

Revelation, Part 10

The Saved in the Tribulation

Rev 6:17 For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

We left off our study of chapter 6 and the Seal judgments with the sixth Seal and this question above regarding all the war, famine, and natural disasters that left one-fourth of the Earth’s population dead, and those remaining were hiding “themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb...’” (V15-16).

Who can stand? Chapter 7 answers that question.

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. 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."

With chapter 7 we take a break from the Seals and go to a section that should be seen as parenthetical to explain some of what we have already seen and will see when we return to the chronology of Revelation. When we left the sixth Seal in the last chapter we saw that two billion people have died. That number might beg the question, "Will anyone be saved during the tribulation?" The short answer is "yes" and it is found in this chapter.

Some argue that there will be no new believers after the Rapture; if you did not come to a saving knowledge of Christ before, you will not after. They look at this chapter and say those must be the Church, and the Church goes through the tribulation. But these are not the Church, as we shall see. Plus we know the Church is not "appointed to wrath". Furthermore, they point to this passage in Second Thessalonians as proof that there can be no new believers during the Tribulation.

2 Thess 2:5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.

They argue if the Holy Spirit is removed, then how are people saved during the Tribulation? Short answer: The same way they were saved before the Church Age. The Holy Spirit will still have His convicting ministry during the Tribulation just like He had before Pentecost in AD30. This passage says the indwelling ministry, as relating to the Church Age, and His restraint on evil will be lifted, with evil then allowed its full expression.

It is important to understand in what sense the Holy Spirit is removed. To do that we must distinguish between His presence and His residence. As a member of the Godhead, He is present everywhere—omnipresent. During the Age of Israel, He took up residence in the Temple. After Pentecost AD30 (the Church Age), he took up residence in individual believers.

1 Cor 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you...?

His residence will change again at the Rapture. When the Church is taken out, His ministry of indwelling believers is removed, and His ministry will return to as it was before the Church Age, which is convicting of sin and making the Gospel understandable to man. We call this the Doctrine of Common Grace. So, yes, we have people who will be saved during the Tribulation, and Revelation chapter 7 is testimony to that fact.

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. 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.”

The scene opens with John seeing 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. Note that a fifth angel from

the East, or literally translated “the direction the sun rises,” has authority over the others. Angelic beings, both elect and fallen, have a system of authority and rankings with leadership positions.

These four angels are prepared to do harm to the earth but are restrained by the fifth. The reason is given in verse 3 “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”

Rev 7:4 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.

There are a number of significant details mentioned in connection with the sealing of this 144,000. Scripture makes it evident that these are Jews, that the 12 tribes of Israel are still in existence, as the names of different tribes are given. However, there are some omissions. In some lists of the twelve the two sons of Joseph, Epharim, and Manassah, are numbered as separate tribes because Joseph was given a double portion. In this list Menassah is mentioned but Epharim is not. In place of Epharim the name of his father Joseph is given in verse 8 with no explanation for this substitution. There is also no mention of the tribe of Dan, and no explanation why Dan is omitted. Ancient interpreters account for this on the theory that the antichrist would come from the tribe of Dan, and they get that from a Genesis passage.

Gen 49:17 Dan shall be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that its rider shall fall backward.

More likely Antichrist will be of the tribe of Judah. A more common explanation is that the tribe of Dan was the first to go into idolatry, was small in number, and probably was thereafter numbered in with the tribe of Naphtali, who was another son of Jacob born of the same mother as Dan. So also was the tribe of Ephraim historically quick to go into idolatry. Dan is later listed in the land distributions to the twelve tribes.

Levi is often omitted from other lists because Levi is the priestly tribe and had no inheritance in the land. There are 29 lists of the 12 tribes in Scripture, and there is no suggestion that they are anything but Jews, descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who was given the name Israel. Some Christians take the position that the Church replaces Israel in God's plan. This is called "replacement theology" and is false. For them references to "Israel" in texts like here in Revelation are really references to the Church. Their position is that the 12 tribes are lost, and the nations of northern Europe and the US are descendants of the lost 12 tribes.

First of all, the 12 tribes are not lost. Secondly, note that we have seen the 24 elders, which we identified as representing the resurrected church, in white robes and crowned with glory seated around the throne in heaven before the reference to the twelve tribes shows up. Note that James references the 12 tribes in chapter 1 of his epistle. He didn't think they were lost.

James 1:1 James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.

And Peter makes mention of them in 1 Peter.

1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the **pilgrims of the Dispersion** in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

The 12 tribes are not lost. God knows where each and every member of those tribes are even if they do not know their own pedigree. God has a future purpose for Israel, and in spite of Satanic persecution, a godly remnant will be preserved to be on earth when Christ returns.

The question arises whether the number 12,000 is literally 12,000? There seems to be indications that more than this number will be saved. The point may be merely to emphasize that 12,000 from each tribe will be made secure in this sealing and will have a special calling to evangelism. They will be delivered from their persecutors and brought safely through the terrible trials of the Tribulation.

