

## SAINTS IN THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Revelation 7:1-17

[Bible Truth Web Site by Cooper Abrams](#)

Chapter Seven does not advance the chronological narrative and is a parenthetical section that denotes a pause in narrative of the events of the seven year Tribulation on earth. John records that at this point in the Tribulation that a 144,000 Jews are saved and sealed. Only six seals of the seven seals have been opened. The prophecy continues Chapter eight with the opening of the seventh Seal. There are two groups of saints mentioned in Chapter seven. The first group is the 144,000 (Rev. 7:4) and the second group described as "great multitude" of martyred dead. (Rev. 7:9)

The question is often asked will anyone be saved in the Great Tribulation. The answer is a resounding "Yes!" This great multitude are saved people from ". . . all nations, and kindreds, and the people, and tongues" which would include every nation and people on earth. Verse 14, says, ". . . *These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*" Two things are clear. First, these are saved people having, "*washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*" Second they said to have come ". . . *out of great tribulation*" meaning they were saved during the seven-year Great Tribulation. Christians saved since Pentecost in the Church Age have been raptured and are in heaven with the Lord awaiting His Second Coming. The saints of Revelation 7 are not Church Age saints.

In Matthew 24 Jesus is describing the events of the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21) and in verse 14 says, "*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*" Although all believers on earth are removed at the Rapture, the Bible is still available to those left on earth and the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ still valid. Most men on earth were left behind because they were not saved. Some probably read or heard Christians talking about Christ's coming and the Rapture of Christians before the Tribulation and therefore had some knowledge of biblical prophecy. Millions have read Hal Lindsey's book, "The Late Great Planet Earth" which graphically details the Rapture and the events leading to the Second Coming of Christ. The books and videos of the "Left Behind" series have also been seen by millions in our day and emphasized the coming event of the rapture. Although, millions have learned what the Bible says is coming, most have not believed and received Christ as their Savior. When the Rapture takes place many of those left behind on earth could easily understand the disappearance of Christians all over the world is what the Bible says will happen. Many of these could possibly be saved.

If God, through the Holy Spirit was not restricting Satan's Note the chronology of the events of Chapter Seven. In Verse 1, John says, "*after these things I saw,*" meaning after the events of Chapter Six, which is the opening of six of the seven seals. After the six seals are opened, the 144,000 Jews are saved and sealed. In ancient history the use of seals gave authority and purpose to the thing on which the seal was applied. It showed that the power and authority of the owner of the seal was transferred to the document, object or in the case the Jew's that God

sealed. They went forth as belonging to God, in His power and with His message. Although Chapter seven does not say why they were sealed the normal use of seals shows that it was for some special service during the Tribulation. In Chapter 14:1-4, they are mentioned again and this time they appear in heaven, probably because their work for Christ on earth is done. Many believe the work the Lord has for the 144,000 will be preaching the Gospel during the Tribulation which will result in millions being saved.

The New Testament predicts the Rapture as a worldwide event. Surely scientists and government officials will struggle to explain it in different ways, but the fact will remain that New Testament accurately predicted this event. The modern fascination with UFOs suggests that alien abduction will probably be offered as the cause of the disappearance of the Church Age saints. The panic could cause a worldwide crisis which would play into the hands of the Antichrist in decreeing special government powers to meet the supposed threat. It may be that the Rapture is the event that triggers the opening of the Jews eyes to the fact that Jesus was truly the Messiah and the 144,000 are the first to believe and God uses them to evangelize the world.

The sealing of these twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel assures them of God protection. The sealing establishes that they belong to God and He is protecting them so they can carry out His special plan for them. The seal symbolizes the safety and deliverance from judgment and protection from the forces of Satan. The Antichrist will not be allowed to harm this group of redeemed saints of God until they have completed their mission.

In Revelation 14:1-5, the 144,000 are seen as in heaven with the Lord. Revelation 13:7 explains how they are killed and why they are then in heaven. Speaking of the Antichrist, God says, *"And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations."* It appears that by the time of the events of Chapter 14, the Gospel has been preached to all the peoples and nations of earth and the evangelizing work of the 144,000 has been completed and God allows them to die a martyr's death.

