



# Revelation 7

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy,  
and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it,  
*because the time is near.* 1:3

An interlude now occurs in the apocalyptic message of judgment and doom upon the earth. **Two beautiful scenes of comfort and hope are offered the people of God before the fearful message of judgment continues in the vision of the seventh seal.** In a sense, these scenes are the Revelator's response to the desperate question which concluded the opening of the sixth seal: "For the great day of their wrath has come and **who can stand?**" (Revelation 6:17). **The calm assurance of those whom God has numbered, sealed and arrayed in white STAND in stark contrast to the world's panic and fear (remember 6:15-17).** Dr. L. L. White, [Revelation](#), p.184

The vision shows that the Elect of God are to be preserved in the coming storms of trial and temptation. God has given them His Spirit, who keeps them steadfast to the end through His Word in the true faith. All the afflictions and adversities of life cannot bring them any harm, because God holds His protecting hand over them. Stoeckhardt, [Lectures on Revelation](#), p.27-28

## Read Revelation 7:1-8

*The 144,000 The Church Militant on Earth*

### Four Angels, Corners, Winds

A triplet of fours - **four** angels, **four** corners, and **four** winds - opens the scene. The threefold repetition of the earth number effectively emphasizes that the whole world is involved in that which is here depicted. Also, this helps us to learn that "**4**" deals with the things of the world.

The four angels are portrayed as "holding back **the four winds of the earth.**" The verb "holding back" literally means to restrain by force. The concept is that of a wild beast struggling with great power to break free from the restraint that holds it firmly in place. The implication of the verb is that if the beast is unleashed, the result will be terrible destruction.

† These four winds are most certainly **a picture of God's judgment** upon the people described in the foregoing.

Stoeckhardt, [Lectures on Revelation](#), p.27-28

The scenes described in Revelation 7 are the first of a number of visions in which the Holy Ghost portrays

### *The Glorious Hope*

that ought to live in the heart of a believing child of God. In the midst of war and famine, pestilence and persecution we need to hear again and again that finally we will be delivered from these great tribulations and find an incomparably happy existence in the glories of Heaven.

Becker, [Revelation](#), p.120



**OT Image** It was previously noted that the imagery of horsemen in the first four seals (Revelation 6:1-8) was largely based upon **Zechariah 6:1-8**. There the prophet identifies the horses with these words: *“These are the **four winds of heaven** going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of the whole world.”* (Zechariah 6:5) Daniel also speaks of *“the **four winds of heaven**”* which take the form of four great beasts coming forth from the churning sea (**Daniel 7:2-3**). Jeremiah uses the destructive power of the four winds as an image of God’s judgment upon Elam: *“I will bring against Elam the **four winds** from the four quarters of the heavens; I will scatter them to the four winds, and there will not be a nation where Elam’s exiles do not go.”* (**Jeremiah 49:36**). Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.186-187

This vision is a symbolic way of expressing the thought at **the present world continues to exist for the sake of the Elect and that the world will not be destroyed until the last Elect person has been brought to faith.** ... The **DESTRUCTION OF THE EARTH** is not to take place until all those predestined for salvation have been made servants of God ... the gospel of the kingdom is to be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations. After that the End will come. ... the four angels will keep the four winds on a leash until the last one of the Elect has been effectively made God’s own through baptism and the gospel. Becker, *Revelation*, p. 119-120

**The Seal of God** Revelation 7:2-3, 9:1-6, 14:1-3, 22:4

The possession of God’s seal marks this angel as one who functions with the authority and the power of God Himself and the seal will be used to place the mark of God’s ownership and protection upon the saints.

† The image of a protective seal on the foreheads of God’s own in the face of impending disaster is derived from **Ezekiel 9:1-11**. The people of Jerusalem are about to be slaughtered because of their idolatry and unbelief. But before the massacre begins God commands His messenger to place His mark upon the foreheads of those *“who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done.”* (Ezekiel 9:4) All those who did not bear the mark of God were killed. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.190

**The seal protected; it was a sign of repentance.**

† The incident is **reminiscent of the first Passover** and the marking of the doorways in Goshen with the blood of the Passover lamb (cf. Exodus 12:7,13,22-28).

