

Interlude Of The Redeemed

Revelation 7 Notes

The Sealing Of The 144,000 (vss. 1-8)

- Chapter 7 comes as a parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seals -- a stylistic feature repeated in the trumpet sequence (10:1-11:13) but not with the bowls (cf. 16:12-21). It is not intended to take the reader back to a time before the Four Horsemen are released in order to parallel the trumpets with the seals. Chapter 7 also serves as a dramatic interlude. It delays for a brief moment the disclosure of that which is to take place when the seventh and final seal is removed from the scroll of destiny.
- There seems to be no question but that the four angels are a restraining of those destructive forces which bring judgment upon mankind. "After this" indicates that the revelation of the sixth seal is complete. The judgment is restrained for a reason known only to God.
- "The four corners of the earth" is an accommodative term used in the Bible to designate the whole surface of the earth (cf. Isaiah 11:12; 24:16; Matthew 24:31). The earth, sea and tree symbolizes God's complete control over and use of His creation. Nothing can deter the carrying out of His purpose.
- The "east" suggests that this angel brings a message of cheer and encouragement. God sends His angel to preserve and give assurance to His saints. When God left Jerusalem, giving the city up to destruction, He departed to the east of the city (Ezekiel 11:23; 43:2). This angel in John's vision was coming with God's seal in his hand to act on His behalf in sealing those that are His.
- Whatever the hurt was, whether the judgment of the sixth seal or some other, it was not to fall until the servants of God were sealed. Nothing can happen to thwart God's purpose. God sees, knows and controls all the forces of the universe. Those who are sealed are preserved against destruction but are not spared from persecution.
- The number does not designate a literal numerical quantity, but a symbolic figure. The figure probably represents the total number of saints on earth at any given time. These are distinguished from the members of the victorious church in heaven before the throne. Many take this to be the Jews, thus proving that the book was written prior to A.D. 70, but the language of the vision is far more inclusive than the early date allows.

- No discernible reason is disclosed for the arrangement of names as they appear in this list. It is interesting to note that Ephraim and Dan are not listed, though Manasseh and Joseph are. A possible explanation is that through Jeroboam I, a descendant (1 Kings 11:26), Ephraim led Israel into idolatry (1 Kings 12:25-33) and Dan left his inheritance and moved north to Laish (later called Dan) where he settled and practiced idolatry (Judges 18). Levi, who had no land inheritance, appears among the twelve, although his name does not appear in some of the Old Testament lists.

The Song Of Victory (vss. 9-17)

- In this section, John introduces this second phase of the vision as he introduced the first (vs. 1). This was not a new vision, but the counterpart of vss. 1-8. This "great multitude" shows that only He knows those who are His and those who continue faithful until death. Those on earth who are sealed to God are symbolically numbered as a hundred and forty-four thousand, and the ones who are finally victorious are symbolically unnumbered as a great multitude which no man can number.
- The shout of salvation is a shout of praise and gratitude to God and the Lamb for the salvation provided; the multitude acknowledges both to be the source of salvation. This salvation, which began with redemption through His blood, and continued by divine help through the persecutions and trials to the present moment of triumph.
- The angel's "Amen" voiced their approval and endorsement of the praise offered by the great multitude (vs. 10). As in the throne scene (5:12) where the angels had offered their sevenfold ascription of praise to the Lamb, so here they offer a sevenfold attribution of worship and praise to God. The angel's praise to God does not exclude the Lamb, for He was included in their "Amen" to the praise offered to Him by the multitude.
- It seems appropriate that an elder, one who represents the redeemed, would ask and answer the question; it was also an elder who had come to John's aid earlier (5:5). This question was not a rhetorical one, it was asked that it might be answered.
- "Thou knowest" is both a confession of John's ignorance and a request for information. The elder's reply indicates the multitude as "they that come out of the great tribulation." The verb tense here indicates a continuous coming, not a past or completed coming as implied by the King James translation, "they which came" out of the tribulation.
- The "great tribulation" took place in the Roman period through which the saints contemporary with John were passing, beginning with

Nero's persecution (A.D. 64) and continuing until the edict of Constantine (A.D. 313). Those saints are now beyond this life, before the throne of God, having gained the victory. The great persecution of this passage was thus confined to the Roman period covering 250 years of Roman-Christian conflict. This view is in harmony with the theme of the book.

- The Christian's redemption begins and ends "in the blood of the Lamb." If the saint must make a choice between life in Christ and death for the faith, he must love not his life "even unto death" (12:11). "Have washed" is active; the saints were not passive. In the first phase of the vision (vss. 1-8) the saints were being sealed for protection; in this second phase they are coming out of the conflict victorious.
- The blessings spoken of in vs. 16 are approached negatively, but positive blessings follow in vs. 17. This picture is drawn for the most part from Isaiah's description of the exiles returning from Babylon (Isaiah 49:10). The saints who have passed through the great tribulation in which they suffered persecution, discrimination and the various trials of the fourth seal are now beyond all these. These torments are all forgotten in the joy of victory.
- The tears which God wipes away are not the tears of grief over a wasted life. Rather, like the tears of a child brought suddenly from sorrow to delight they linger on the faces of the redeemed.
- Two metaphors are here combined: the Lamb who purchased and redeemed the saints by the blood of His sacrifice is also the Shepherd who leads them (cf. Psalm 23:1; Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:23). Even when His sheep have fulfilled their mission on earth, the Shepherd who led them here shall continue to lead and guide them. As Jesus has provided the water of life here (John 4:10), so there He provides water for eternal life (cf. Psalm 126:5).