The first six seal judgments will bring great distress and fear to men on earth and history records that men have always turned to God in difficult times. God's judgment during the Tribulation is not only a judgment of the wicked that will be destroyed, but is a call for men believe and receive salvation. Every example of judgment in the Bible, with the exception of the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20:15-18, was to turn men from their sin and back to God. Through all the Old Testament that is clearly in view and most times Israel returned to God for a time after His judgment.

Another question that is frequently asked is, "Will people alive today who have heard the Gospel and not accepted Christ be saved in the Tribulation?" To answer the question we must look at what the New Testament says. In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul is talking about the *"coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"* which is the Second Coming of Christ. Paul talks about the events leading to the Second Coming. He says, the return of Christ is "imminent" ("at hand" verse 2) and that no one should be deceived, that the day should not come least there be a "falling away" first, meaning wide spread apostasy. He further says that the *"man of sin, the son of perdition"* will be revealed. This is a name for the Antichrist. So the context of this chapter in Thessalonians is clearly the Tribulation and the Second Coming.

Note that what God says in 2 Thessalonians 10-12:

*"And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:10-12).*

This passage is addressing the question of those who have willingly, with a full understanding of the Gospel, rejected Christ before the Tribulation. The verse says they will not be saved. The reality is that these people have hardened their heart toward the Gospel and rejected the Lord's truth. Jesus explains why men are condemned saying, *"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."* (John 3:19-21) These people loved their sin and in rejecting the reproof of the Holy Spirit, in the Tribulation they will continue to reject Christ. The love of sin is more important to them than the love of their Creator.

Theologically speaking it is possible for them to repent and be saved if they accept Christ, but God says He will *"send a strong delusion that they should believe a lie."* The verse does not say that those who simply heard of Jesus Christ or heard the Gospel will not be saved. It says these who will not be saved refused to believe. This is a key point in understanding the situation. The reason they accept the delusion is because their hearts are cold to God's truth. For example, today millions claim to be Christians, yet do not obey Christ or show forth any fruit of their salvation. Even today when many hear the truth, they refuse to believe God's word and follow their false teachers. Many so called Christian churches deny and pervert the word of God teaching a false Gospel. The teachings, beliefs and practices are in direct opposition of God's truth, yet they unashamedly proclaim they worship Almighty God. They believe in a works and ritual based salvation. In truth God's word shows them to be false religions masquerading as Christians. Jesus speaks us such people and denounces them saying, *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* (Matthew 7:21-23) It is a work of iniquity to impersonate a child of God all the while serving Satan.

The most ostracized people today in "Christian" circles are those who uncompromising believe and teach the Word of God. They are looked upon with scorn by other so called "Christians" because of their strict aberrance to the teachings of Christ. Jesus said to the multitudes who were following Him, yet who did not know God, *"Why did you call me Lord, Lord and do not the things I say"* (Luke 6:46). Clearly many follow Christ with only a head knowledge and yet have never repented of their sins and savingly believed on Him.

There will be a great multitude of people saved during the Tribulation as Revelation 7:14 states. Initially a 144,000 Jews will be saved and sealed. Although the Jews today are still not recognizing Jesus as their Messiah, they are not in their hearts rejecting Him. Most Jews have

never heard a clear presentation of the Gospel. Nationally they do not accept Jesus as the Christ; probably few have consciously rejected Him. When these Jews see and hear the truth many will respond in faith and accept Jesus as their Lord and Messiah.

Even in spite of the missionary work of those who truly love God and preach his Word today, most of the world has never heard a clear and truthful presentation of the Gospel. Currently it is estimated that there are only 35,000 missionaries in the world who are preaching the true Gospel. Millions even in the United States have never heard a clear presentation of the Gospel. Many of these people have probably not consciously rejected Christ even though they may have heard of Him. These people like the Jews, when they hear God's truth, will believe and be saved.

