

Revelation Chapter Seven

The Redeemed of the Tribulation (vv. 1-17)

Vision of the 144,000 (vv. 1-8)

Restraint of Judgment (v.1)

VERSE 1 **After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth**

(Μετὰ τοῦτο εἶδον τέσσαρας ἀγγέλους ἐστῶτας ἐπὶ τὰς τέσσαρας γωνίας τῆς γῆς [*prep meta + demonstr.pro.acc.nt.s. touto this; with meta = "after these things" + aor.act.ind.1s. eidon see + adj.acc.m.p. tessares four + noun acc.m.p. angelos angel + pf.act.part.acc.m.p. histemi stand + prep epi upon, on, at + art.w/adj.acc.f.p. tessares four + noun acc.f.p. gonia corner + art.w/noun gen.f.s. ge earth*], **holding back the four winds of the earth** [κρατοῦντας τοὺς τέσσαρας ἀνέμους τῆς γῆς [*pres.act.part.acc.m.p. kratio take hold of + art.w/adj.acc.m.p. tessares four + noun acc.m.p. anemos wind + art.w/noun gen.f.s. ge earth*], **so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree** [ἵνα μὴ πνέῃ ἄνεμος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς μήτε ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης μήτε ἐπὶ πᾶν δένδρον [*conj hina so that; purpose clause + neg me "no" + pres.act.subj.3s. pneo blow + noun nom.m.s. anemos wind + prep epi on + art.w/noun gen.f.s. ge earth + conj mete nor, or + prep epi one + art.w/noun gen.f.s. thalassa sea + conj mete or + prep epi on + adj.acc.nt.s. pan any + noun acc.nt.s. dendron tree*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 1

1. The two visions of chapter 7 separate the sixth and seventh seals (vv. 1-8; 9-17).
2. These two visions do not constitute judgment upon mankind but refer to two classes of tribulational saints.
3. The believers that are the subject of the first vision are selected believers who are totally protected from the ravages of the 7th seal with its trumpets and bowls.
4. The second group represents tribulational martyrs from the nations previously seen under the 5th seal judgment.
5. The visions of chapter 7 constitute a pause in the chronological progression seen in the opening of the seals.
6. These two visions have been called a parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seals, but there is some objection to this because the visions are an integral part of the book's movement.
7. The visions reflect the status of two groups of tribulational believers from the vantage point of the midpoint of the seven year tribulation forward.
8. The two groups represent total opposites in terms of Phase 2 experience.
9. Four angels move to center-stage as the new vision begins.
10. The new vision is introduced by the phrase "After this" (*meta touto*).
11. In the discussion of this phrase at Rev. 4:1, it was observed how the expression followed by *eidon* ("I saw") introduces a new vision, rather than the plural *tauta* ("these things") viewing the events from the perspective of the sixth seal.

12. Because the placement of the vision's fulfillment depends to some degree on the time of the sealing mentioned in 7:3, it is advantageous to deal with that issue here.
13. One view places it after the 70th Week of Daniel, viewing the setting of both visions of this chapter as millennial.
14. The placement of both visions on earth, however, is contradicted by the presence of the four living beings and 24 elders in 7:11.
15. Both of these groups are in heaven.
16. Another suggested placement of the time of the scene is at the beginning of the 70th week.
17. The stillness before the four winds blow is taken as an indication that the time of the tribulation has just begun.
18. The natural meaning of the text places the sealing and the vision as a whole just after the sixth seal.
19. Revelation 7 is an interlude between the sixth and seventh seals.
20. This is proved by the change in tone from the subject matter of the sixth seal and by the delay until Rev. 8:1 in the opening of the seventh seal.
21. The description is provided to answer the question of 6:17 by way of showing that some will survive and even prosper under the blessing of God during the very worst period of earth's terrors, the second half of the tribulation.
22. With the sixth seal there has been chronological progression up to the midpoint of the seventieth week.
23. As will be shown below, the sealing comes to protect those who serve God in a special capacity from the effects of the trumpet judgments during the last half of the Week.
24. It is a valid question as to why these 144,000 male Jews do not have protection from the wrath of God during the first half of the Week.
25. The fact is, they will have a high level of protection, so that they can accomplish the maturity adjustment under the tutelage of the two witnesses (cf. Rev. 11).
26. The two witnesses will enjoy this kind of protection during the first half of the tribulation (cf. Rev. 11:5).
27. The evidence is sufficient for placing this sealing before the midpoint of the seven-year Tribulation.
28. Though the *meta touto* indicates a change of vision, this does not mean there is no relationship to the sixth seal.
29. The agents in control of the four winds are *tessares angelous* ("four angels").
30. These are somewhat comparable to the angel of fire in 14:18 and the angel of water in 16:5.
31. They are of a somewhat lower station than the four living beings.
32. They are assigned charge of earth's weather patterns during the Tribulation.
33. The four are located *epi tas terraras gonias tes ges* ("at the four corners of the earth").
34. A sphere (like a basketball) is never referred to as having four corners!
35. The earth is not a flat square with four corners.
36. The language here is literal indicating four corners on a circle.
37. These four point of the compass are points of origination from which the four winds proceed (cf. Jer. 49:36; Matt. 24:31).
38. The threefold repetition of the numeral *tessares* ("four") is a means of marking the universality of this angelic action.
39. In light of the emphasis, *ges* ("earth") should not be limited to the land of Palestine or to the Roman world of the time in any of its three uses in verse 1.

