

Revelation 7

The 144,000 of Israel Sealed

1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, 3 saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” 4 And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

5. 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed,
12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,
12,000 from the tribe of Gad,
6. 12,000 from the tribe of Asher,
12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali,
12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,
7. 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon,
12,000 from the tribe of Levi,
12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,
8. 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,
12,000 from the tribe of Joseph,
12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.

A Great Multitude from Every Nation

9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” 11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” 14 I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have 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 shelter them with his presence.

16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;
the sun shall not strike them,
nor any scorching heat.
17. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Discussion Guide

Revelation 7 begins the third scene of John’s vision. This is also the part of the book that begins to create controversy based upon whether a modern reader identifies as dispensational, historic premillennial, amillennial, or postmillennial (not to mention the thousands of variances of opinions found within each of those broad categories of thinking).

I’d highly encourage you to review the [Glossary of Terms](#) provided at the beginning of our series on Revelation. You can find it online at:

daretoventure.org/message-archive/intro-to-revelation

Begin to think through the categories that theologians use when studying this section of Revelation. Let’s add a couple of new terms that may also help as you discuss Revelation 7.

The Divine Passive

This is a very difficult aspect of God for many of us to understand.

When you have a small group conversation and get people to tell the stories of their lives you will often find some deep and intense spiritual struggles with how a sovereignly powerful God can allow bad things (the reign of sin) to occur.

Harmful things happen that affect us, our families, our friends, our nation, and the environment. The clear teaching of the Bible, and Revelation in particular, is that God is ultimately in control over these harmful forces. Nevertheless, we cannot blame God for sin or conclude that the reign of sin in the world means that the world is outside of his control.

God is removed from blame for evil even though he can and will ultimately prevail over it. Furthermore, we know that God uses bad things to execute his divine judgment over the world.

Revelation 7:1-3 shows us that the only reason worse things don’t happen more often is because God sometimes exercises grace in preventing them.

The greatest degree of His grace is displayed to the elect, those who are saved and sealed by the blood of Christ from Revelation 7:3-14. Their rescue means that they are to ultimately be brought through tribulation that will destroy everyone and everything else.

The 144,000

This section of Revelation 7 might be one of the most hotly debated in the whole Bible.

Every Bible teacher has an opinion on who the 144,000 are. Danny Akin¹ lists 4 of the most prominent opinions given by orthodox Christians and non-Christian cults.

1. Jehovah's Witnesses who will reign in heaven (BTW, there are now far more than 144,000 people in this cult)
2. People who faithfully keep the Sabbath
3. The church of every age, tribe, tongue, and nation represented as a military census of the "new Israel" who all are sealed by and serve Jesus Christ
4. Jewish believers sealed for service during the Great Tribulation

Options 1 & 2 are espoused by cults that are prominent in America. Options 3 & 4 are common among evangelical Christians.

In our preaching and teaching at Venture we are assuming option 3, but humbly recognize that there are wise Bible teachers we respect and look up to who adhere to Option 4. Austin has put some great discussion of the 144,000 in his study helps on daretoventure.org.

The actual number in Revelation 7:4-8 is not the point of Revelation 7. Salvation is the point.

Whether the 144,000 are Jewish Christians or a mixed multitude of Christians, the point of the passage is that we who have dipped our robes in the blood of the Lamb are saved and sealed from the reign of sin all the way until the consummation of Christ's kingdom.

We are the 144,000 and we will be preserved in faith until the end.

Great Tribulation

Many identify the period in Revelation 7:14 with the 70th week in Daniel 9:24-27. Dispensational teachers will say that this is a period of intense persecution immediately before the return of Christ.

I would claim that the Great Tribulation speaks of the entire age of the church, from Jesus' ascension to his return. Persecution and tribulation has been a constant and intensifying force throughout the history of the church.

We should all be humble in our opinions and acknowledge that we might not have this precisely figured out.

¹ Daniel Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Revelation*, (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2016)

Discussion Questions:

- Do you struggle with God allowing personal, national, or environmental disasters to occur?
How do you explain disasters?
- Have you had personal experiences where you can see God saving you from some of the worst effects of sin in the world around you?
- What have learned from the sermon and study of Revelation 7 that has given you a different perspective of the 144,000 and the “Great Tribulation?”
- How does being one of those sealed for salvation allow you to worship God with a heart of glad submission?
- How does worship of Revelation 7:9-17 give you encouragement in the midst of the situation you are in today?

Feel free to email jonathan.pugh@daretoventure.org if you have any pressing questions that you would like to discuss.