

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation 7:1-8:6 | Session 13 | The 144,000 and the Second Vision in Heaven

We recall from an earlier session that there were seven pairs of visions given to John in the book of Revelation. The first of each pair of visions pertain to events that are taking place in Heaven, and the second part of the pair concerns events taking place on Earth. Each subsequent vision follows that pattern.

In our last class, we looked at part of the *first* vision on Earth. In this session, we will conclude that vision and see John's second vision in Heaven.

<i>The Divine Outline of Revelation</i>		
The Vision	In Heaven	On Earth
First	4:1-5:14 <small>The Throne, the Book, and the Lamb</small>	6:1-7:8 <small>The Six Seals and the 144,000</small>
Second	7:9-8:6 <small>The Great Multitude and the Seventh Seal</small>	8:7-11:14 <small>The Six Trumpets</small>
Third	11:15-19 <small>The Seventh Trumpet</small>	11:19 <small>The Earthquake and Hail</small>
Fourth	12:1-12 <small>The Woman, the Child, and the Dragon</small>	12:13-13:18 <small>The Dragon and the Two Beasts</small>
Fifth	14:1-5 <small>The Lamb and the 144,000</small>	14:6-20 <small>The Six Angels</small>
Sixth	15:1-8 <small>The Seven Vial (Bow) Angels</small>	16:1-18:24 <small>The Seven Vials</small>
Seventh	19:1-16 <small>The Marriage of the Lamb</small>	19:17-20:15 <small>The Final Five Judgments</small>

THE FIRST VISION ON EARTH (6:1-7:8) CONTINUED FROM SESSION 12

The first vision John saw in Heaven (4:1-5:14) comprised the Throne Room of God, the Twenty-Four Elders, the Four beasts (or living creatures), the seven-sealed scroll. The Lamb who was slain (Jesus Christ) was there also, and He was the only One able to open the seven seals.

In the first vision on Earth (overlapping the first vision in Heaven¹), Jesus Christ took a scroll that was sealed with seven seals and opened six of them². Chapter 6:1-17 paralleled the prophecy Jesus gave his disciples on the Mount of Olives in Matthew 24:5-30. The first four seals are labor pains preceding the seven years of God's judgment on the Earth. Seal five summarizes the entire seven years, and seal six concludes the seven years with the catastrophic ending, culminating in the *great day of the Lord's wrath* when Jesus will return as Judge of all nations and people (See chart below on page 5).

Chapter 7:1-8 continues with the vision of the events on Earth, as seen by John.

THE SEALING OF THE 144,000 (7:1-8)

¹ Jesus is in Heaven during the opening of the Seals, but the events contained in the scroll will take place on Earth.

² The Lamb will open the seventh seal in Revelation 8:1

In this chapter, we are going to see that 144,000 of God's elect will be marked with a seal upon (or in) their foreheads. The identity of the 144,000, because of a lazy reading of Scripture and failure of rightly dividing, has resulted in false teaching from cults like the Jehovah's Witnesses. They claim there will only be 144,000 "Christians" reigning with Christ and spending eternity with God. Nowhere in this passage is there a likeness of the 144,000 to Christians who will rule and reign with Christ in His Kingdom. These 144,000 will receive a *mark (or sealing) of God*, and the passage concerning this group of 144,000, that we will see in a moment, taken literally, tells us exactly who they are.

Verses 1-3 —

And after these things, John saw another vision of **four angels standing on the four corners of the earth** or marking the *four points of the compass*. In Daniel 7:2,3, Daniel saw a vision of *four winds*:

"Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another."

We see this imagery in Jeremiah 49:36 and Daniel 7:2; 8:8; 11:4; Zechariah 2:6; 6:5.

John saw **four angels...Holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree**. E. W. Bullinger believes that the idea here is *stillness*, or as we might say, *not even a leaf moves*. *The imagery* of stillness may show that the sealing of the 144,000 will take place before the opening events of the Tribulation. Perhaps during the opening of seals 1-4?