40. The realm of control of the four angels is shown in the words “holding back the four winds of the earth.”
41. The verb *kateo* means “hold fast,” “hold firmly,” or “detain.”
42. At each of the four points of the compass one of the four winds is held prisoner by an angel who affects its movements.
43. The mission of the angels is to prevent outbreaks of elemental fury.
44. The notion of the language is that the winds are struggling to get loose, but are being restrained.
45. The four winds picture God’s destructive wrath against the earth in prophetic literature (cf. Jer. 49:36-38; Dan. 7:2; Hos. 13:15).
46. The Jewish concept was that winds blowing from the four quarters, i.e., due north, south, east, and west were favorable, but winds blowing from angles or the four corners, i.e., east-northeast, west-northwest, etc., were harmful.
47. Revelation 7:1 speaks only of unfavorable winds, those that when unleashed bring harm to the earth (7:2-3).
48. The four winds picture God’s destructive wrath action against the earth and its inhabitants.
49. Whether or not to attach symbolic significance to these winds has been debated.
50. One approach has the four winds as the divine judgments under the first six, particularly the four horsemen of the first four seals.
51. This connection which makes 7:1-3 retrospective, rests largely on understanding Zech. 6:5 to say that the four horsemen are “the four winds of heaven,” and thereby identifying the four horsemen with the four winds also.
52. This view rests on a mistranslation of Zech. 6:5, which actually says that the four chariots “are *going forth* to the four winds of heaven,” not that they *are* the four winds.
53. A retroactive understanding of Rev. 7:1-3 ignores “after this” in 7:1 and the chronological sequence that it represents.
54. It is better to see the winds as picturesque apocalyptic way of referring to the plagues that are shortly to happen to mankind.
55. The release of the winds is later replaced by the seven angels with the seven trumpets, at whose sounding the plagues fall upon the earth.
56. The first two trumpet judgments affect the same parts of the creation as the winds, i.e., the earth, the trees, and the sea (cf. 8:6-9), so the angelic restraint here is in essence a delaying of the initiation of the trumpet series.
57. Further confirmation of the connection comes in the sealing that must precede the release of the winds (cf. 7:2-4).
58. As reflected in Rev. 9:4, this protects the servants of God (144,000) from the effects of trumpets as the sealing of Ezek. 9:4-8 protected the righteous remnant from the agents of slaughter in Jerusalem.
59. Such a mark set on certain people protects them from the harm inflicted on the rest.
60. The regular use of winds to depict destructive forces from God coincides with this interpretation (cf. Dan. 7:2; Jer. 49:36-38; Hos. 13:15).
61. The angelic restraint is tied to the construction and the verb tense which suggests the sense, “lest a wind keep on blowing.”
62. This would indicate that the winds of destruction had already begun to mount.
63. Yet they had not yet struck, as the verse indicates.
64. The world was in every way ready.

65. Only the detail of the 144,000 remained before the unleashing of these destructive winds.
66. “The sea” should not be invested with the symbolic connotation of nations and people in rebellion (cf. Isa. 57:20; Dan. 7:2,3) or that “tree” should be taken as representative of the might and pride of the earth (cf. Ezek. 31:3-9; 14-18; Dan. 4:10,22).
67. No symbolism is involved.
68. The terms should be taken literally as they are in connection with the first two trumpet judgments.

Fifth Angel (v.2)

VERSE 2 **And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God** (*καὶ εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον ἀναβαίνοντα ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς ἡλίου ἔχοντα σφραγίδα θεοῦ ζῶντος [conj kai and + aor.act.ind.1s. eidon see + adj.acc.m.s. allos another + noun acc.m.s. angelos angel + pres.act.part.acc.m.s. anabaino ascend + prep apo from + noun abl.f.s. anatole rising; sunrise; “rising of the sun” + noun gen.m.s. helios sun + pres.act.part.acc.m.s. echo have + noun acc.f.s. sphragis seal + noun gen.m.s. theos God + pres.act.part.gen.m.s. zao live]; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea [καὶ ἔκραξεν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ τοῖς τέσσαρσιν ἄγγέλους οἷς ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς ἀδικῆσαι τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν [conj kai + aor.act.ind.3s. krazo cry out + noun instr.f.s. phone voice + adj.instr.f.s. megas great + art.w/adj.dat.m.p. tessares four + noun dat.m.p. angelos angel + rel.pro.dat.m.p. hos “to whom” + aor.pass.ind.3s. didomi give, assign + pro.dat.m.p. autos “to them” + aor.act.infin. adikeo do wrong to; harm + art.w/acc.f.s. ge earth + conj kai + art.w/noun acc.f.s. thalassa sea]),*

