

INTRODUCTORY NOTES:

- Chapter 6 poses a question: **“For the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?”** Chapter 7 answers this question.
- For each group of “sevens” (seals, trumpets, bowls) there is always an **inserted “interlude” between the 6th and 7th** of each group. We had six seals in chapter 6, now in this chapter there is an interlude before the opening of the 7th seal in chapter 8. Quite literally, all “hell will break loose” in the trumpet and bowl judgments. God wants us to understand some things before seeing that.
- After the age of the Church, God’s focus returns to Israel, and that is quite evident here in Revelation. Israel is once again taking center stage, not only in the Word of God, but in our current events. There are two major issues (errors in thinking about Israel) that are resolved in this chapter: **Replacement Theology** (the lie that the Church replaces Israel in God’s covenants) and the **Ten Missing Tribes** (that 10 of the tribes of Israel no longer exist, following the destruction of the northern Kingdom of Israel in the time of the Kings)
- This chapter features two major groups of saints: 1) Jewish witnesses (verse 1-8), and 2) Martyred believers (never referred to as the Church, always called “saints”) (verses 9-17)
- The big question of whether or not people will be saved during the tribulation is firmly answered here. YES!
- This chapter is a beautiful promise to all believers.

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.”

- **“four corners of the earth...”** – Common phrase in scripture (see Isaiah 11:12; Jeremiah 49:36; Daniel 7:2; 8:8; 11:4; Zechariah 2:6 and Matthew 24:31) Four ordinal directions, includes entire earth.
- **“...four angels...holding the four winds...that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.”** - Something is being held back here. Something is coming. Winds are often a symbol for judgment, and the earth can represent Israel, the Sea the Gentiles, and trees individuals.



- This is probably not specific to Israel, however, but these angels are holding back something that will come upon the whole earth and affect every individual. God is restraining His wrath until the important message of this chapter can be delivered. In the Apocrypha, it is common to hear of angels controlling the forces of nature.
- ***“...another angel...having the seal of the living God.”*** A seal implies ownership, protection and authority. This angel has been sent on a great mission from God. Seals will play a big role in this Book of Revelation. This seal stands in marked contrast to another seal in Revelation 13 – the mark of the Beast. Both are permanent. (Remember that the Church has already been sealed: ***“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”*** [Ephesians 1:13-14]) Those to be sealed here are NOT the Church.
- ***“...the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea.”*** These are angels delivering judgment. This judgment is restrained until something else is done first.
- ***“...Do not harm....till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”*** This is the first mention of a seal, or mark, on the forehead of people in this book. This is God’s seal, his mark of ownership, protection and authority, and these people are called servants of God. Judgment is being held back until this sealing happens. There is an interesting passage in Ezekiel 9:4-6 - ***and the LORD said to him, “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.” To the others He said in my hearing, “Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary.”*** Sounds familiar! (Notice where this killing begins...at God’s house! God will judge those who claim to be His, but are not, first.) Many people think that ALL believers will be sealed with a mark during the tribulation, a mark that will protect them and keep them from suffering the horrors of this time. Others think it is only these 144,000 Jews who have that mark, since it is not specifically discussed for the tribulation saints. We know many tribulation saints are killed during this time, so it seems they are not spared from all of the violence of these years.
- ***“till”*** – such a small word, with so much meaning! Romans 11:25-27 contains the same word, which has relevance here: ***For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”*** (quoting Isaiah 59:20-21) **TILL, or UNTIL** is a very important word in scripture. This passage in Romans speaks of the blindness of Israel (for their rejection of Jesus the first time He came) during the time we call the Church Age. This blindness will continue UNTIL that age is over, until all of the Church who will come in, comes in. There is an ultimate number within this Church that only God knows. When this number is reached (its fullness), the Church is removed, and God’s attention returns to the salvation and promised covenants of the Jews. We see in this verse that Israel will indeed be saved. And in this chapter 7 of Revelation, we see 144,000 Jews sealed, protected and owned by God. He has purchased them through the blood of Jesus. He is holding back judgment on the earth until they are owned and protected by Him, and under His authority. God has a plan that will be completely and perfected fulfilled.