The purpose of the seal of God in their foreheads is to protect these *men* from the devastation of the *seven-years*. Revelation 9:4 states this about their protection from a scourge of locusts:

"And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads."

Those who have the *mark of the beast* (Revelation 13) are under Divine judgment, but the *seal of the Living God* protects those 144,000 of God's elect.³

Verses 4-8 —

And I heard the number of them which were sealed...a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

There is no indication that we should interpret this number in any way other than as a literal 144,000. The identity of the *seal* placed upon the 144,000 is found in Revelation 14:1:

³ Believers in the dispensation of grace are *the Body of Christ*, not God's elect, as the Calvinist incorrectly insists. God's elect in Scripture always refers to Israel.

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him a hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.”

All the *tribes* of Israel are listed, but, curiously, *Ephraim* and *Dan* are missing. Instead, *Joseph* and *Levi* are inserted to take their place.

The reason for this may be because of Deuteronomy 29:18-21. All the curses written in this book shall lie upon anyone who should introduce idolatry into Israel, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.

Both the tribe of Dan and later Ephraim introduced idolatry (See Leviticus 24:10-16; Judges 18:2,30,31; 1 Kings 12:28-30; Hosea 4:17). Therefore, Ephraim and Dan will not be protected during the Tribulation. However, they will be restored one day and receive their earthly inheritance in the Millennial Kingdom.

Based on the following verses, the purpose of the 144,000 seems to be worldwide evangelism, and the fruits of their labor, in preaching that Jesus is the Messiah, is seen in Heaven.

Reuben
Simeon
Judah
Issachar
Zebulun
Ephraim/Joseph
Manasseh
Benjamin
Dan/Levi
Asher
Gad
Naphtali

THE SECOND VISION IN HEAVEN (7:9-8:6)

Verses 9-10 —

After this would show, this next vision occurs after the vision of the 144,000. John sees a **great multitude...of all nations** (i.e., *ethnos*, Gentiles). Many think this refers to the Church in Heaven, but this is not how the Church is described in Scripture.

The Church is “*the Body of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:12), the Church is “*a new man*” (Ephesians 2:15; 4:24; Colossians 3:10) and the Church is “*a new creature*” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Church is distinct from both Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:14-17).

This **great multitude** is indeed in Heaven, but it is not required that they be a part of the Church and, in fact, if we read a little further in the passage (vs. 14), their identity is found. This **great multitude** comprises Gentiles who believed in Jesus as Messiah during the Tribulation, likely because of the preaching of the 144,000. This multitude would include those saints (Jews) described in the fifth seal in 6:9-11.

Through the 144,000, the Holy Spirit is still at work during the seven years performing the ministry of regeneration, filling, sealing, etc., but not baptizing since that was His special ministry for the Church only (1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27). So not only will an *elect remnant* of Israel survive through the Tribulation, but a *countless number* from all Gentile nations who joined with Israel and the Jews will be saved *out of it*.

It is stated in many passages that God first deals with Israel and then with all mankind.

For example:

Psalms 67:1-2: *God be merciful unto us, and bless us; And cause his face to shine upon us; Selah. That thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations.*

Isaiah 49:6: *And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, That thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*

Verses 11,12 —

As the heavenly host stands around the Throne of God, a blessing is given. In chapter five (5:12), there was a sevenfold blessing to *him that sitteth upon the throne*, now the heavenly host again ascribe a sevenfold blessing to God; **Blessing, and glory and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen.** A reminder that God is forever to be praised, and we would do well to look upon God in this manner.

Verses 13,14 —

These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

These are the *overcomers* who did not receive the mark of the Beast.

How can something washed in blood become white? It can't. The preposition "in" is not a clear translation. The Greek preposition *en*, constantly, is translated *by*, and *through*, or *by implication*. So the meaning must be *washed because of, or by implication of the blood*.

These who have come out of the great tribulation have washed their garments. This cannot mean we also *wash ourselves in the blood* in order to be sanctified or made holy. If so, that would be a work.