ANALYSIS: VERSE 2

1. The next thing John sees is as fifth angel ascending from the east.
2. The adjective *allon* (“another”) indicates another of the same kind.
3. The angel is of the same character as the other four.
4. Second, by the use of the first person plural in this angel’s address to the other four angels.
5. The pronoun “our” (v.3), identifies him with the four angels in a common task.
6. John sees him ascending from the rising of the sun.
7. It is implied that he has been occupied with some earlier service on earth and now rises to the sky to deliver his message to the four angels.
8. The importance of east in Scripture is seen in Paradise was set up in the east (Gen. 2:8), and the glory of God comes to the Temple from the east (Ezek. 43:2).
9. This is the direction the Magi came at Jesus’ birth (Matt.2:1), indicating the direction from which the Messiah was expected to come.
10. Jesus is called “dayspring” (Lk. 1:78) and “morning star” (Rev. 22:16), which signals the arrival of daylight through the rising of the sun in the east.
11. Israel, so prominent in the first part of this chapter, will experience deliverance through the “sun-rising” of Christ (Mal. 4:2).

12. In his possession the fifth angel has an item that is the focus of attention: “having the seal of the living God.”
13. A seal was usually a signet ring that a monarch affixed to give validity to official documents or to mark his property (cf. Gen. 41:42; Esther 3:10; 8:2; Dan. 6:7).
14. It was used to authenticate and secure.
15. Rev. 14:1 suggests that it is the name of the Lamb and that of His Father.
16. “Mark” (*charagma*) is the word to describe the label placed on the followers of the Antichrist in Rev. 13:6,7.
17. It carries the connotation of tattooing such as was practiced by pagan religions.
18. The term *sphragis* on the other hand had a rich meaning in Christian doctrine, including that of ownership (2Cor. 1:22), security (Eph. 1:14; 4:30), and authentication (Jn. 6:27).
19. For the church age believer the sealing ministry of God the Holy Spirit is related to the doctrines of eternal security and the resurrection.
20. The fifth angel possesses the seal of the living God.
21. This familiar expression is seen in both the OT (e.g., Josh. 3:10; Ps. 42:2; Hos. 1:10) and NT (2x in Matthew; 1x in Acts; 7x in the Paul’s letters, 4x in Hebrews).
22. Similar references to God occur in Rev. 4:9, 10; 10:6; 15:7), where “forever and ever” accentuates the unending nature of God’s existence.
23. God’s eternity (E.L.) assures the accomplishment of His purposes for His people (cf. 10:6; 15:7).
24. This title adds solemnity and vitality and ownership to the seal it identifies.
25. The fifth angel instructs the other four with a loud voice denoting urgency with respect to the task at hand (cf. 6:10).
26. His primary concern at this juncture is the protection of the 144,00 Jewish evangelists.
27. Before the four angels release the elements which will wreak havoc on earth’s environment, these believers must receive a mark of exemption for the ill effects of God’s visitations of wrath against the rest of humanity.
28. The four angels are poised to unleash God’s wrath against “the earth and the sea.”

Angelic Prohibition (v.3)

VERSE 3 saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees (λέγων, Μὴ ἀδικήσητε τὴν γῆν μήτε τὴν θάλασσαν μήτε τὰ δένδρα [*pres.act.part.nom.m.s. lego + neg me + aor.act.subj. or aor.act.imper. 2p. adikeo harm + art.w/noun acc.f.s. ge earth + conj mete or + art.w/noun acc.f.s. thalassa sea + conj mete or; coordinating conj used to link neg. ideas + art.w/noun acc.nt.p. dendron tree*]) **until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads** [ἄχρι σφραγίσωμεν τοὺς δούλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν [*conj achri until + aor.act.subj.1p. shpragizo seal + art.w/noun acc.m.p. doulos slave; “bond-slave” + art.w/noun gen.m.s. theos God + pro.gen.p. ego “our” + prep epi on + art.w/noun gen.nt.p. metopon forehead + pro.gen.m.p. autos “their”*]]."

ANALYSIS: VERSE 3

1. Four angels in John’s vision are poised to bring environmental judgment upon the earth.
2. These four angels are not acting independently of God.

