

Prayer:

The Bible is a prophetic book – the only truly prophetic book in the world. When it was originally written, about 28% of it was prophetic. There are about 1000 prophecies in the Bible, and about 500 of them have already been fulfilled.

They have ALL been fulfilled literally. All those prophecies related to Christ's first coming have been fulfilled literally, and so likewise we believe that all those prophecies related to His Second Coming will also be fulfilled literally. If consistency means anything, it means they will be fulfilled literally. And God is very consistent!

Back in the OT, God chose Israel to be His special witness nation. In Daniel 9:24-27, God said there would be 70 units of 7 years (called 70 weeks – that is weeks of years and not weeks of days) for a total of 490 years of special dealings with Israel, and then the kingdom would come.

If you do the study, you will find that 69 of those units of 7 years were fulfilled at Christ's Triumphal Entry. Then there would be a pause involving an indefinite amount of time. Of course, we now know this corresponds to what we call the Church Age. But this leaves one week (one 7-year unit) – the 70th week yet to be fulfilled. This is often referred to as the 7-year Tribulation Period, which will begin when Antichrist signs a 7-year covenant with Israel as seen in Daniel 9:27. This is where we get the idea of a 7-year tribulation period.

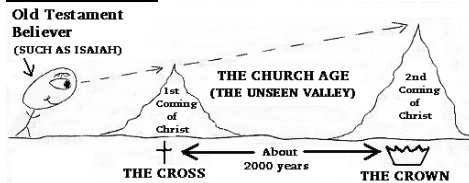
This corresponds to the time period Jesus was addressing in Matthew 24, as He very specifically ties what He is saying to the prophet Daniel. In Matthew 24:15, Jesus very precisely quotes Daniel 9:27 as a reference point to what He is addressing, which corresponds to the middle of the 7-year tribulation period.

The Jews all knew the Messiah would come. But they didn't understand He would have two separate comings. They just thought He was coming to reign – end of story. They did not understand that at His first coming, He came to die for us to be our Savior, and then at the Second Coming, He will come to reign as Lord over all. To this day, most Jews still don't understand the reality of one Messiah and two comings.

And the other thing they failed to see is that, between those two comings, God would do a brand-new thing called the CHURCH.

Since Israel rejected Jesus as their Messiah, God has temporarily set Israel aside and is building a forever family of believers consisting of both Jew and Gentile called the Church.

Slide # 1



When the Church is complete, God will rapture her out of the world and then finish His program with Israel. This will involve God bringing judgment on the whole world, with Israel right in the middle of it. This will break Israel and bring her to repentance. God is not done with Israel. He just needs to break her to make her. And He will use the Tribulation Period to do it!

What the book of Revelation does is take the whole of prophetic truth involving the whole of redemptive history and brings it all to a grand consummation. This presentation is very orderly. First comes the Church Age, then the scene in heaven, then the Tribulation on earth, then the Second Coming, and then the Kingdom.

We are given an inspired outline of the book in Revelation 1:19.

Slide # 2

Revelation 1:19 – Inspired Outline

Revelation 1:19 (NKJV)

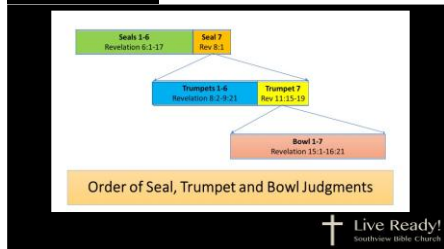
19 “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

- “have seen” – Past (Vision of Christ) – **Ch. 1**
- “which are” – Present (Church Age) – Ch. 2-3
- **“after this” – Future (Post-Church Age)** – Ch. 4-22
 - - Scene in heaven – Ch. 4-5
 - - **Tribulation** – **Ch. 6-18**
 - - Second Coming – Ch. 19
 - - Kingdom – Ch. 20
 - - Eternal State – Ch. 21-22

Following the Church Age, the scene is in heaven, and the great issue is this: Who is worthy to take the scroll (the title deed of the earth) and, in a series of judgments, take back the earth for mankind. Only Jesus is found worthy to do it and all of heaven worships.