This passage is one of works; notice **they...have washed**. It is in the active tense, something they did. For those of us in the Body of Christ, according to 1 Corinthians 6:11, we are washed, are sanctified, and are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. The tense of these three verbs, washed, sanctified, and justified, shows something that was done for us when we believed.

Ephesians 2:8 says we are saved/washed "not of ourselves." Justification is a gift given to us, not by any *active work we do*. It is important to recognize these *tenses* as you read Scripture to keep from assigning what is meant for Israel to us in the Body of Christ.

The song Are you washed in the Blood, although a song I like to sing, is one of those songs that is not theologically correct for us in the Body of Christ. A better title might be, *Are you washed in the Spirit because of the Blood?* It may sound like I'm quibbling over semantics, but wouldn't you agree we want to more precisely understand what we believe? We are washed by the Spirit *because* of the blood. Although without the shedding of Christ's blood, we could not be washed, sanctified or justified by the Spirit. For example, Paul wrote in Titus 3:5, that the love of God appeared toward man, "*Not by works of righteousness which we have*

done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

Verses 15, 16, 17—

This multitude in Heaven performs priestly services **before the throne of God... day and night**. In contrast to what they endured on the earth during the Tribulation, they will experience ultimate blessings: No hunger, no thirst, no suffering, fed by the Lamb, led by the Lamb, and all their tears shall be wiped away by God.

THE SEVENTH SEAL (8:1-6)

Verse 1 —

We have seen how the first four Seals in chapter six cover the labor pains leading up to the seven years, then the fifth seal, encompasses the entire seventieth week of Daniel, and finally, its culmination with seal six and the return of Christ. Now in chapter eight, when the seventh Seal is opened, it is followed by a **silence in Heaven**. It breaks off all continuity and shows us we are now going to go back to learn about the details of the judgments—the events of seals five and six are now going to be filled in for us. It is here (specifically 8:7) where I place the beginning of the seven years of Jacob’s trouble.

In the fifth Seal, the saints (The Jews) cried out to God, *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our*

blood on them that dwell on the earth? (Revelation 5:10).

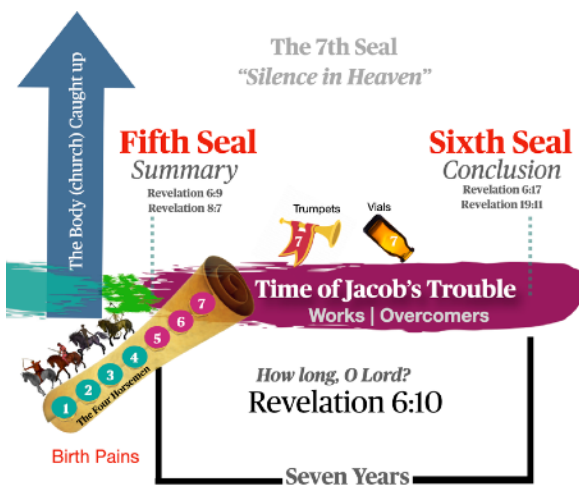
Their request is answered by the commencement of a series of judgments which follow the opening of the seventh seal, beginning with the sounding of seven Trumpets.

Verse 2 —

The seven angels are likely the seven spirits who are before the throne we saw in 1:4, 3:1, 5:6, and 8:6. **To them were given seven trumpets**. We are not told by whom. Trumpets publicly proclaim war or alarm. Here, we have the beginning of the seven years. All Seven years is a time of God’s wrath.

These trumpets give notification of the *Great and Terrible Day of the Lord* (Zephaniah 1:14-16,18).

“The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and destruction, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers...Neither silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD’s wrath...”



Verse 3,4,5 —

Another angel. We are not told who this angel is. The **censer** carries **incense** representing the prayers of the saints we read about in Revelation 5:8-10. This scene is the answer to the prayers of the saints.

Verse 6 —

The events about to unfold will exceed those events when God brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt (Jeremiah 23:7,8). With the sounding of the trumpets, God *will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth*, as prophesied in Exodus 34:10.

We will begin to see those *terrible* things next time.