Because of the strong delusion of the false prophets and the one world religion many will be deceived. John says, "*And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many . . . For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*" (Matthew 24:11, 24) Look how many millions today are being deceived by the false preachers, cults and churches today. According to the Bible it will be worse during the Tribulation.

Some have questioned whether people could be saved if the Holy Spirit is "taken out of the way" as 2 Thessalonians 2:7 states. This verse is saying the Holy Spirit who is now limiting the power and work of Satan will stop His restraining ministry. It does not say He will be removed. No man can be saved a part from the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.*" (John 6:44) The fact that there are millions saved during the Tribulation clearly shows the Holy Spirit is working during this time. In this present age the power of Satan is limited by God. He has great power, but all he does is within the limits set by God. Satan when unrestrained in the middle of the Tribulation will bring sudden destruction power he would be destroying the world today.

### **THE 144,000 SEALED. Revelation 7:1-8**

God reveals in Chapter seven other events that are happening at the same time as the Seal judgments are preceding. In Revelation 6:17 the chronology of the events is interrupted and begins again at Revelation 8:1.

Note that Revelation 6:17 ends the Chapter with the question "*Who shall be able to stand?*" Unquestionably Chapter seven answers this question. The answer is that no one can flee, whether they are kings, great men, rich men, chief captains, mighty men, bondsmen, and free. (Rev. 6:15) Habakkuk 3:2, says, "*O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known, in wrath remember mercy.*" Clearly this chapter is revealing that a "great multitude" will be saved and God's mercy is evident in the Tribulation as well as His wrath in judgment.

It appears there is now a lull in the judgments of God. The winds of judgments are being held by the four angels (Rev. 7:1). When a man is saved God doesn't change the world to make it easier for him, but He does equip the saints to persevere. In the Great Flood, God's mercy was shown to Noah in the ark. At Calvary the earth was shaken and God could have closed the

books and ended the matter, but He showed mercy.

In Revelation 7:1, the "Four corners of the earth" are North, South, East and West. (See Isa. 11:12, Zech. 2:6, Jer. 49:36, Matt. 24:31, Dan. 7:2, 8:8, 11:4) The wind is quiet over all the earth. The picture is this; an angel from the East comes and tells the four angels who are carrying out the judgments, to stop the destruction, "*Hurt not earth or sea, nor trees until we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads*"(Rev. 7:23). Revelation 14:1 also reveals that the seal "*written in their foreheads*" (Rev. 7:3) is the name of God the Father.

In Matthew 24:31, Jesus said, "*And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds and from one end of heaven to the other.*" The angel has the "seal" of God, but this is not a seal judgment, but the "seal of the living God." It is the seal God places on believers that identifies them as His. 2 Timothy 2:19, says, "*Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*" As stated earlier, Revelation 13:7 states that the Antichrist was given power to make war against the saints and to overcome them. Contextually, the 144,000 are next seen in heaven and it seems logical to assume that although God had initially protected them from being killed, they have completed their work and now He allows them to be killed.

Many believe that these Jews will be 144,000 evangelists who will preach the Gospel all over the earth. Jesus stated in Matthew 24:14 "*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*" The "Good News" or Gospel mentioned here is the Gospel of the Kingdom which refers to the coming Millennial reign of Christ. It is a two part Gospel which is the same as preached today, but with the addition of the promise of the coming kingdom that Jesus will set up on earth after the second coming. There is no specific verse that states that the 144,000 will be evangelists, but because they are Jews and God is once again working to save Israel, this must be their task. Revelation 7:3 states that they are the servants of the Lord, therefore as servants they certainly would have a purpose and role to fulfill. There will be a great multitude of people saved during the Tribulation and it is surmised that many of them will hear the Gospel of the Kingdom from these sealed Jews. (See Rev. 7:9-14)

Today several false cults such as the Jehovah's witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists teach that they are a part of the 144,000. This cannot be true because God plainly states that these are Jews, twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. There are no Gentiles in the 144,000. Dan is not mentioned and Manasseh is substituted. Ephraim is also not mentioned. In Judges 18:30, the tribe of Dan went into idolatry and God replaced them Manasseh. God promised to blot out the idolater. (Deut. 29:18-21) Some have speculated that the Antichrist may come from the tribe of Dan. In Ezekiel 48, all the former tribes are listed in millennial temple. So they probably here lose their place to preach the gospel and be a witness in the Tribulation. They have lost their witness, but not God's mercy.