3. They are elect angels who are bound by their righteousness to the service of God who is the ultimate author of earth's woes.
4. In fact, these four angels cannot act in connection with the four winds of destruction apart from Jesus Christ's opening of the 7th seal (cf. 8:1).
5. So why is it necessary for this fifth angel to admonish these four to 'stand down' with respect to their assigned duties in connection with the trumpet judgments?
6. The prohibition "do not harm" is literally, "do not begin to harm" as the verb is an aorist with the weak negative *me*.
7. They are to restrain themselves until such time as the God's servants have been sealed.
8. The reason for this call to 'stand down' on the part of the angel ascending from the east is to call special attention to the sealing process.
9. The infliction of destruction must wait "until we seal the servants of our God upon their foreheads."
10. The angel from the east includes others who will assist him in the sealing assignment.
11. The first person plural of "we seal" perhaps refers to the assistance of the four angels who are seen restraining the four winds, in which case they would act as agents of mercy as well as agents of wrath.
12. Or, it could refer to yet other angels assigned to seal the 144,000.
13. The sealing is a pledge of security.
14. The clear indication is that the seal exempts its bearers from the plagues that afflict the rest of the human race during the second half of the tribulation (cf. 9:4; 14:1-5).
15. Another way of viewing the sealing is immunity from death.
16. Since the 144,000 are already believers (e.g., bond-servants) the sealing is not directly related to saving faith.
17. These individuals later appear with the Lamb on Mount Zion (14:1-5) which means they will enjoy physical preservation until they rendezvous with Christ at the 2nd Advent.
18. So, these believers operating in mortal bodies (like the 2 witnesses), will experience exemption from suffering and death (unlike the 2 witnesses) for the duration of the tribulation.
19. The two witnesses experience exemption from suffering until the very end of their ministry when they are taken into custody and martyred.
20. What they experience in the 2nd half of the tribulation is parallel to the experience of the 2 witnesses minus the experience of martyrdom.
21. Martyrdom is not a goal to be pursued; it is suffering that is marked out for a select few, relatively speaking.
22. The percentage of martyrs to non-martyrs is greatly increased in the tribulation (cf. Rev. 7:9, 14; 13:15).
23. The 144,000 male Jewish servants are exempt from the experience of the saints of verses 9 and 14; 6:9; 13:15 and Matt. 24:9.
24. It does not follow that if God allows the beast to kill the two witnesses (Rev. 11:7), that He will not isolate the 144,000 from terminal harm.
25. The sealing protects this category of tribulational saint both from harm from the source of God (e.g., God's wrath) and men (e.g. persecution).
26. The fact that all 144,000 are physically intact at the 2nd Advent is clear from Rev. 14:1-5.
27. The fact that these saints are shielded from the plagues of wrath connected with the seven trumpets is clear from such statements as Rev. 9:4 ("They were told not to hurt the grass of

- the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.”).
28. The best analysis of the seal is that it protects against the disasters that the four winds will bring on the earth.
 29. The context of 7:1-3 is in preparation for the judgments of the seventh seal that includes seven trumpet judgments.
 30. Thus the sealing must relate to these judgments..
 31. The command “do not harm” implies that after the sealing is accomplished, the judgments that are next in the divine program (i.e., Rev. 8) will commence.
 32. For what imaginable reason could such a prohibition be uttered, unless those who are sealed are being designated for some purpose connected with the work of the four angels.
 33. For what purpose could they be marked out for exemption?
 34. This is an important lesson that is reflective of Ezek. 9:4-7 where the remnant is sealed as protection against the divine slaughtering of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
 35. The parallel device of the beast to mark his own (cf. Rev. 13:16; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20) is rivaled by God who is truly able to protect His own as over against the beast who is not able to protect his own.
 36. Next follows the observation that these individuals were not so protected from the adverse effects of seals one through six.
 37. These seals are confined to the first half of the tribulation.
 38. It is during these years that the 144,000 will come to saving faith and will matriculate under the ministry of the two witnesses.
 39. Sealing is necessary for the ministry to follow during the last half of the tribulation.
 40. It was not necessary for the first half nor was it possible as these individuals were in the process of making the adjustments to God along with their Jewish brethren.
 41. As pointed out on many occasions Jews living in the land and coming to saving faith in the first half of the tribulation are to flee to specified mountainous area to ride out the second half of the tribulation.
 42. These believers will enjoy essentially the same benefits apart from the sealing that the 144,000 will enjoy, but who are not to hide out for the duration of the tribulation.
 43. The placement of the seal is “upon their foreheads” (cf. Ezek. 9:4).
 44. It was not uncommon for a soldier or a guild member to receive such a mark.
 45. The forehead was chosen because it was most conspicuous.
 46. It will be obvious to whom these slaves belong and whom they serve.
 47. It is not the seal per se that protects the individual from all harm and grants him access to all places of his ministry, but rather it is the miraculous supernatural power of God that will make his life in chaotic times a charmed one.

Their Identity (vv. 4-8)

VERSE 4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed (καὶ ἤκουσα τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῶν ἐσφραγισμένων [*conj kai + aor.act.ind.1s. akouo hear + art.w/noun acc.m.s. arithmos number + art.w/perf.pass.part.gen.m.p. shpragizo seal*]), **one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel** [ἐκατὸν τεσσαράκοντα τέσσαρες χιλιάδες, ἐσφραγισμένοι ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ [*adj.nom.f.p. hekaton one hundred + adj.nom.f.p. tessarakonta forty + adj.nom.f.p. tessares four + noun nom.f.p. chalias thousand + perf.pass.part.nom.m.p. shpragizo seal + prep ek + adj.abl.f.s. pas all, every + noun abl.f.s. phule tribe + noun gen.m.p. huios son + noun gen.m.s. Israel*]):

