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The Mission
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Revelation 7

So tonight we're in Revelation Chapter 7, which means we were in Revelation chapter 6 last week. And there we saw with John the first six seals being opened. The very first seal was ridden of course by the anti-christ who was trying to mimic the Lord Jesus, and he brought with him a false peace to the world.

And then the red horse appeared as the second seal was opened and he brought with him war and blood shed. And then the third horseman, the black horse brought famine and economic hardship; and then the fourth horseman, the pale colored horse brought death and destruction to the world, when over 1/4 of the world's population will be killed or die.

And then when the fifth seal is opened, we see the martyrs who have been killed up until this point and time and they're in heaven under the heavenly altar and they're crying out, asking when justice will come for the blood that they have shed.

And then the sixth seal is opened and all hell it seems breaks loose, and there are massive earthquakes that rearrange the entire landscape of the earth and great hailstones and or meteor showers that plummet the earth and no matter the social status of those here on the earth at that time, they will be terrified as these events unfold. And they will wish they were dead and even beg to die because of their great fear.

And so that brings us to chapter 7, which is more or less an interlude if you will, between the final events of the sixth seal and the opening and beginning events of the seventh seal. And here in this chapter we're going to be introduced to two groups of people. We're going to learn about the 144,000 servants of God, who are somehow sealed on their foreheads.

And then the second group of people we're going to see and learn about are described in verses 9-17, and they're described as a "great multitude."

And so if someone would like to read for us the entire chapter and then I'll go back and try and explain it to you verse by verse best I can.

Revelation 7:1, 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."

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.

9 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!”

11 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.”

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?”

14 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.

15 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.”

Okay, so let's go back to verse 1.

7:1, 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.

John says, “After these things”. After what things?

After what he has just witnessed with the opening of the first six seals in chapter 6. The coming of the antichrist, the false peace, war and bloodshed, the famine and economic hardship and all the cataclysmic events that came at the end of the opening of that last seal.

After these things, he saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth. And so here we have proof that the earth is not round after all but a square or rectangle, right?

No, this just means that they had all points north, south, east and west covered.

Now, all throughout the Bible, angels are used by God to execute judgment on the earth. And that waiting to do that here. But for the time being, they're actually holding back the judgement of God, at least for a time.

And then in verse 2

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.”

And so God sends an angel to notify the other angels, to keep holding back these four winds until further notice, and that notice will only come after all the servants of God described in the next verse are sealed.

In other words, upon their foreheads they're going to receive the seal of God.

Now, keep in mind, that everything God does, Satan tries to imitate. And this seal on the forehead of God's chosen people is no exception.

Satan's going to have his own version of a seal to identify his followers and we read about that in:

Revelation 13:16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads,

17 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.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.

So who are these servants of God who will be sealed?

Well, look at verse 4.

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:

So these are the first fruits of Israel. They're all Jewish believers and evangelists who have been chosen and sealed by God to proclaim the gospel in the last days.

So these are 144,000 Jews who have been especially chosen by God to preach the gospel; 144,000; twelve thousand from each tribe of Israel.

And then we're given the list of the tribes, which by the way, are different from any other list we have from the Old Testament. And we have nineteen of them.

There are at least nineteen different ways, the twelve tribes of Israel were listed in the Old Testament.

Sometimes they were listed by their birth order, sometimes in the order in which Jacob blessed them, sometimes by the order of encampment, by the order of a census, by the order of blessing and cursing, once by the order of Moses, the order of princes, the order of inheritance, and several others I won't bother to mention.

But again, none of them match up with this list.

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.

Now, a few things about this list. Reuben was actually the first born, and should have been listed first, and would have been listed first, only he forfeited his birthright as punishment for sexual misconduct with his father's concubine.

And then the tribe of Dan is omitted altogether and replaced with the tribe of Levi, because the tribe of Dan was guilty of idolatry. Now, all of Israel was guilty of idolatry, but the tribe of Dan was blatantly worse than any of the other tribes.