That brings us to chapter 6, where Christ begins to unseal the 7 sealed scroll (the title deed of the earth). Each seal represents a new series of judgments that build in intensity until judgment is complete. In the book of Revelation, there are the seal judgments, followed by trumpet judgments, followed by the climactic bowl judgments.

Slide # 3



But what I want you to see is that sprinkled in between these series of judgments are interludes.

It is like in a football game when a timeout is called to further review or analyze what is happening. The action at that point does not move forward. It denotes a pause in which the commentators give further insight into what is happening. The action does not move forward until play resumes. That is what these interludes are like in the book of Revelation. Revelation 7 is such an interlude.

In chapter 6, we saw the unsealing of 6 seals. The first 4 seals seemingly relate very closely to the 1st half of the Tribulation (cf. Matt. 24:7-14). The 5th and 6th seals seem to relate very closely to the middle of the Tribulation and, in essence, are introductory to the 2nd half of the Tribulation. The 5th seal presents the martyrs praying for vengeance on those on the earth, which is immediately followed by the 6th seal judgment in which the heavens and the earth are in convulsion. The unbelievers are terrified and try to hide in mountains and caves from God's wrath. And here is what they cry out...

Slide # 4

Revelation 6:17 (NKJV)

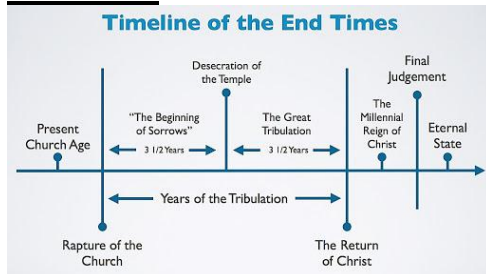
17 For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?

Their question, "***Who is able to stand?***" provides a very apt segue into chapter 7, which in effect answers that question.

But note the reason I say this seems to be introductory to the last half of the Tribulation Period is because of the language used here.

Christ described the first part of the Tribulation as “the beginning of birth pains” (Mt. 24:8), but He described the last part as “**great tribulation**” (Mt. 24:21). “**Great** tribulation” corresponds to “**the great day of His wrath has come**”. Note the “**great**” emphasis here. The 6 seals leading up to this have been preliminary, but now the GREAT DAY OF HIS WRATH has come! It is now upon them.

Slide # 5



Who can withstand this day – the great day of His wrath? The answer is that no one in rebellion can survive this (cf. Ps. 1:5-6). However, those who come to faith in Christ will in the end be found standing.

Those found **standing on the earth** are those who have the “seal” of God, and those believers who die and are found **standing in heaven** before the throne. All those found standing are those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. They have all come to know Christ as their Savior!

So yes, there will be those who come to the Lord in this awesome time of judgment, and in the end, it is those who will be found standing! John, at this point, has two distinct but related visions. In this time out (interlude) he pauses to show what is happening in reference to God’s people at this point. One scene is on earth, and the other scene is in heaven!

The world of unbelievers is going down into the caves of the earth to try and hide, but God’s people are standing. Some are standing for Him on earth, and some are standing in heaven in celebration.

Revelation 7:1–17 (NKJV)

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.

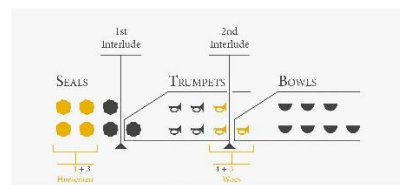
“**After these things**” denotes what John saw after the loosing of the first 6 seals. Again, we think this scene is somewhere around the middle point of the 7-year Tribulation Period.

God often uses angels to accomplish His plans. These four powerful angels are standing at the four corners of the earth. Now, this is not an argument that the earth literally has four corners. Rather, it is colloquial, everyday language in the sense of the four directions of the compass. The Bible occasionally uses this language in this sense (cf. Isa. 11:12; Rev. 20:8). The language used here denotes a worldwide phenomenon (cf. Jer. 49:36; Ezek. 37:9; Dan. 7:2; Matt. 24:31).

These four angels are holding the four winds of the earth, representing judgments that will blow over the whole earth when released. And note the spheres related to “on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.”

After the climactic 7th seal is loosed, the first two trumpet judgments in Rev. 8:7-9 involve the unleashing of judgments that relate to these very realities of earth, sea, and trees. So, the angels are told to hold up for now and not proceed with judgment.