† The sealing of the foreheads of God’s people on earth is also mentioned in **Revelation 9:1-6** where the seal serves to protect them from the scorpions-demons that arise from the abyss. In two other similar texts, **Revelation 14:1-3** and **22:4**, the people of God are designated as having **the Name of God upon their foreheads**. Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.190

† **The imagery of God’s seal upon the foreheads of His servants is a promise of preservation in the faith amid all of the trials and tribulations still to come. God’s people will not escape the suffering that comes upon the world as the result of sin but they will be empowered to persevere through all adversity. The winds of judgment about to be unleashed will serve to refine and strengthen the faith of the believer.** Dr. L. L. White, *Revelation*, p.191



The sealing here in Revelation 7 refers to  
**the ongoing work of the Spirit through  
GOD'S WORD AND SACRAMENTS**

by which the Christian is kept in faith and protected in godly hope through all the tribulations and sufferings and persecutions illustrated by the four horsemen. No matter how dire the dangers become for the Christian, God will not permit His people to be lost.” Brighton, p. 187

† “Here the ‘*slaves of our God*’ (7:3) are thus to be sealed so that they are marked – **identified and signed with God’s own signature** – *as God’s property and under His authority, care, and protection*. The seal of God represents God’s special way or manner of identifying His people and marking them as His own for their protection and eternal well-being.”

**The SEAL is described in various ways in Scripture:**

- † Holy Baptism (Romans 4:11, Col 2:11-13)
- † The Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14 and 2 Cor. 1:22)
- † The Name of God (Matthew 28:19, Numbers 6:27, Rev 14:1, 22:4)

**The seal is the ONGOING WORK of the Holy Spirit  
through God’s Word and Sacraments**

*Satanic Counterfeit: 666*

Revelation 13:16-18 (20:4)

“However, in the two instances of the mark of the evil one, the word used for the marking is not the word for God’s ‘seal’, but rather the word ‘mark, stamp’.” They do not bear the seal, but rather a *phony version*, such as a brand or a tattoo.

“Throughout the time ... of Revelation, the slaves of God and the slaves of Satan each have a mark that identifies them as belonging to their respective masters.

**And there are no ‘neutral’ people who serve no one;  
every person is either a slave to God or a slave of Satan.**

Revelation, Brighton, p. 183ff

**144,000: the Church Militant**

This 144,000 is the first part of a two part answer to the last verse in Rev 6:17, “*For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?*”

The answer is found in Rev 7: **God’s People can stand!**

**The Church Militant (7:1-8), and the Church Triumphant (7:9-17).**

The number 144,000, like nearly all the other numbers in the Book of Revelation, is a symbol with figurative significance. It represents **the entire people of God on earth, the whole church, the full number of the elect.**

† In the numerology of Scripture, **twelve is the number of the church**, based upon the number of the twelve tribes of Israel. Christ's deliberate selection of twelve apostles was designed to mirror and reflect the tribes of the Old Testament. Thus, when a vacancy was created by the suicide of Judas, it was necessary to select a replacement so that the twelve might be restored. Twelve as the number of the church was illustrated earlier in Revelation by the twenty-four elders who surround the throne of God in heaven (Revelation 4:4). This same symbolism is reflected later in Revelation in the twelve gates and the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:12-14). The names of the twelve tribes are written upon the twelve gates and the names of the twelve apostles are written upon the twelve foundations. The twelve imagery continues in the New Jerusalem as angel called to measure the city finds that it is a perfect square of 12,000 stadia and that its walls are 144 cubits thick. (Revelation 21:16-17). The number/symbol 144,000 is obtained by squaring twelve (12 x 12 = 144), thus representing both the church of the Old Testament (the twelve tribes) and the church of the New Testament (the twelve apostles). This number is then multiplied by the ordinal number 10 cubed (10 x 10 x 10 = 1,000). *This is done to signify absolute completeness. Each and every one of God's people on earth is included in this number.* The symbolic nature of the number 144,000 is further indicated by the fact that exactly 12,000 are sealed from each of the twelve tribes listed in the text. **Thus the seal of God upon the foreheads of the 144,000 is a sign of assurance and promise. As the winds of tribulation blow throughout the earth, God will protect His own.** None of those whom God has chosen will be lost. Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.192



† We arrive at the meaning of the 144,000: All the saved from the Old and New Testament Church. Those who are sealed for protection during the troubles to come are all the saved, forgetting none. Those who truly are God's children through the Lord Jesus need fear nothing, either in these woes or the related woes to come. This is a great comfort.” Revelation, Paul A Bartz

† John indicates that the 144,000 will be drawn with precise symmetry from the twelve tribes of Israel. It is not uncommon for the New Testament to refer to the church, both Jews and Gentiles using the Old Testament terminology of the Children of Israel. In the Epistles of Romans and Galatians St. Paul explicitly and emphatically teaches that membership in the Israel of God is a matter of faith not blood or ethnic descent. To be a true descendant of Abraham is to believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Accordingly, **the reference here is not to ethnic Israel but to all the people of God, both Jews and Gentiles.** Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.193

### NOT A LITERAL 144,000

It is not a literal 144,000 converted Jews from each Tribe of Israel as some teach. Here's why:

† The ordering of the list is abnormal ... it is not a list used in Old Testament for the historical, literal 12 tribes.