Some see Genesis 49:17 and Jeremiah 8:16 as showing the Antichrist will come from the tribe of Dan:

*"Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward."* (Genesis 49:17)

*"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 are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein." (Jeremiah 8:16)*

Daniel states the Antichrist will come to power by force and that he will rule over a ten nation European confederacy. (See Daniel 7:8, 8:9) It would seem highly unlikely that a Jew could rise to such power in Europe when one understands the historical anti-Semitic bias of the Europeans. Further he is prefigured as the "king of Babylon" in Isaiah 14:4 which also preclude his being an Israeli. The empire he sets up is the "Revived Roman Empire" which is more evidence of Antichrist's European origin.

Revelation 14:4 says the 144,000 are all virgin men who were not "defiled" with women and were the first who were saved at the beginning of the Tribulation. These men in whose "mouth was found no guile" because of their being totally devoted to the Lord remained unmarried. The word "guile" means they were not deceitful and spoke the truth.

## **THE GREAT MULTITUDE SAVED OUT OF ALL THE NATIONS OF EARTH. Revelation 7:9-17**

*"John sees a great multitude ". . . a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;" (Rev. 7:9) These saints of God are praising the Lord and the angels in this heavenly scene with the elders, the four beasts who fall before the Lord on their faces and worship Him. These together honor the Lord saying "Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." (Revelation 7:12)*

Verse 13 records that one of the elders asks John who are these arrayed in white robes and where did they come from. It is imperative one understands what is the question asked and what is given as the answer. The answer establishes their identity. One must understand that this great multitude of saints are seen as being in heaven serving the Lord before the throne.

The elder then identifies them as Revelation 7:14 states as those who come out of the great tribulation. Note the words "great tribulation" is not capitalized. *". . . These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."* The elder answers the question and plainly states they are those who come out of the great tribulation that has occurred up to this point in the chronology of the seven years. Clearly, these are the saints slain and seen in heaven at Revelation 6:9-11 records at the opening of the Fifth Seal.

*"And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." (Revelation 6:10-11)*

It must be understood that Revelation 7 is a parenthetical section added within the chronology of the Book of Revelation. This Chapter reveals the sealing of the 144,000 and explains further the details of what John saw in Chapter 6 of the saints who have been martyred up to this point in the Tribulation and who are in heaven at the throne of God. Chapter 7 does not move the timing of the events of this period forward, but explain what will be going on behind the scenes.

As stated earlier, these are not believers of the present church age, but those who are saved and martyred since the beginning of the Tribulation and before the Fifth Seal. They cannot represent Church Age saints because all saints of the present age, have not been martyred. Revelation 7:14, specifically states these saints have been came out of great tribulation. All believers in the Church Age have not had to endure "great tribulation." They are in heaven, therefore these surely have died in the great tribulation they have endured.

When John penned this Book there were no Chapter or verse division. It at first may appear that these are two different groups or times. But Chapter 7 is an extension of Chapter 6. This group is made up from many ethnic and geographical areas of the earth. They have "palms" in their hand, which may refer to the Feast of the Tabernacles when Israel rejoiced in the blessings of God. (Lev. 23:40-43) It more probably parallels Jesus' Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem when the Lord presented Himself as Israel's Messiah. (See John 12:13)

Note that these people are saved and their sins washed white in the blood of the Lamb as are all who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ. Revelation 7:16 indicates they had been thirsty and hungry while on earth, but were no longer being in heaven. This gives further indication that these lived in the first part of the Tribulation as there will be a famine as Revelation 6:6-8 explains. The reference to relief from the heat of the sun may refer to the sun's powerful rays causing great distress on earth and possibly partly causing the famine. Revelation 7:17 makes it very clear, as terrible as the Tribulation had been, it was now over for them and these saints now rested for all eternity in the presence of God. And He ". . . shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Think about those who still remain on earth. Most men, still alive on earth in these terrible times, will be rejecting Christ. It is my opinion that one can surmise from this passage that most people who are saved come to Christ in the first half of the Tribulation. Those remaining, in spite of all that God has done, will be rejecting Him. They could be saved if they would believe, but because of their sin and rebellion they suffer under the judgment and condemnation of their sin. (See John 3:19)

