

The Book of Revelation
Lesson #11—"The Seven Seals (Part Two)

Introduction: The first six of seven seals have been opened.

- Chapter 7 serves as parenthesis between the 6th and 7th seal.
- A stylistic feature which will be repeated in the trumpet sequence of 10:1-11:13
- Also a type of dramatic interlude that delays for a moment the disclosure of that which will take place when the final seal is opened.
- Chapter 7 consists of 2 visions: The sealing of the 144,000 and great multitude before the throne in heaven.
- In a sense these visions answer the question, "Who can stand?"

I. The Sealing of God's Servants (7:1-8)

A. Four angels overseeing the cosmos:

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. Revelation 7:1 NKJV

1. In apocalyptic literature; angels often are in charge of nature.
2. Angel in charge of the waters (16:5); In charge of fire (14:18).
3. Four winds as destructive agents; also a regular feature in apocalyptic.

Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. Daniel 7:2 NKJV

Against Elam I will bring the four winds From the four quarters of heaven, And scatter them toward all those winds; There shall be no nations where the outcasts of Elam will not go. Jeremiah 49:36 NKJV

4. Angels hold the winds in check until the servants of God are sealed.

B. The angel who gives direction:

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." Revelation 7:2-4 NKJV

NOTE: Probably a signet ring putting the Lamb and Father's name on them.

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. Revelation 14:1 NKJV

They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. Revelation 22:4 NKJV

Compare to:

So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. Revelation 16:2 NKJV

Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. Revelation 19:20 NKJV

And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." Revelation 14:11 NKJV

And that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Revelation 13:17 NKJV

NOTE: Ownership entails protection

Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 2 Timothy 2:19 NKJV

C. The sealing takes place:

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. Revelation 7:4-8 NKJV

Who are these people?

1. If a pre-tribulation rapture; must be literal Jews.
 - a. Church is gone; already in heaven.
 - b. Clear statement about 12 tribes.
 - c. Part of the bringing of Israel to repentance.

"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. 11 In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. 12 And the land shall mourn, every family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; 13 the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of Shimei by itself, and their wives by themselves; Zechariah 12:10-13 NKJV

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; 27 For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins." 28 Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. 29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 30 For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, 31 even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. 32 For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Romans 11:26-32 NKJV

- d. Dan is missing; some think anti-Christ comes from Dan.

*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. Genesis 49:17 NKJV*

*The snorting of His horses was heard from Dan. The whole land trembled at the sound
of the neighing of His strong ones; For they have come and devoured the land and all
that is in it, The city and those who dwell in it." Jeremiah 8:16 NKJV*

- e. Dan and Ephraim omitted; possibly because of their involvement in idolatry.
 - f. Likely, devout believers who will spread the gospel of the Kingdom during the tribulation.
2. Also futurist who believe this is the true Israel or the church (do not believe in pre-tribulation rapture).

What reasons do they posit?

- a. Brings in racial distinctions that some argue do not exist in the New Testament. (Jew or Gentile).
- b. Disregarding fact that 10 of 12 tribes disappear in Assyria and the remaining two lost identity when Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70.
- c. A symbolic number representing completeness and the church is taking up Israel's eschatological inheritance.

*So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the
Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on
twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Matthew 19:28 NKJV*

*But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit,
not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God. Romans 2:29 NKJV*

*And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon
the Israel of God. Galatians 6:16 NKJV*

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

*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special
people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into
His marvelous light; 1 Peter 2:9-10 NKJV*

The beast of the field will honor Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I give waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My people, My chosen. Isaiah 43:20 NKJV

The rivers will turn foul; The brooks of defense will be emptied and dried up; The reeds and rushes will wither. Isaiah 19:6 NKJV

d. Further irregularities in list

- Judah instead of Reuben heads up the list (Reuben is oldest)
- Both Manasseh and Joseph are listed but not Ephraim (Manasseh and Ephraim are Joseph's sons).
- Dan is omitted (some say Dan was copied as Man later changed to Manaseh which would fix both problems).
- Probably Dan is omitted because of idolatry.

Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. Judges 18:30 NKJV

And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 1 Kings 12:29-30 NKJV

NOTE: I believe these are Jews; sealed during the tribulation.

II. The Bliss of the Redeemed in Heaven (7:9-17)

NOTE: Now a great multitude!

- A. Likely the multitude of Gentiles who come to Christ during the tribulation and are martyred for their testimony.
 - 1. Like the 144,000; distinct from the raptured church.
 - 2. These did not accept Christ during the age of grace but did during the tribulation.
- B. Others see this as all the faithful of every age, some who became martyrs; crying out to the Lamb who made the way for their salvation.
 - 1. A necessary leap if reject the pre-tribulation rapture.
 - 2. Same group of 144,000 only are on earth during the tribulation, this group in heaven afterwards.

C. The scene carried out:

1. Worship of the martyrs:

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!" Revelation 7:9-10 NKJV

2. Joined by the angels:

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." Revelation 7:11-12 NKJV

3. Question of the elder:

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

4. Answer of John:

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. Revelation 7:14 NKJV

5. Their privilege:

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." Revelation 7:15-17 NKJV

III. The Seventh Seal

*When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.
Revelation 8:1 NKJV*

NOTE: A word about seals, trumpets and vials:

A. The outline theory: (I-A-1)

I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. 13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. 14 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. 15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" Revelation 6:12-17 NKJV

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." Revelation 7:15-19 NKJV

Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" 18 And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. 19 Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. 20 Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great. Revelation 16:17-21 NKJV

B. 6th seal, 7th trumpet and 7th bowl are simultaneous setting the scene for Revelation 19:11-16.

- C. Silence in heaven as the King prepares to return and claim the Kingdoms of the world.

*"But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him."
Habakkuk 2:20 NKJV*

*Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD; For the day of the LORD is at hand,
For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice; He has invited His guests. & "And it shall be,
In the day of the LORD's sacrifice, That I will punish the princes and the king's children,
And all such as are clothed with foreign apparel. Zephaniah 1:7-8 NKJV*

*Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for He is aroused from His holy habitation!"
Zechariah 2:13 NKJV*