- This (verses above) is a literal fulfillment of the beautiful passage in Zechariah: *“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. (12:10) ; and “In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness... (13:1). God will indeed save the Jews, but their salvation will be through Jesus, and only Jesus, just as all humanity’s salvation comes through Him. The fountain referenced in this verse is the blood of Jesus.*
- Later in this passage in Zechariah, however, we read of **terrible times for the Jews:** *“...two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, But one-third shall be left in it: I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, ‘This is My people’; And each one will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’” (13:8-9)* Those who put their trust in Jesus will be rewarded. Perhaps these are the 144,000 of Revelation 7?
- All of these verses, and in particular this sealing of the 144,000 Jews in Revelation 7 should put to rest the blasphemous doctrine called “replacement theology.” **THERE IS NO REPLACEMENT OF GOD’S PEOPLE. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY.** This is the idea that the Church replaces Israel in God’s covenant promises. “Israel” has never been used to describe the Church. There is no reference that the Church has replaced Israel. The Church is not “spiritual Israel.” The promises given Israel were **unconditional and eternal** (you can’t forfeit these!) **(Abrahamic covenant [Genesis 12], Eternal Possession of the Land Covenant [Genesis 12, 13, 15], Davidic Covenant [2 Samuel 7], the New Covenant [Jeremiah 31]) The only conditional covenant was the Mosaic covenant in Exodus. The people broke this covenant and God did exactly as He said He would do.** Augustine and Origen began the allegorical interpretation of scripture which led to this lie.

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.

- *“One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed...”* This is a literal number, not symbolic and not a number beyond counting. Notice the word “all.” There are 12 tribes of Israel, plus the two sons of Joseph adopted by Jacob (literally 14 tribes, though always numbered as 12). **The “ten lost tribes” is a myth.** When the northern kingdom of Israel (10 tribes) split away from the united nation of Israel (under Solomon’s son Rehoboam), they were eventually destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 BC. They did not return to the land, like the southern kingdom of Judah (2 tribes) after exile in Babylon. Hence the beginning of the myth that there are 10 “lost” tribes of Israel. Throughout scripture, even following the destruction of the northern kingdom and the exile of the southern kingdom, the tribes are listed intact. After the split all 12 tribes were represented in both kingdoms, and they continue today. In Ezekiel 36 and 37, God declared that Judah (2 tribes of southern kingdom) and Israel (10 tribes of northern kingdom) would be joined as one nation in the regathering. This has already been fulfilled.

- **12,000 are sealed from each of the tribes of: Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin.** If you count and make a comparison to the total of 14 tribes, you will notice two are missing: the tribe of Dan, and the “half-tribe” of Ephraim (Joseph, son of Jacob, had two sons who were adopted by Jacob, and became the “half-tribes” of Manasseh and Ephraim, representing the tribe of Joseph). So where are these tribes? Ephraim is mentioned indirectly. The tribe of Joseph is really the two tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim. However, Ephraim was involved in idolatry, hence their non-mention (Hosea 4:17). Dan is a “whole” tribe, and his lack of mention is troubling. There is a great deal of controversy over this. Deuteronomy 29:18-21 states that idolaters will be separated, and their names blotted out. In Jacob’s blessing of his sons in Genesis 49, Dan’s “blessing” in part reads *“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.”* (Gen 49:17) This is not really a blessing, but a prophecy about not only the idolatry of the tribe of Dan, but their efforts at derailing others as well. (Dan’s idolatry is recorded in Leviticus 24:10-16, Judges 18:1-2, 30-31). They are leaders in apostasy in 1 Kings 12:28-30, and 100 years later in 2 Kings 10:29. Dan is also mentioned as the “voice of calamity” (Jeremiah 4:14-15, Amos 8:14), and cowardice under the judge Deborah (Judges 5:17). The tribes of Dan and Ephraim both were the first to fall into idolatry. Perhaps their lack of mention here is their payment. Some commentators go so far as to consider that the rider on the white horse (the one we call antichrist) may be Jewish, and from the tribe of Dan. More on this when we get to chapter 13). We just don’t know for sure why they are missing. It is significant they are not listed.
- **These 144,000 are JEWISH.** They are not symbolic for others. God has made it quite clear that these are Jews. The tribe names are mentioned individually. These are not to be considered symbolic for other peoples. Many have tried to claim identity with them through the ages, including Jehovah’s Witnesses. These are LITERAL JEWS, and they are MESSIANIC JEWS – Jewish believers in Yeshua (see chapter 14).
- Some believe that these **144,000 Jews will be witnesses for Jesus during the tribulation.** There will be great evangelization happening at this time, and perhaps these people will be like 144,000 “Billy Graham’s.” They may be involved in preaching salvation through Jesus Christ. It is significant that the second group of tribulation saints are mentioned immediately following these Jewish witnesses. Perhaps some of the second group became believers as a result of the first group’s work of evangelism. The “soul harvest” in this time will be huge. We have the makings of an equation for this:

**(effects of rapture on the world) + 144,000 witnesses + Holy Spirit + chaos, terror + world’s largest population
= GREATEST HARVEST OF SOULS....EVER!**
- In the Old Testament, the **Jews were to be a light to the Gentiles**, to bring God’s message to the entire world. They failed in this mission, holding it for themselves (*with a few exceptions, Naham, Jonah, etc.*). It is just like God to give them another opportunity to do so at the end of time.
- We see this group again (most likely) in chapter 14. Here they are mentioned as those “who follow the Lamb wherever he goes....”
- *“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues...”* now we get a look at a second group of people. These are not just Jews, but people from ALL nations, tribes and tongues. There are so many, they cannot be counted. This is the greatest harvest of souls in all history.

- ***“...standing before the throne and before the Lamb...”*** note these are standing, in contrast to those who cannot stand in the Presence of the lamb (and His wrath) in previous chapter.
- ***“clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands...”*** White robes are the pure white clean robes given to the redeemed, they are the righteousness of Jesus. Palm branches are traditional at Feast of Tabernacles, a symbol for victory. These souls are in heaven, victorious. This second group of people are the saints who have been martyred during the tribulation. Perhaps this second group is in heaven because of the efforts of the first group of Jewish witnesses.
- ***“and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!’”*** There is no other way for salvation. Jesus, the Lamb is the way the truth and the life. There is no other way to the Father except by Him (John 14:6).
- ***“All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures and fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God...”*** Here they go again! This group never stops worshipping. The angels know the extent of God’s love for man, therefore they love us, too. These angels rejoice when believers come to God! Everyone at the throne of God is praising Him, including the Church (the elders) and tribulation martyrs (those here clothed in white robes with palm branches)
- ***“...saying, ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.’”*** Note God is praised by giving him 7 things. This shows perfectly complete praise for a perfectly complete God. It is bracketed by two “Amens.” Truly! So be it!
- ***“Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from? 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.’”*** An elder (one of the Church) asks John who these people are, and apparently John did not recognize them. This is another indication this group is not the Church (*and being distinguished from the Church*). This is an entirely separate group, coming out of the tribulation, not prior to it. Washing our robes in the blood of the Lamb is a critical concept in Christianity. The blood of the Lamb washes away the blackness of sin and makes everything clean. (Notice “great tribulation” – last 3 ½ years?)
- ***“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.”*** This is a scene taking place in heaven. They are around the throne. Some speculate this references the Millennial Temple on earth, since there is no night in heaven. This may be true. However, what John is seeing now is in heaven, so the reference to “day and night” may merely indicate 24/7, all the time. It also may be future based and indeed reference the Temple on earth during the reign of Jesus. John may be seeing the future service of these people. It isn’t until AFTER the Millennium that the heavens and the earth are recreated, and there will be no night, AND no temple. In the meantime, the saints who come out of the tribulation will be in the presence of God.



- *“They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; 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.”* What a beautiful promise to the believer, whether in the Church, or among the tribulation saints. The things listed here may also indicate how these people died, if they did not take the mark of the beast, they would have no food or water, no protection from the elements. This passage may line up with what we know will be in eternity, AFTER the tribulation, AFTER the millennium, and into eternity. It is a beautiful description of the rewards to believers. We see reference to no more tears or sorrow in Chapter 21 as well. The living waters can be seen also in the Millennial Kingdom coming from the throne. Read Ezekiel 47!
- **There are some interesting things to see here:** Note that the Lamb is also the Shepherd, and He is not only the sacrificial Lamb, but He is also our High Priest. Interesting how God works, isn't it!?



COMPARISON OF THE CHURCH TO THIS GROUP OF BELIEVERS:

1. The Church is not in the tribulation, these come OUT of the tribulation (see Rev. 3:10, Church does not experience the wrath of God)
2. The Church will sit on thrones (1 Corinthians 6:2-3, 1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6), like the Elders already in heaven, these stand before thrones.
3. The Church is crowned, these are uncrowned (at least here, in this time)
4. The Church sings a new song, these cry in a loud voice
5. The Church reigns as kings and priests, these serve Him day and night.