It is explained "*Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.*" (Rev. 7:15) He makes it plain that the blessings they will receive are related to the coming Millennial reign of Christ which follows the Tribulation. In the Millennial temple, these Tribulation saints with Church Age saints will serve Christ continually both day and night. This and other passages of Scripture indicate that the saints of God will not be idle in the Kingdom of God, but will have specific duties and be used in carrying out the Kingdom. Paul said that Christians would judge angels. (1 Corinthians 6:3)

Because this event follows the calling of the 144,000, these are probably those won to the Lord by these Jewish evangelists and those who were saved after witnessing the rapture. Further, in verse 14, this is confirmed when John asks who are these rejoicing saints and is told they are the ones who came out of great tribulation. The grammatical structure of this phrase shows that this great multitude of saints declare that salvation for them has been accomplished. Their faith in the promises of God of salvation has borne its fruit and they are now safe in heaven with the Lord.”

In Revelation 7:11, there is another reference to the twenty four elders. They too join in the rejoicing with all the hosts of heaven at the salvation of this great number of people. Truly, in the heart of every true child of God is the desire and burden to see people saved, by believing in Jesus Christ.

Although the Bible reveals to us God’s great salvation we only know it by faith as a future promised hope. However, there will come a time when every believer will experience the full blessings of salvation. The natural response will be to fall down in gratitude to the Lord and worship Him for His mercy and grace to the sinners we were.

#### JOHN IS TOLD THE IDENTITY OF THESE SAINTS OF GOD? Revelation 7:13

In verse 13 one of the elders states a question on John’s mind that is not verbally stated. The elder asks “. . . *What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?*” John replies that the elder clearly knows the answer. The elder explains these are believers saved during the preceding events of the Tribulation. “*And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*” (Revelation 7:14) Although some would try to see these as Church Age saints the elder’s reply settles the question. These are not Church Age saints, but saints martyred in the Great Tribulation. If these are Church Age saints there is a problem with their identity because all Christians have not come out of great tribulation. Further, he says they are saved in the same way that all men are saved and that is by having their sins washed in the blood of the Lamb. In the Old Testament and in the New Testament men are saved by faith in the redemptive act of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Before the Jesus came believers believed the promises of God and looked forward to the salvation that the Messiah would accomplish. (See Isa. 53) Church Age saints and these Tribulation saint look back toward the cross.

#### THE HEAVENLY SCENE. Revelation 7:15

These Tribulation saints are now in heaven standing in the presence of the Lord. They see their Redeemer face to face and have full access to Him day and night. Further they are said to be personally serving the Lord and He is among them at all times. God’s plans for His children in heaven are not revealed, but it is enough to know that believers are part of His plans and He will use us to carry out His purposes. Heaven will not be a time of idleness for the saved, but a place of industrious service to the Lord.

#### THE CONTINUING MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST TO HIS SHEEP. Revelation 7:16-17

Jesus proclaimed that He was the good shepherd tending and protecting His sheep. “*I am*



*the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”* (John 10:11) The writer of Hebrews boldly proclaims this shepherding ministry of the Lord Jesus. *“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”* (Hebrews 13:20-21)

Christ ministry to His children will continue throughout eternity. Here in these closing statements of Chapter 7 God reveals the details of His caring for His sheep.

*“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”* (Revelation 7:16-17)

Paul expressed the heart’s expectation of every true child of God saying, *“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”* (Romans 8:23) What a glorious day it will be when the curse of sin is removed forever and the pain and suffering of this mortal life will end. Words fail to even come close to revealing this great and wonderful state that God’s own will experience for eternity. Paul who saw a glimpse of heaven stated, *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* (Romans 8:18)