ANALYSIS: VERSE 4

1. John's report continues that the sealing has taken place between the verses.
2. Perhaps the fifth angel is the source of John's information regarding the number 144,000.
3. No justification can be found for understanding the simple statement of fact in v. 4 as a figure of speech.
4. In fact, those who interpret the number as symbolic of a large number, are those who have a theological axe to grind.
5. They contend that the 144,000 is symbolic of the church with which no possible numerical connection exists.
6. We have here a definite number in contrast to a large indefinite number in 7:9.
7. If this number is taken symbolically, no number in the book can be taken literally.
8. The sealing of these men is for the purpose of preservation with view to a specialized world-wide ministry in the last half of the tribulation, and not with a view to martyrdom.
9. As noted in the previous analysis, the 144,000 are protected both from the ill effects of the wrath of God as well as from the effects of persecution.
10. They are tribulational survivors with a vengeance!
11. They are not, however, the only persons who survive the tribulation (cf. Matt. 25 and the judgment of the sheep and goat nations).
12. This is in no way the total number of tribulational believers.
13. Tribulational martyrs make up a far larger number according to the language of 7:9 (e.g., "a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne...").
14. Then there are the believing Jews who hold up in the mountains until the 2nd advent mentioned in Matt. 24:15ff.
15. Then there are the Jews who defend Jerusalem at the 2nd advent (Zech. 14).
16. Then there are Jews still scattered among the nations and are regathered at the 2nd advent (Matt. 24:31).
17. The 144,000 represent a special group whose ministry it is to travel around the world and evangelize the nations (cf. Isa. 52:7).
18. After their witness is finished they will rendezvous with the Lord at the 2nd advent on Mount Zion (cf. Rev. 14:1ff.).
19. As with the tribulational martyrs of the 5th seal, they will form a special fraternity.

20. Based on the placement of this vision, it is concluded that the period of their ministry will coincide with the last half of Daniel's 70th week.
21. For purposes of emphasizing that every tribe is included is added the supplemental note to the numerical total: "from every tribe of Israel..."
22. The term *Israel* refers to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
23. This is the natural understanding and the word's usage in the NT as well as the OT.
24. This accounts for the detailed division of the chosen people into twelve families answering to the twelve tribes of Israel in vv. 5-8.
25. Paul makes a clear distinction between the two groups of God's people, Israel and the church, as developed in Rom. 9-11.
26. In about eighteen lists of the sons of Jacob in the OT, different tribes are omitted at different times, but the number is always twelve.
27. This is another indication that ethnic Israel is in view.
28. This identification of the 144,000 of Revelation chapter seven best accounts for the distinction between them and the innumerable multitude in the second vision of this chapter who come from various ethnic backgrounds.
29. Attention falls upon a sub-set of believing Israel living during the tribulation that is selected by God to evangelize the nations during the second half of Daniel's 70th week.

The Twelve Components of the 144,000 (vv. 5-8)

VERSE 5 From the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed (ἐκ φυλῆς Ἰουδα δώδεκα χιλιάδες ἐσφραγισμένοι [*prep ek from + noun abl.f.s. phule tribe + noun gen.m.s. Iouda, Judah + adj.nom.f.p. dodeka twelve + noun nom.f.p. chilas thousand + perf.pass.part.nom.m.p. shragizo seal*]), **from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand** (ἐκ φυλῆς Ῥουβὴν δώδεκα χιλιάδες [*prep ek + abl.f.s. phule tribe + noun gen.m.s. Rouben, Reuben + adj.nom.f.p. dodeka twelve + noun nom.f.p. chilas thousand*]), **from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand** (ἐκ φυλῆς Γὰδ δώδεκα χιλιάδες [*prep ek + noun abl.f.s. phule tribe + noun gen.m.s. Gad + adj.nom.f.p. dodeka twelve + noun nom.f.p. chilas thousand*]),

VERSE 6 from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand (ἐκ φυλῆς Ἀσὴρ δώδεκα χιλιάδες [*prep ek + noun abl.f.s. phule tribe + noun gen.m.s. Aser Asher + adj.nom.f.p. dodeka twelve + noun nom.f.p. chilas thousand*]), **from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand** (ἐκ φυλῆς Νεφθαλίμ δώδεκα χιλιάδες [*prep ek + noun abl.f.s. phule tribe + noun gen.m.s. Nephthalim Naphtali + adj.nom.f.p. dodeka twelve + noun nom.f.p. chilas thousand*]), **from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand** (ἐκ φυλῆς Μανασσῆ δώδεκα χιλιάδες [*prep ek + noun nom.f.s. phule tribe + noun gen.m.s. Manasse Manasseh + adj.nom.f.p. dodeka twelve + noun nom.f.p. chilas thousand*]),

VERSE 7 from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand (ἐκ φυλῆς Συμεῶν δώδεκα χιλιάδες [*prep ek + noun abl.f.s. phule tribe + noun Zumeon Simeon + adj.nom.f.p. dodeka twelve + noun nom.f.p. chilias thousand*]), **from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand** (ἐκ φυλῆς Λευὶ δώδεκα χιλιάδες [*prep ek + noun gen.f.s. phule tribe + noun gen.m.s. Leui Levi + noun nom.f.p. dodeka twelve + noun nom.f.p. chilias thousand*]), **from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand** (ἐκ φυλῆς Ἰσσαχάρ δώδεκα χιλιάδες [*prep ek + noun abl.f.s. phule tribe + noun gen.m.s. Issachar + adj.nom.f.p. dodeka twelve + noun nom.f.p. chilias thousand*]),