Slide # 6



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,

The word “another” here means “***another of the same kind***”. This is another powerful angel. He came from the east. In the Bible, the garden of Eden was “eastward” (Gen. 2:8). In Ezekiel 43:2, the glory of God comes to the temple from the east. It was because of things like this that the Jews thought the Messiah would come from the East.

Whatever the exact ramifications, this angel came from the east, having “***the seal of the living God***.” In the Bible, a title often used for God is that of being “***the living God***.” It denotes the unending existence of God. He is eternal – the ever-living One. He is the very essence of LIFE from which all life comes and on whom all of life is dependent. Jesus said He was “the life” – the very essence of life (Jn. 14:6).

This angel cried with a LOUD voice to the four angels who were granted power 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.”

The whole universe seems to be coming apart in chapter 6 under the 6th seal. The heavens and the earth are in convulsions, and then suddenly these angels are told to stand down. There is to be a pause.

The reason given is that a delay is to be in place until the servants of God can be sealed. Servants (Gk. *doulos*) here is more literally “slaves”. In Revelation 14:1 it says they have the “***Father’s name written on their foreheads.***”

The exact nature of this seal is not revealed, other than it was on their foreheads.

Seal signifies the idea of ownership as indicated in the idea of them being God’s slaves. And in this context, it also denotes the idea of protection as seen in the order “***Do not harm...till we have sealed...***”. The angels are not to unleash their destructive judgments until a seal of protection is put upon God’s servants (cf. Ezek. 9:4).

Slide # 7

Revelation 9:4 (NKJV)

4 They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but **only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.**

This seems to indicate that this seal will protect them from the judgments of God in the context of their serving God. God’s wrath is not directed against those who, in repentance, have come to faith (cf. 1 Thess. 5:9). However, it need not necessitate that unbelievers will not be able to afflict them at any point in the Tribulation. (cf. 13:7, 20:4) These servants are sealed right before the scroll is completely unsealed and “all hell” breaks loose on earth.

“It is only noted that these will have special protection from the wrath of God while they witness. After their witness is concluded, martyrdom may well be their fate, as subsequent discussion of Rev. 12:13 and 14:1-5 will reflect.” – **Robert Thomas**

The extent of this sealing protection is not really spelled out, but being the slaves of God, they are sealed to serve. Their calling would seem to be one of specialized service. And they are protected to that end.

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:

Clearly, this is a Jewish remnant! You have to defy all the laws of language to arrive at an allegorical interpretation and make this the church, which many try to do. These are Jews! Once again, in the plan of God, the Jews will be front and center. In Rev. 14:4 it says they are the “***firstfruits to God and to the Lamb***” meaning there are more converts to follow.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses maintain that these 144,000 are those of their faithful who will dwell in heaven with Jehovah and rule over the earth. The rest will live in Paradise on earth. Cults such as Jehovah’s Witnesses often pay no attention to the plain sense of Scripture. These are Jews – converted Jews in the context of the Tribulation Period.

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.

There are about 20 different listings of the 12 tribes of Israel in the Bible. There are always 12 listed, but no two listings are exactly alike. They are listed according to birth order (Gen. 29-35); according to blessing (Gen. 49:3-27); according to encampment (Num. 2:3-31); according to inheritance (Josh. 13:7-22:34); according to the gates of the city (Ezek. 48:31-34), and so forth. In each case, there was a particular reason for listing them as they did, and yet the number is always 12.

The listing here in Revelation 7 is unique.

The **inclusion of Levi** is different. Levi often was not included because the priestly tribe did not receive a land allotment.

Joseph is named instead of Ephraim. Normally, his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim are both mentioned together, but not here.

The tribe of **Dan is omitted** here altogether. However, in the millennial kingdom, we note from Ezekiel 48:1, 32, that Dan will have a part.

There are lots of theories here as to why this particular arrangement is in place here in Revelation 7, but that is all they are: theories. It is noteworthy that Judah is named first and the Messiah comes from the tribe of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10; Rev. 5:5). The important thing to note is that Israel is literally in view here. These are representatives of the entire nation of Israel.

