

TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

An Interlude Between the Sixth and the Seventh Seals of Judgment Revelation 7

Revelation 7

"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." 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.

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."

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."

Background Notes

In Revelation 6 we studied the opening of six of the "Seal Judgments." These judgments will take place during the future seven-year Tribulation Period. This period will follow the Church leaving this earth and being taken home to heaven.

Daniel 9:27 tells us that this future period of seven years will be divided into two 3 ½ year periods. We sometimes refer to the second 3½-year period as the "Great Tribulation." Now comes a question that is difficult to answer: in the seven-year Tribulation Period, when will the Seal Judgments of the Book of Revelation take place? In the futurist view I'm presenting in these Talks, the Seal Judgments will take place during the first 3½ years of the Tribulation Period. In this view, these judgments will be the "beginning of sorrows" mentioned by our Lord in Matthew 24:8 - "*All these are the beginning of sorrows.*" The fact that the seals on the scroll of God's judgment must be opened before the book itself can be opened would support the idea that this is the **beginning** of sorrows, taking place in the first part of the Tribulation Period. Furthermore, we see in the first three verses that the 144,000 Jewish evangelists will be sealed for preservation **before** the great storm of judgment that will harm the earth and sea and trees. So the time must be early in the Tribulation Period.

Doctrinal Points

1. There will be 144,000 Jewish evangelists during the Tribulation period.

The first point to be made about this group of 144,000 evangelists is that they are Jewish – 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. Whether there will be exactly 12,000 from each tribe, or whether this number is symbolic (like many things in the Book of Revelation), we can't say for sure. However, there's no reason not to see it as literally 12,000 Jewish evangelists from each tribe. Exactly how the tribal identification will be determined is uncertain – maybe it will be done by DNA studies! On the other hand, maybe the Lord will indicate in some other way the tribe to which these Jewish evangelists belong.

The main point is that they're **Jewish** evangelists of the Tribulation Period. These 144,000 evangelists are **not the Church!** We believe that the Church will be in heaven and the 144,000 Jewish evangelists will be here on this earth during the Tribulation Period.

Where will these "saved Jews" come from, and what will their message be? Romans 11 and many Old Testament prophecies reveal that there will be a great spiritual revival in the nation of Israel in the future – and it may have already begun!

When reading Romans 11, it is hard to miss the important fact that the Church has **not** replaced Israel and the Church is **not** the "New Israel"! **Israel is Israel!** Romans 11 indicates that Israel has been **temporarily set aside** during this present time, the "Church Age." During the Tribulation God will raise up a godly "remnant" of Jews. This is the "all Israel" that will be saved according to Romans 11:26, *"And so all Israel will be saved..."* Out of this godly remnant will come the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, who will evangelize worldwide before the Lord returns to this earth. They will preach the "Gospel of the Kingdom" -- that is, the good news that Jesus is returning to set up His long-awaited kingdom on this earth. This global evangelism is seen in Matthew 24:14 where the Lord said, *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."* There will be 144,000 Jewish evangelists during the Tribulation Period.

2. There will be many thousands of Gentile converts during the Tribulation Period.

In verses 9-14 we see a "great multitude" of saved Gentiles -- from every nation! Who are they? Is this the Church? No, if we're consistent in our interpretation, they can't be the Church! Verse 14 says that these people are "the ones who come out of the Great Tribulation." Remember, the Church will be in heaven during the Tribulation, and will not go through the time of great judgment on this earth. These people are Gentiles who will come to the Lord during the Tribulation. They are the Gentile converts of the Tribulation Period who are not martyred. After the Tribulation, they will enter the Millennial kingdom that our Lord will set up on this earth. In Revelation 6, under the fifth seal, John saw the martyrs of the Tribulation Period, and in chapter 7 he saw the believers who will live through the Tribulation Period. In chapter 7 there are 144,000 Jewish evangelists and a great multitude of Gentile believers!

These Gentiles are the individuals that our Lord refers to as "sheep" in Matthew 25. Matthew 25 is part of the Lord's Olivet Discourse of the future. The reward for the "sheep" will be to enter Christ's earthly kingdom. We also see that the evidence of the faith of these individuals is their kind treatment of the Lord's "brethren." Matthew 25:40 - *"And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'" We believe the brethren here "inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."* It certainly appears that the "brethren" mentioned here are the 144,000 Jewish evangelists of the Tribulation Period. Those who show kindness to them during the Tribulation will risk their lives, and this will certainly be evidence of true faith. The "sheep" individuals will be similar to the righteous Gentiles of World War II, who risked their lives to protect the Jews of Europe from death under the Nazi regime.

Notice the reward for this great multitude of Gentile converts in Revelation 7:15 - *"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."* Did this scene take place on earth or in heaven? Christians differ on this detail. I believe that it's an earthly scene, because there is no night in heaven! Remember, at this stage of the vision, John had been caught up into heaven, and there was rejoicing in heaven, as we see here in verses 11-12. But it seems that John saw this great multitude of living Gentile believers serving Lord on this earth during our Lord's Millennial Kingdom and at His Millennial Temple. No longer will these faithful believers hunger or thirst or be without shelter (conditions during the Tribulation), but our Lord Himself, as the Lamb on the throne, will provide for them: *"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."* These are the saved Gentiles of the Tribulation Period. There will be many thousands of Gentile converts during the Tribulation period!

Practical Application

Don't be too dogmatic about the details!

It's not wrong to have an opinion or have a position on the details of John's vision, but there's certainly room for discussion on most of the small details! For example, the end of Revelation 7:15 says, *"He who sits on the throne will dwell among them"* [or, *"spread His tabernacle over them"*]. I believe that this "tabernacle" that is spread over them refers to a literal protective canopy that will be over Jerusalem during the Millennial Kingdom. The same idea of a protective "covering" is predicted for this time period in Isaiah 4:5-6: *"then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering. ⁶ And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain."*

So I have a position on the interpretation the details of Revelation 7:15 - but you may disagree with my position! You might see Revelation 7:15 as taking place in heaven and not on this earth. That's OK -- we can still be friends and have fellowship together! In fact, we can discuss it in a friendly way (and even later, when it's history!) In the meantime, let's not be too dogmatic about the details!