

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 ἀγγέλοις 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 tribulation 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.