VERSE 8 from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand (ἐκ φυλῆς Ζαβουλῶν δώδεκα χιλιάδες [*prep ek + noun abl.f.s. phule tribe + noun gen.m.s. Zaboulon Zebulon + adj.nom.f.p. dodeka twelve + noun nom.f.p. chilias thousand*]), **from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand** (ἐκ φυλῆς Ἰωσήφ δώδεκα χιλιάδες [*prep ek + noun abl.f.s. phule tribe + noun gen.m.s. Ioseph Joseph + adj.nom.f.p. dodeka twelve + noun nom.f.p. chilias thousand*]), **from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed** (ἐκ φυλῆς Βενιαμὶν δώδεκα χιλιάδες ἐσφραγισμένοι [*prep ek + noun abl.f.s. phule tribe + noun gen.m.s. Benjamin Benjamin + adj.nom.f.p. dodeka twelve + noun nom.f.p. chilias thousand + perf.pass.part.nom.m.p. sphragizo seal*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 5-8

1. At this point comes a listing of the twelve components that make up the 144,000.
2. The birth of Jacob's 12 sons is recorded in Gen. 29:32-35:18.
3. Other lists of them are found in Gen.35:22-26; 46:8-25; 49:3-27; Ex.1:2-5; Num.1:5-15; 2:3-31; 13:4-15; 26:4-51; 34:19-28; Deut.27:12-13; 33:6-25; Josh.13:7-22:34; Judg.5:12-18; 1Chron.2:1-8:40; 12:24-37; 27:16-22; Ezek.48:1-7, 23-28; 31-34.
4. These 19 arrangements of the name differ from each other in one way or another, and the listing in Rev. 7:5-8 agrees with none of them.
5. In the OT sometimes the order of birth is followed (Gen. 29:32-35:18).
6. At other places in the OT, it is the order of Jacob's blessing them (Gen. 49:3-27), the order of encampment (Num. 2:3-31), the order of the census before the invasion of Canaan (Num. 26:4-51), the order of blessing and cursing (Deut. 27:12-13), the order of Moses' blessing (Deut. 33:6-25), the order of "the princes" (Num. 1:5-15), the order of inheritance (Josh.13:7-22:34), the order by the wives and concubines (1Chron.2:1-8:40), and the order of the gates of the city (Ezek.48:31-34).
7. Peculiarities of this list have been the objects of special discussion.
8. One is the fact of Judah, Jacob's fourth son, heading the list.
9. It is totally out of line to use the omissions and peculiarities of this list are that this is not ethnic Israel, but spiritual Israel.
10. A listing that is random and without reason raises serious questions about why the list was included in the text in the first place.

11. The obvious reason for Judah's position in the list is due to the fact that Jesus is a member of that tribe, which gives it preeminence.
12. This is supported by the title "the lion of the tribe of Judah" in Rev.5:5 (cf. Heb. 7:13-14).
13. In the OT there is a messianic expectation through the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10; 1Chron.2:3-4:43; 5:2).
14. The major peculiarity of the list is the absence of the tribe of Dan.
15. A number of explanations of this have been advanced.
16. A favorite of the early church was that the Antichrist was to arise from this tribe.
17. Based on a rabbinic interpretation of Jer. 8:16, the early church saw this omission as an outgrowth of Dan's territory being one of the places where Jeroboam set up his idolatrous calf-worship (1Kgs. 11:26; 12:28-30).
18. Another support for this was Jacob's prophecy about Dan in Gen. 49:17, relating him to a serpent and what is treacherous.
19. As much attention as this view has drawn, it is too fanciful to be taken seriously.
20. A related explanation is that the tribe of Dan had become extinct.
21. Another proposal to explain why Dan is omitted is that Dan left his inheritance and moved north to Laish and practiced idolatry.
22. This tribe was given an inheritance by lot just like the rest, but chose to move away and settle in the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, thereby rejecting the grace of the Lord.
23. Being the only tribe that failed to conquer its territory (Judg. 1:34), it turned to idolatry (Judg. 18:14-31).
24. However, Dan is included in the millennial distribution of the land (Ezek. 48:1,2,32).
25. So much for Dan being extinct or being banished from Israel.
26. It seems contradictory to exclude the Danites from this list and yet to include them in the millennial inheritance.
27. The solution to Dan's absence from the list is probably due to the fact that there will not be 12,000 qualified men from that tribe according to the requirements of Rev. 14:4.
28. The absence of Ephraim's name is resolved by the fact that the names Joseph and Ephraim were synonymous.
29. Such a substitution of names occurs elsewhere (Judg.1:22,35).
30. Both Ephraim (dominant tribe) and Manasseh, is closely associated with their father Joseph through whom they received their inheritance (Josh. 17:6-17).
31. So the inclusion of Joseph in the present list accomplishes the purpose of including Ephraim.
32. The listing in Ezek. 48:31-34 includes Levi and Joseph as John's list does.