The mention of the 12 tribes refutes the idea that they have ever been lost, as some cultists have claimed, or that the lost tribes have been perpetuated through the English-speaking people of the world. This is all heretical nonsense!

But it is argued, how do these people know which tribe they came from?

In the destruction of the temple the Jewish people lost the records of their tribal identity. Since that time, many of them have made this claim or that claim, but they really can't prove what tribe they belong to. However, in the sovereignty of God the tribes continue on and God knows exactly who belongs to what tribe. It is one of the providential "miracles" of God that, in spite of being scattered throughout the world for 2000 years, Israel retains its ethnic identity intact, and in fact, all the Tribes still retain their identity before God. That is unique amongst the peoples of the world!

"At no other time in world history, so far as it is known, has a people been destroyed, and then come back after a lapse of time and reestablished itself. It is utterly out of the question to seek a parallel for the recurrence of Israel's restoration after 2500 years of former history." - **William Foxwell Albright**

"This is not the entirety of the faithful remnant of Israel, but a group of them charged with a special responsibility of witnessing for Christ during the world's darkest hour..." – **Robert Thomas**

The contextual implication is that these 144,000 are SEALED for the special ministry of evangelism and will be very effective in spreading the gospel.

Note that immediately after this, in verse 9 and on, the scene is in heaven with an innumerable number of saints from all over the world who have come out of the great tribulation.

“While we are not told explicitly in Scripture that the 144,000 Jews are God’s special witnesses, and that the Gentile host is saved through their ministry, this appears to be a logical deduction; otherwise, why are they associated in this chapter? The parallel with Matthew 24:14 also indicates that the 144,000 will witness for the Lord during the Tribulation.” – **Warren Wiersbe**

We note that the basic order of things given by Jesus in Matthew 24 very closely follows the order given in Revelation 6.

Slide # 8

Matthew 24

Revelation 6

False Christs (vv. 4-5)

Seal 1 – White Horse Rider (vv. 1-2)

War (v. 6)

Seal 2 – Red Horse/war (vv. 3-4)

Famines (v. 7a)

Seal 3 – Black Horse/famine (vv. 5-6)

Death (vv. 7b-8)

Seal 4 – Pale Horse/death (vv. 7-8)

Beginning of Birth Pains (Mt. 24:8)

Martyrs (v. 9)

Seal 5 – Martyrs Under Altar (vv. 9-11)

Worldwide chaos (vv. 10-13)

Seal 6 – Worldwide chaos (vv. 12-17)

Introductory to GREAT TRIBULATION

It’s in the flow of this context that we have this statement from Christ...

Slide # 9

Matthew 24:14 (NKJV)

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

The context here relates closely to the middle of the tribulation period. And this very probably is where the interlude of Revelation 7 fits in. The 144,000 will go forth like 144,000 apostle Paul’s preaching the gospel throughout the world and their fruit will include an innumerable amount of believers – many of whom will die for their faith as seen in Revelation 7:9.

Footnote: We are not right now preaching the gospel of the kingdom in the sense that they will be doing here. John the Baptist preached the kingdom is at hand (Mt. 3:2); Jesus preached the kingdom is at hand (Mt. 4:17). But when Israel rejected Jesus, His message changed from saying it is at hand to proclaiming it was being delayed (cf. Mt. 13). After the resurrection the apostles did not preach the gospel of the kingdom as being at hand. Rather, the emphasis from there on out throughout the whole NT is on the gospel of Jesus Christ related to His death and resurrection. We are preaching the gospel of Christ. That is our emphasis with the imminent of our blessed hope being the rapture (Titus 2:13). We are not looking imminently for the kingdom, but rather for the rapture! But now, here in Matthew 24, in the throes of the tribulation period, the message will again go out throughout the whole world that the good news of the kingdom is at hand. It is right on the other side of these horrendous days of tribulation. And that will be GOOD news indeed – the gospel of the kingdom. We are not preaching this today in that sense.

Postscript: Right now, I am doing a deep dive on all things Bethel – Bethel theology as taught by pastor Bill Johnson, Bethel music, and so forth. I will address this in a series of ECLs in the new year. But the driving thing is this: Bethel theology is wrong on the kingdom! They are wrong on more apostles, they are wrong on new revelation, and they are wrong on kingdom miracles in the here and now (cf. Heb. 6:5). And this colors everything they do! And it comes with a boatload of theological error. We are not in the kingdom – we are not seeing kingdom miracles. We are seeing huge amounts of false teaching and deception, symptomatic of last days madness. And sadly, an overwhelming majority of the professing church is not discerning enough to know what is happening. More to come.

