He Is (7:11-12)

Note that every single angel stood in the presence of God. This relates to the countless beings mentioned earlier in Rev. 5:11-14. Similar to the elders mentioned in 5:14, the angels also humble themselves by falling on their faces before the Lord. This moment is profoundly sacred. Like the saints

mentioned in 7:10, the angels don't speak of God's actions but rather describe who God is. The word "Amen" surrounds a sevenfold blessing. The angels confirm what the saints have expressed and then offer their own words of worship and adoration.

- 1) **Blessing** – a good word, a praise.
- 2) **Glory** – honor derived from a good reputation; it is the radiance or outshining of the divine person.
- 3) **Wisdom** – divine knowledge and perspective on all things, especially in the outworking of His plan of salvation.
- 4) **Thanksgiving** – we get our word “Eucharist” from it. It speaks of gratitude and is the appropriate response to the God of all good things.
- 5) **Honor** – esteem, public recognition (c.f. 4:11; 5:12, 13).
- 6) **Power** – God’s omnipotence, his ability to act as He wills.
- 7) **Might** – strength as a quality one has. Often related to God’s mighty acts in salvation history.

Everything here has a single purpose, a sole target, and an exclusive recipient: our God for all eternity. This act of worship is not fleeting; it's everlasting. It doesn't last just for a brief moment but endures forever.

Or, as the old song says: *What a mighty God we serve. Angels bow before Him, heaven and earth adore Him. What a mighty God we serve!*

We are Promised Salvation out of this World's Tribulations (7:13-17)

Observing this awesome scene in heaven, one of the 24 elders (go back to Rev. 4), one of the redeemed, puts a question to the apostle John: “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they and where have they come from?”

In a sense, he anticipates the question that was on John's mind. Indeed, John throws the issue back to the elder in verse 14 by saying, “Sir, you know.” What unfolds is a glorious description of the promises of salvation this group enjoys, and five different angles or aspects are highlighted. Though these promises are particularly for this group, these promises also belong to us as well.

We are promised:

#1 – Sanctification (7:13-14)

These come out of the *Great Tribulation* (see: Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21). Though it is not specifically stated, it would seem, then, martyred believers are in view. Sacrificed on earth, they are sanctified in heaven, for their robes were made white in the blood of the Lamb.

It's crucial to understand that we are not saved because of our tribulations but through them. Tribulations, trials, and afflictions drive us to the fountain of Christ's blood for cleansing and redemption. These saints have come out of Great Tribulation, their robes made white in the blood of the Lamb. Tribulations serve as a means to draw us to Christ, to wash our garments in his righteousness, and to trust in his finished work on the cross.

Each member of this vast assembly has been brought to heaven through different circumstances and providences, yet all share the same glorious seal—the blood of the Lamb. Yet “wash and made white” indicates once-for-all actions. Take our ugly, sinned, soiled garments and plunge them into the blood of the Lamb and miraculously, supernaturally, they come out white.

The church in heaven is a testament to God's grace and faithfulness, where every individual is known by name. There are no exceptions, no forgotten souls. This multitude stands as a testimony to God's redemptive power. We are promised sanctification!

#2 – Service (7:15a)

- **“Serve (cont.)”** – priestly or worshipful service.
- **“Day and night”** – continually, unceasingly, without interruption.
- **“In His temple”** – the present heavenly dwelling place of God. But in eternity (Rev. 21:22), he is himself our temple.

#3 – Security (7:15b)

“The one seated on the throne will shelter them” – This reminds us of the tabernacle in the wilderness (as described in Leviticus 26 and onwards), the pillar of cloud and fire (from Exodus 13:21-22), the radiant presence of God known as the Shekinah Glory among his people (found in Exodus 40:34-38), and the coming of God in human form through the Son (as in John 1:14). God is with them, right there among them. They will never again feel abandoned or suffer. They now experience the highest level of God's presence and protection!

#4 – Satisfaction (7:16)

In the past, people in ancient times often had to deal with the challenges of hunger and thirst, and these issues still persist in many parts of our world today. However, in heaven, there will be no starvation, thirst, or scorching heat from the sun.

Our souls will find complete satisfaction in Christ. We will no longer crave worldly pleasures or sinful desires, for our joy will be in worshiping the Lamb in his presence. The Lamb will feed us and lead us to living fountains of water. We will be bathed in his love, basking in his glory, and fully embracing our purpose of glorifying God.

This is in sharp contrast to what the Four Horsemen represent in 6:1-8. They bring curses, but God bestows blessings. They bring suffering and sadness, while God provides us with contentment.

#5 – A Shepherd (7:17)

The Lamb will take on the role of our shepherd. It's a significant shift from being the Lamb to becoming the Shepherd, as seen in references like John 10, Hebrews 13:20, and 1 Peter 2:25. Jesus is known as the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, and the Chief Shepherd. He will lead us to the "springs of life-giving water," with the emphasis on "life." This stands in stark contrast to the world's offerings of thirst that can never truly satisfy.

Furthermore, any painful memories and suffering will be erased as our God lovingly and kindly wipes away every tear from their eyes, as described in 21:4.

Again, the Lamb will dwell among his people in heaven. This dwelling signifies a close, intimate relationship between Christ and his redeemed. We will be at home with him, and He will be at home with us. Our souls will find refuge under his wings of love.

Heaven will be a place of perfect fellowship, where God's people will dwell in eternal unity with their Savior. It's a glimpse into the future where our joy will be boundless, our worship deep, and our love for Christ ever-increasing.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Read Rev. 7:1–8.

1. What is the function of the four angels? Can we infer whose authority is behind them?
2. How does the announcing angel indicate a distinction for the 144,000?
3. What do you think is the meaning of the sealing?
4. Who is being sealed?
5. Is the number 12 significant in these verses? If so how? What Old Testament background is the logical background for the use of this number?
6. What is the significance of the multiple of 1,000?
7. What tribes are listed? Make a list, and compare it to the list in Numbers 1.

- a. What tribe is missing in Numbers 1? [Levi: see Num. 3]
 - b. What tribe is missing in Rev. 7:1–8?
 - c. How is the missing tribe made up for in each case, so that the total is still 12?
 - d. What is special about Levi? Num. 3:5; 8:14–16 (and others).
 - e. What is special about Dan? Judg. 18.
8. What is the significance of this numeration?
9. What is the guarantee (see Rev. 7:3; 9:4; 14:3–5)?
10. Where do John's readers in the seven churches fit into this vision? (Hint: Christians are the true Jews, 3:9; 5:10.)
11. Where do we fit in?
12. What do you think is inscribed in the seal? See Rev. 14:1; 3:12. What difference does it make?

Read Rev. 7:9–17.

13. What participants are there in the heavenly scene?

14. What are the characteristics of the great multitude?

15. What are they doing? What about the elders and the living creatures?

16. How are we supposed to react to this scene?

17. What do we see about God?

18. What have the multitude been rescued from?

a. On the “tribulation,” see Acts 14:22; 2 Thess. 1:6–7.

19. How? (note: the blood of the Lamb, verse 14)

20. What is their reward? What details do you see? How are they reassuring?

21. Where do John's readers fit in to this passage?

22. Who is represented by the great multitude?

23. Where do we fit in?