The Innumerable Multitude (vv. 9-17)

VERSE 9 **After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count** (Μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοὺ ὄχλος πολὺς, ὃν ἀριθμῆσαι αὐτὸν οὐδεὶς ἐδύνατο [*prep meta + pro.demon.acc.nt.p. touto this + aor.act.ind.1s. eidon see + conj kai + part idou behold + noun nom.m.s. ochlos crowd, throng, multitude + adj.nom.m.s. polus much, great + pro.rel.acc.m.s. hos which + aor.act.infin. arithemeo count + pro.acc.m.s. autos it + pro.nom.m.s. oudeis no one*], **from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues** [ἐκ παντὸς ἔθνους καὶ φυλῶν καὶ λαῶν καὶ γλωσσῶν [*prep ek + adj.abl.nt.s. pan*

every + noun abl.nt.s. *ethnos* nation + conj *kai* + noun abl.f.p. *phule* tribe + conj *kai* + noun abl.m.p. *laos* people + conj *kai* + noun abl.f.p. *glossa* tongue, language], **standing before the throne and before the Lamb** [ἑστῶτες ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου καὶ ἐνώπιον τοῦ ἀρνίου [perf.act.part.nom.m.p. *histemi* stand + prep *enopion* before, in front of + art.w/noun gen.m.s. *thronos* throne + conj *kai* + prep *enopion* before + art.w/noun gen.nt.s. *arnion* lamb], **clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands** [περιβεβλημένους στολὰς λευκάς καὶ φοίνικες ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτῶν [perf.mid.part.acc.m.p. *periballo* put on clothes (midd) + noun acc.f.p. *stole* long flowing garment + adj.acc.f.p. *leukos* white + conj *kai* + noun nom.m.p. *phoenix date palm* (Jn. 12:13); by synecdoche *palm branches* + prep *en* + art.w/noun loc.f.p. *cheir* hand + pro.gen.m.p. *autos* him, her, it; “their”]);

ANALYSIS: VERSE 9

1. The phrase “After these things” introduces the second vision of the innumerable multitude of the redeemed from the nations.
2. The exclamatory “and behold” points to an amazing phenomenon related to the “great tribulation” (cf. v. 14).
3. John seeing into the distant future sees this multitude as being in the 3rd heaven in contrast to the 144,000, whom he saw as being on earth.
4. The vision begun at this point offers a number of contrasts to the previous one.
5. In vv. 1-8, the number of person is definite, but here it is indefinite.
6. The first group is taken exclusively from 12 tribes of Israel, but in the second, from all the nations.
7. In the first instance, the men are sealed from impending peril, but in the second, they lose their lives, but are seen as victorious and secure.
8. The inferred connection between the two distinct groups is that the innumerable gentile multitude is the fruit of the ministry of the 144,000.
9. But that is not completely the case as the 144,000 only minister in the last three and one half years of the tribulation.
10. This multitude constitutes believing Gentiles from the whole tribulation who die and go to heaven.
11. Again, John sees them in his vision as being in heaven, i.e. “standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands.”
12. A more accurate accounting of their evangelization is that of the two witnesses, the 144,000, and an angel (cf. Rev. 14:6).
13. In both of these visions both groups are seen in a completed state, a case not true of this latter group under the 5th seal (cf. Rev. 6:11).
14. The *meta tauta eidon* expression shows that this is a new vision and that John witnessed it immediately after the vision of verse 1-8.
15. We should not limit this multitude to tribulational martyrs as there is nothing in the identification of this group in the explanation to John by one of the elders as such in verse 14.

16. Certainly this multitude does include those who experience martyrdom in the tribulation (cf. 6:9; 13:7, 15; 20:4).
17. The fact that the entire company of tribulational casualties, among the elect is seen in heaven does not mean that they exist as such, simultaneous with the sealing of the 144,000.
18. Putting the scene at the end of the tribulation, just before the Second Advent, inserts an anticipatory glimpse of the end of the tribulation from the standpoint of the sealing of the 144,000.
19. The second vision of chapter seven is proleptic.
20. A millennial setting is inappropriate as the multitude is seen in heaven and not on earth.
21. This multitude is seen as serving God in heaven and not on earth (cf. v.15).
22. Also, the presence of the elders and the living beings (cf. 7:11) verifies that the scene is in the heavenly throne room introduced earlier in chapters four and five.
23. Another view sees this multitude from the vantage point of the middle of the tribulation.
24. In that case their numbers is not yet complete, and none of them would be converts of the 144,000.
25. Or put another way, their numbers would be added to over the course of the last three and one half years.
26. This perspective depends upon the correct analysis of verse 14 and the participle “are coming out.”
27. This view places the fulfillment of this vision between the sixth and seventh seals just before the midpoint of the tribulation.
28. Clearly, this is where the fulfillment of the vision of the sealing of the 144,000 occurs.
29. If the second vision is fulfilled at the same time as the first vision, then it cannot be maintained that this multitude is at least in part the fruit of the evangelization of the 144,000.
30. It seems best to see the fulfillment of the second vision as occurring very close to the Second Advent proper.
31. The clause “which no one could count” should not be taken to imply that someone tried to count this multitude.
32. No such attempt was made, but if it had been, it would have surely failed.
33. The reason is, that believers dying in the tribulation die in a widespread area and in diverse ways.
34. No one would care to do so and no one would have the ability to do so if they wanted to.
35. Only God knows those who are His, and only God is able to keep tabs on His children.
36. In the end, they all will be accounted for as God is omniscience and omnipresent.
37. The number of tribulational casualties among the saved is finite and is known by God alone.
38. The universality of the source of this multitude is stressed by the fourfold division from every nation and [all] tribes and peoples and tongues.
39. A similar expression has already been noted at 5:9, and others will be seen at 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15.
40. The partitive *ek* (“from”) means that only some from these same classifications will be represented.
41. In chapter 11: 9-10, others from these same groups will celebrate over the death of God’s two witnesses.
42. John sees the multitude “standing before the throne and before the Lamb.”
43. This is the same throne that is the center of attention beginning with chapter four.
44. Such a placement vividly portrays the multitude as both victorious and virtuous.