But back to our text: Finally, Israel will at long last be the witness nation God has all along intended her to be. The gospel first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 1:16). That is the continuing pattern here with the gospel of the kingdom. Remember, at this point, the church is in heaven, and now Israel is central to all that God is doing on the earth. It makes sense that God's people, Israel, will NOW be a major factor in getting out the gospel of the kingdom to the whole world during the Tribulation.

This critical passage [Rev. 7:4-8] reinforces the biblical truth that God is not through with the nation of Israel (cf. Rom. 9-11). Though Israel failed in its mission to be a witness nation in the Old Testament, that will not be the case in the future. From the Jewish people will come the greatest missionary force the world has ever known.

– **John MacArthur**

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,

“After these things” is John’s typical way of moving the reader on to what he wants us to see next.

After seeing the vision of the 144,000 sealed Jews on earth, John immediately saw another vision of a great innumerable multitude in heaven. They included people of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues.

Slide # 10

All...

Nations: Greek *ethnos* = ethnic groups – a multitude living in the same context

Tribes: Greek *phule* = family groups – common ancestry

Peoples: Greek *laos* = people groups - race

Tongues: Greek *glossa* = language groups

The emphasis is that people from every category and classification will be represented here. This goes along with the gospel of the kingdom being preached in all the world (Mt. 24:14). The response will be GREAT!

God is really going to have the attention of the world. This is going to be the greatest movement toward God in the history of the world. It is going to be the WORST of times, but also the BEST of times, in terms of people getting saved. Yes, revival is coming to the world, but it is going to take the tribulation period to make it happen. There may be local areas of revival as there is “in season and out of season”, but the trajectory of the Church Age is not in the direction of revival. Rather, the defining end times characteristic for the Church Age is apostasy, not revival (cf. 2 Tim. 3-4).

In a very real sense, we are sowing the seed that will reap a great harvest in the tribulation. People who are not listening now will listen then. It is one of the reasons Christ gave the revelation to the Church. We are lovingly warning the world that judgment is coming. They need to get ready! Most will not listen. But when judgment day comes, there will still be mercy. The gospel of the kingdom will go out far and wide, and then an innumerable number of people will then respond in saving faith.

It is like Habakkuk 3:2 says, “***In wrath remember mercy.***” Even in the worst time of wrath, God will still remember mercy, and MANY will be saved! Yes, some will come through standing! Some of them may be your family members, some of them may be your co-workers. Some of them may be those who mock and hate you now. But when the great day of His wrath has come who will be able to stand? Only those who repent and turn in saving faith to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The logical deduction is that these standing in heaven are there because of the ministry of the 144,000.

This innumerable multitude is seen standing before the throne and before the Lamb. This is the same throne that was the center of attention in chapters 4 and 5. This is the throne room in heaven with God the Father sitting on the throne.

They are clothed with white robes (denoting a standing of righteousness- cf. 7:14) and with palm branches in their hands (which denotes a festive response celebrating victory – cf. Lev. 23:40; Jn. 12:13).

Note again this interlude between the opening of the 6th and 7th seal (in view of the connection with Matthew 24) I believe happens in close proximity to the middle of the tribulation period. The 6th seal introduces “the great day of His wrath” (Rev. 6:17), which Jesus spoke of in terms of “great tribulation” (Mt. 24:21). This 3 and ½ year period will begin with Antichrist going into the rebuilt Jewish temple and declaring himself to be God (cf. Dan. 9:27; Mt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4). In conjunction with this Revelation 13 says this...

Slide # 11

Revelation 13:5 (NKJV)

5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for **forty-two months**.

Revelation 13:7 (NKJV)

7 It was granted to him to **make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.**

Revelation 13:10 (NKJV)

10 He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. **Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.**

The 42 months here corresponds to the last 3 and ½ years of the Tribulation Period. The language here of “**every tribe, tongue, and nation**” corresponds to what we have here in 7:9, which strengthens the argument that the timing here is early in the 2nd half of the tribulation. As soon as Antichrist declares himself to be God he will go on the warpath to kill Christians. And as it says in 13:7, he will overcome them. This accounts for the innumerable multitude found in heaven before the throne in 7:9.