† It would be like saying: “January, November, July, April, December, March, August . . .” The disorder alerts you that something is different; in this case as apocalyptic literature, it indicates that this is figurative for God's People, and not a literal reference to the 12 tribes of Israel.

- † The tribe of Levi is not counted in OT, they were priests and received no land. (Joshua 13:33ff)
- † The tribe of Dan is omitted. (Joshua 19:40-48)
  - a. Ephraim is not mentioned (Joshua 16:1-10), while Joseph is (Joshua 13-19). (The 12 tribes are the sons of Jacob; cf. Genesis 35:22-26: Rueben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher. However: Levi and Joseph did not receive land. Levi became the priests; and Joseph received Levi's portion (a double share) and it went to his two sons: Ephraim and Manasseh. The Levites received cities and pastures rather than land; note also that Moses and Aaron were Levites. Also, note, that the promised Messiah came through Judah's lineage.)



- † **The list of tribal names and their sequence in Revelation 7 is unique in Scripture.** The Old Testament includes almost twenty variations and combinations of tribes . . . **By removing Dan and Ephraim and including Levi and Manasseh, John maintains the symbolically significant twelve.** Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.193

- † **If this is literal, then no Gentile could be saved, a conclusion soundly contradicted throughout the Bible.** Revelation, Paul A Bartz
- † The first thing we notice as we view this assembly of the victorious in Christ is that the multitude was so great that no one could count it (7:9) This identification makes it clear that the 144,000 mentioned earlier as the number of the saved in Christ was a symbolic number Revelation, Paul A Bartz

**A literal 144,000 is**  
*a false teaching!*

**Jehovah Witness Website:**

The Bible indicates that 144,000 people will be resurrected to heavenly life. (Revelation 7:4) . . . The Bible shows that only a limited number go to heaven and that those who will live forever on earth will be a great crowd of unlimited number. [http://www.watchtower.org/library/jt/index.htm?article=article\\_04.htm](http://www.watchtower.org/library/jt/index.htm?article=article_04.htm)

## LCMS Website:

Q: How do Jehovah's Witnesses believe that people are saved?

A: Based on misinterpretations of passages from the Book of Revelation, the Watchtower Society believes that Jehovah God extends salvation to two different groups of people. First, there are the 144,000 who shall inhabit heaven. The rest of those saved will inhabit earth in the new kingdom that Christ will establish when he returns after the Battle of Armageddon. They believe that the only persons who will be numbered among the 144,000 are those who have adequately met specific requirements and have lived well enough in imitation of Christ. For Jehovah's Witnesses, salvation is not an accomplished fact by Jesus Christ, given as a free gift, but only something that is earned by doing good works. Chief of these works is aggressive personal visitation of non-members. This explains in large part why the Jehovah's Witnesses are so zealous for personal visitation. (What About . . . The Jehovah's Witnesses? President A. L. Barry The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod)



## Read Revelation 7:9-17

*The Great Multitude: The Church Triumphant in Heaven*

### After this I looked

The characteristic phrase “After this I looked” signals the shift to the next scene in the vision. It is important to note, once again, that the phrase does not indicate a chronological sequence of events, but the movement from one scene in the vision to the next.

- The vision of the 144,000 depicted the **CHURCH MILITANT ON EARTH**, sealed and protected by the mark of the Almighty God.
- The glorious sight of the **CHURCH TRIUMPHANT IN HEAVEN** is now presented before our eyes. The great host stands “before the throne and in front of the Lamb.”

**This unprecedented glimpse of heavenly glory is intended to strengthen and encourage God’s people on earth, still locked in desperate conflict with sin and evil.** The message is clear: *Do not despair! Do not grow weary in the struggle! Evil has already been defeated! The victory celebration is already taking place in heaven.* Dr. L. L. White, Revelation, p.195-196

### Immense Comfort

Be sure to put your loved ones who died in Christ in this picture!

### 7:9 Every Nation, Tribe, People, and Language

God had promised the patriarchs that their descendants would be as countless as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore (Genesis 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; 32:12). That promise is now fulfilled as a host beyond counting fills the halls of heaven. The phrase “*from every nation, tribe, people, and language*” emphasizes the universal nature of the group. The language is from the Book of Daniel (Daniel 3-7).

† The magnitude of this multitude contrasts with the 144,000 who were counted in the preceding scene. **This appears to be a much larger group including all the saints now in glory from the beginning of time.**