45. These believers are seen existing under semi-ultimate sanctification, since they are awaiting final resurrection in heaven (cf. 20:4).
46. John's description is not explicit as to where as to where the redeemed company stands in relation to the others.
47. The apparel of the persons in the crowd is reflective of their status.
48. In John's day white robes were emblematic of victory celebrations.
49. Here they indicate status based on imputed righteousness though the work or blood of Christ (cf. v.14).
50. The palms carried in their hands confirm the symbolism of victory.
51. According to oriental thought, a palm was a perfect tree because it embodied everything a tree should have.
52. Palm branches were regarded as appropriate at any season of joy or triumph, such as the triumphal entry of Christ (Jn. 12:13).
53. They were prominent at the Feast of Tabernacles, being used to construct the shelters on the housetops required for that occasion.
54. Another allusion to the "tabernacles" used at this feast may be latent in "will [be a] tabernacle over them" later in this vision (v. 15).
55. The Greeks and Romans employed palm branches with the same symbolism.
56. This multitude is exuberant in celebration of the impending victory associated with Christ's advent.

Their Song (v.10)

VERSE 10 and they cry out with a loud voice, saying (καὶ κράζουσιν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ λέγοντες [*conj kai + pres.act.ind.3p. krazo cry out + noun instr.f.s. phone voice + adj.instr.f.s. megas great + pres.act.part.nom.m.p. lego say*]), **"Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb** [Ἡ σωτηρία τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ καὶ τῷ ἀρνίῳ [*art.w/noun nom.f.s. soteria salvation + art.w/noun dat.m.s. theos God + pro.gen.p. ego "our" + art.w/pres.dep.part.loc.m.s. kathemai sit + prep epi upon + art.w/noun loc.m.s. thronos throne + conj kai + art.w/noun dat.nt.s. arnion lamb*])."

ANALYSIS: VERSE 10

1. Their celebratory song points to the one responsible for their victory.
2. The emphasis of the verb form "they cry out" is that they "keep on crying out."
3. They never stop.
4. Nor are their voices subdued.
5. They do it "with a loud voice."
6. The language here reflects the degree of the gratitude of the crowd and a determination to give credit where credit is due.
7. They are completely uninhibited in their vocal celebration.
8. "Salvation" sounds the chief aspect of this song (cf. 12:10; 19:1).
9. Salvation is not of their own doing, but that of God and the Lamb.
10. The first connotation of the term is deliverance from the greatest peril of all facing humanity, and that is spiritual death.

11. They are all there because they called on the name of the Lord in a time of maximum distress and danger.
12. This sense of the terms best describes the use of the term in 12:10 and 19:1.
13. The second connotation to be recognized in the use of this noun is that of victory (or deliverance) from the perils they recently faced in the cosmos.
14. Another look at 12:10 and 19:1 shows this meaning to be appropriate there as well.
15. In 12:10 it is victory over the dragon, and in 19:1 victory over prophetic Babylon and the persecutors of the saints.
16. The word frequently carries the meaning of “victory” in classical Greek and in the LXX.
17. Because these souls are coming out of great tribulation (v.14), triumph over enemies is certainly a cause for celebration.
18. Doctrinally, spiritual deliverance over spiritual death is the ground for their being blessed to be in heaven, as is true with all saints of all eras, but the more restricted sense of the noun is in keeping with the context of the vision and book as a whole.
19. Both connotations of the noun *soteria* are equally apropos.
20. The Feast of Tabernacles/Booths (Lev. 23:34ff.) has been proposed as a background for this celebration.
21. The reference to God’s being a tabernacle over His people in verse 15 is an important indication in this connection.
22. This reference to salvation recalls the hosanna (“save now”) uttered during the Feast of Tabernacles (2 Macc. 10:6-7).
23. Another part of the feast was the prominence of water (cf. v. 17 with Jn. 7:37-39; cf. v. 2).
24. Since this multitude is primarily Gentile in makeup, if not exclusively, this feast is the one the nations are required to send representatives to the millennial age (Zech. 14:16-19).
25. Then, of course, there were the palm branches previously mentioned.
26. The multitude has now entered their heavenly or Ph 3 rest, another symbolic feature of tabernacles celebration (cf. Deut. 16:13-15).
27. The words “to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb” ascribe the victory to God and to the Lamb.
28. “Our God” show that God belongs to the redeemed just as He does to the Lamb (cf. Jn. 20:17; Rev. 3:12).
29. The multitude of tribulation saints acknowledges this fact on this grand occasion of ongoing celebrations in the third heaven.