Now, Ephraim was close second for committing basically the same sin and so they too were disqualified for this list at least, and his brother Manasseh was included, because he was a faithful son of Joseph.

And so we see here that God's not through with Israel. Even though they as a nation rejected Jesus when He came the first time, and they as a nation have been rejecting Him ever since; God's still not through with Israel.

And just like Paul tells us Romans chapters 9-11, though Israel failed in its mission to be a witness in the Old Testament, and has failed so far in the New Testament to be a witness, that won't be the case forever.

During the final days of the Great Tribulation period, there's going to come an evangelistic force like the world's never seen before. And it's going

to come by way of these 144,000 Jews, who will be hand chosen by God to spread the gospel.

And the result of that evangelistic movement will be the salvation of the entire nation of Israel; along with many, many more Gentiles to go along with them.

And then in verse 9, we have that statement again.

After these things!

After what things? After this first vision in chapter 7; there's another vision to follow.

9 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!"

Now, there have been some really great responses to the gospel down through history. The birth of the church on the Day of Pentecost I guess was the first one. And then there was the Reformation in Europe during the 16th Century. And then the Great Awakening in America in the 18th Century! And during every one of these times, thousands upon thousands came to Christ.

But there's coming a time in the future when every one of these responses will pale in comparison. In just a few short years, vast multitudes of people are going to come to Christ. During the worst time the world has ever known, God is going to get glory for Himself and in spite of Satan's last ditched efforts to steal, kill and destroy, many, many souls are going to be saved.

And this great multitude which could not be numbered, from all nations, tribes and peoples speaking every language imaginable, is what John sees before the throne and before the Lamb of God. And they're in white robes and they're holding palm branches.

Palm branches in the scripture are associated with celebration and deliverance joy. Remember the crowd that welcomed Jesus when He came riding that donkey into Jerusalem, they were waving palm branches and shouting Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

And so these are the martyred saints from the tribulation, the same ones John saw earlier in chapter standing before the throne of God and before the Lamb, but here they're not praying for vengeance, because vengeance has already begun. Here they're just praising God and Jesus.

And they're not alone. Verse 11 says,

11 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."

John had saw the angels earlier in chapter 5 as well and they too were uncountable. He said there were thousands of thousands!

And then he saw the elders who are the 24 elders who he saw earlier who represent the Raptured church; along with the four living creatures who are the cherubim, which are exalted angels. And they're all on their faces before God and the Lamb and they're praising and thanking God for what He's doing and for who He is.

And then in verse 13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?”

14 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.

The elder, a representative of the church, asks John a question that he already knows the answer to. And so he wasn't really searching for an answer, he was really conveying information. He was making sure John and us knew who the people were in the white robes. He wanted to make sure we knew they were the ones who had been martyred during the tribulation, which means they had died in order to execute faith in Christ.

And if you've ever wondered or asked the question; Will people be saved during the tribulation period, then here's your answer.

But there will be even more who won't be saved, because even in the midst of all these judgements on the earth, they will continue to reject the Lord Jesus and even go as far as to curse God.

Revelation 9:20 says, But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. 21 And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

And then again in

Revelation 16:9, It says and men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

Paul wrote about those who would perish because they refused to accept the love of God.

2 Thessalonians 2:10, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

And so the angel explains to John and to us who these folks in the white robes are. And you might think, that should be obvious to the Apostle John, but remember, he didn't see a lot people getting saved during his ministry. And he had also been taught that few would be saved. And so when he saw this great multitude of people, he may have wondered who they were. And by what he said, it sounds like he did wonder! He said, **“Sir, you know”**

And then the elder told him.

“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.

And then he says in verse 15,

15 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.”

What a great promise and though it's directed toward the tribulation saints here in this passage of scripture, it's promise for all of us who place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

That one day, when we get to heaven, there won't be anymore pain, or sorrow, or suffering and because there won't be any of those things, there won't be any tears! At least no tears of sadness! Amen!