Rev 14:1 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. 3 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. 4 These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. 5 And their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

It would seem that the 144,000 are delivered (standing on Mount Zion) and, as first fruits, they symbolize the harvesting of more fruit to follow after them. And here they are....

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, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

John looks and sees a great multitude beyond the ability to number. They come from "all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues" suggesting not only Jews but Gentiles, as well. They wear white robes and carry palm branches symbolic of their identification with Christ as believers. Their large number implies that either the "first fruits" (the 144,000) were very productive or the spectacular event of the Rapture induced many to come to Christ, probably both.

It is clear that the 144,000 have a ministry for God. They are said to be “servants” (slaves) in verse 3 and “sealed with the mark of God”. Revelation 14:4 describes them as “first fruits,” implying they bring forth more fruit. Most expositors take the position that these 144,000 from the twelve tribes are “super-evangelists”. Very early in the Tribulation they come to a saving knowledge of Christ and become evangelists, first fruits leading others to Christ. They evangelize both Jews and Gentiles from “all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues” as seen in verse 9. And those out of “all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues” are martyrs as indicated in verses 13-14

Rev 7:11 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.”

Joining this multitude of the saints, the angels and all those in heaven are described as falling down before the throne in worship.

Rev 7:13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?”

Note that one of the 24 elders asks who these people are. This implies he is not one of them.

Rev 7:14 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.”

John answers the rhetorical question with “Sir, *you* know,” indicating he does not know who they are. The elder answers that they came out of the tribulation “and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” This is further evidence that the 24 elders are representative of the raptured Church. They identify this multitude as coming out of the Tribulation, thus they are not the Church as some would claim. Note the statement in verse 14 “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation.”

It is believed most of these come out of the second half of the tribulation the half generally referred to as the “Great Tribulation”. There is no reason not to believe chapter 7 presents things in chronological order with previous or subsequent chapters. As a parenthetical insertion to give more detail, chapter 7 probably covers the whole span of the seven years, as do other parenthetical insertions in Revelation. The 144,000 are saved in the beginning of the trib, and we see the fruit of their missionary service manifested during the second half. It is assumed they go through some kind of training or spiritual development. Even Paul, a highly learned Pharisee, underwent a period of personal training by the Lord before he started his ministry.

Significant detail in this passage is the reference to the washing of their robes in the blood of the lamb. Obviously, the literal washing in blood will not make anything white, so this must be figurative language. Both the OT and the NT makes reference to washing in blood. Leviticus 17:14 tells us “the life of all flesh is in the blood thereof,” thus the Jews were forbidden to consume blood (which would mean they could not eat red boudin). Hebrews 9:22 tells us the shedding of blood is necessary for the remission of sins. Acts 20:28 tells us the church has been purchased by the blood of Christ. Romans 3:25 tells us Christ is declared to be a propitiation for our sins through “faith in His blood”. Ephesians 1:7 says we have redemption through His blood. Colossians 1:20 says Christ has made peace through the blood of the Cross. 1 Peter 1:18-19 says we are not redeemed with corruptible things ... but with the precious blood of Christ. Revelation 1:5 says He washed us of our sins in His own blood. In Egypt the Jews were told to sacrifice a lamb and put its blood on the door posts. Upon seeing that blood, the death angel would pass over that house when God smites Egypt. What is true for these Tribulation martyrs is true of all ages. Only faith in the blood of Christ as a cleansing agent will wash away sin.

Rev 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. 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.

The chapter closes with a description of life in heaven: No hunger, no thirst, no heat, no physical attacks. These seem to be there to emphasize what they went through as martyrs during the tribulation.

And God will be their shepherd, implying He will take care of them and provide their every need, like a shepherd cares for his sheep, giving them to drink from the living waters. “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” Whatever burdens were laid upon them during their earthly life will be lifted—“No sorrow, no tears, no death”. Again this probably represents the agony they experienced on earth for their witness for Christ. That agony is now behind them and no more will it affect them.

The juxtaposition of the 144,000 at the beginning of the chapter with the “multitude out of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues strongly suggests a relationship between the two groups. The 144,000 are preserved in safety through the Tribulation. The result of this ministry has its fruit among the Gentiles and the Jews, and great multitudes are saved during the Tribulation.

Chapter 7 serves as a review of the situation described in previous chapters and emphasizes two important facts: God is going to judge Israel, but 144,000 will be protected and sealed. Second, that a great multitude of the martyred dead are found in heaven rejoicing and praising God just prior to the Second Coming of Christ indicates countless souls will find Christ as savior and be saved, probably as a result of the ministry of these 144,000. We will also see later that many born again believers will survive the Tribulation in their physical bodies.

The Seventh Seal

Rev 8:1 When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. 3 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings,

lightnings, and an earthquake. 6 So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

The opening of the seventh seal is a momentous event signified by this call for silence in Heaven for about half an hour after it is opened. Something tremendous is about to take place. Things were bad before with the six Seals and now they are going to get incrementally worse with the seventh Seal.

Rev 8:2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.

Note that we shift to seven Trumpets as part of the seventh Seal. The seven Trumpets are within the seventh Seal, and the seven Bowls are within the seventh Trumpet, a single series in three movements that intensifies at the end. So what we get is a compounding of judgments, a piling on.

Verse 2, “And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.” We have no reason not to take this literally; that there are seven angels who are given seven literal trumpets. Angelic beings have been used before to deliver messages and even announce judgments. Trumpets were used in ancient Israel for any number of purposes. In the military they were used to manage troops on the battlefield. The commander’s voice cannot carry very far but a series of notes from a trumpet can. The US military today still uses trumpets and certain music to communicate information, but it is mainly for ceremonial purposes now. Watchmen on the wall in ancient Israel had trumpets to sound the alarm, and Jewish religious practices also include the use of the trumpet to signal important events in their calendar.

Lev 23:23 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 24 “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. 25 You shall do no customary work on it; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord.’ ”

Lev 25:8 ‘And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. 9 Then you shall cause the trumpet of

the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land.

Nu 10:1 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 “Make two silver trumpets for yourself; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps. 3 When they blow both of them, all the congregation shall gather before you at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. 4 But if they blow only one, then the leaders, the heads of the divisions of Israel, shall gather to you. 5 When you sound the advance, the camps that lie on the east side shall then begin their journey. 6 When you sound the advance the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall begin their journey; they shall sound the call for them to begin their journeys. 7 And when the assembly is to be gathered together, you shall blow, but not sound the advance. 8 The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets; and these shall be to you as an ordinance forever throughout your generations.

9 “When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the Lord your God, and you will be saved from your enemies. 10 Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am the Lord your God.”

Remember, the context of Revelation is a return to the Age of Israel, Daniel’s Seventieth Week and *his* people. This symbolism would resonate with Israel.

Rev 8:3 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand.

This is a beautiful picture of the prayers of the saints as seen from Heaven. We have already discussed how incense is bound up in the concept of prayer. Under the Law the priests burned incense, and the smoke would fill

the Temple and ascend to heaven. Prayer is the language of dependance, and it is sweet to God to hear that dependance upon Him expressed.

No details are given concerning the incense, but it is reasonable to assume it is made up of the four spices mentioned in Exodus

Ex 30:34 And the Lord said to Moses: "Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, and pure frankincense with these sweet spices; there shall be equal amounts of each. 35 You shall make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure, and holy. 36 And you shall beat some of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony in the tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. 37 But as for the incense which you shall make, you shall not make any for yourselves, according to its composition. It shall be to you holy for the Lord. 38 Whoever makes any like it, to smell it, he shall be cut off from his people."

The exact makeup of three of these spices is unknown, but frankincense was the sap that came from the frankincense tree. Note that the three were considered holy and reserved for use in worship and for God. The people were forbidden to make or use it for their own purposes.

There is much discussion whether the angel mentioned in verse three is actually an angel of high rank or the angelic representation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The fact that the angel has items, censor and much incense, given to him in order to make his worship possible, some have concluded this is only an angel designated for this work in heaven. From the nature of his work as mediator serving in the role of priest and because this would not be a proper function of an angel, others have concluded this angel is the Lord Jesus Christ. The fact that Christ appeared in the OT as an Angel of Jehovah further supports this view. The evidence seems to favor this "angel" is really our Lord in His work as High Priest.

Rev 8:5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. 6 So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

The alter of incense in the Temple was used to offer incense in the OT worship. It was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold.

Ex 37:25 He made the incense altar of acacia wood. Its length was a cubit and its width a cubit—it was square—and two cubits was its height. Its horns were of one piece with it. 26 And he overlaid it with pure gold: its top, its sides all around, and its horns. He also made for it a molding of gold all around it. 27 He made two rings of gold for it under its molding, by its two corners on both sides, as holders for the poles with which to bear it. 28 And he made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold.

This alter of incense was used to burn the incense representing prayer and, in this case, the prayers are those of the martyrs we saw earlier in chapter 6 asking how long would it be before the Lord avenged their suffering and death? Now the angel of the Lord takes the censer and fills it with coals from the alter of incense and casts the fire onto the earth.

Then we have “noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake”. “Noises” or “voices” in the KJV is *teh Greeel phone* from which we get telephone and means any noises especially coming from a human voice. “Thunderings” is that sound that comes from lightening. “Lightenings” in the Greek is a word for flashes of lightening or stabbing rays like we associate with lightening. “Earthquakes” is just what it says, even more earthquakes after those seen during the Seals. This is a very noisy and violent picture of divine judgment upon the earth. I believe this scene represents the seven trumpets which picture what is struck by these judgments.

And we will get into the Trumpet judgments next time.