10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

There is vigorous enthusiasm in their voices as they say, “**Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!**”

“Crying out” is in the present tense, meaning they are continually crying out with a loud voice!

“It’s good thing we can’t save ourselves or people would never hear the end of it.”

There is no doubt in heaven where the credit for salvation belongs. It belongs entirely and only to God the Father, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb – the Lord Jesus Christ.

The strong expression reflects the depth of gratitude of the crowd and a determination to give credit where credit is due, to God and the Lamb. – **Robert Thomas**

In heaven, it’s all about SALVAITON, it’s all about God on the throne, it’s all about the Lamb! No one is waving a palm branch and crying out, “**We did it!**” No, rather they in unison are crying out with a LOUD voice, “**Salvation belongs to God and the Lamb!**”

This innumerable company of martyrs is not complaining about death, but rather celebrating God’s deliverance and their victory through Christ. God has brought them triumphantly through persecution and made them to stand in heaven!

This is what it looks like on the other side for those who know Christ! It’s a glorious celebration of our God and His salvation (cf. 12:10; 19:1). The focus is totally on God!

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.”

All of heaven is alive with celebration. The innumerable number of martyrs are praising God in verses 9-10, and then here in verses 11 and 12, they are joined by all the angels, the elders, and the four living creatures who, in unison, fall on their faces and worship God.

Though angels do not experience victory and salvation in the same sense as humans, they still rejoice over the repentant sinner (Luke 15:10) and have an intense desire to know more about the salvation that is available to men (1 Pet. 1:12). – **Robert Thomas**

The elders, as noted, in chapters 4 and 5 are representative of the church. The living creatures are the highest order of angelic beings. Similar to the scene in 5:11, they form a circle around the throne. And here is what they say in worship to God.

Slide # 12

Amen! They affirm what the great multitude has declared about SALVATION! This is the theme of this worship service.

Blessing: to speak well of

Glory: honor derived from a good reputation

Wisdom: divine knowledge and application of His salvation plan

Thanksgiving: gratitude/ appreciation

Honor: esteem – to think highly of

Power: the ability to act – to bring about salvation

Might: the quality of having strength

How appropriate that as we are celebrating “Thanksgiving,” we see this is a key component of the worship of heaven. But note again that this 7-fold panorama of worship is attributed to God in relation to His SALVATION (cf. 5:12).

Our salvation is so great that we will never get over it! Heaven can’t praise God enough!

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

This question came from one of the elders, who we believe are representative of the church in heaven at this point. He asked John two leading questions: 1) Who are these arrayed in white robes? And 2) where did they come from?”

The questions coming from the elder make it clear that he is not one of the group inquired about, and it is clear that John, as a member of the church, didn’t recognize them. He recognizes the elder as an elder, but not this new group. And so he said...

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.

John flat-out admits that he doesn’t know the answer to these questions. And so the elder fills him in, saying, “***These are the ones who came out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.***”

This vast throng **comes out of the great tribulation**. Actually, “come out” is in the present tense, giving it the sense of “continually keep coming out”. An innumerable number have already come out, and more are coming. And the phrase “***the great tribulation***” is more literally, “***the tribulation, the great one.***” There is an emphasis here!

Again, we note that the second half of the tribulation, as indicated by Daniel (Dan. 9:27) and referenced by Christ in Matthew 24:15, begins with the “abomination of desolation” – that is, Antichrist going into the temple and declaring himself to be God. Jesus in Matthew 24:21 labeled this period as the “great tribulation”. This indicates that these martyrs in heaven were saved out of the second half of the tribulation period called “The Great Tribulation.” They come out of the great tribulation!

Slide # 13



Recall that earlier, under the 5th seal, we saw the martyrs who died in conjunction with the first 4 seal judgments were told that there would be other martyrs yet to follow. Now here they are en masse as seen in chapter 7.

Slide # 14

Revelation 6:11 (NKJV)

11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, **who would be killed as they were, was completed.**

The martyrs who died as represented in 6:11 died in the first half of the tribulation, the martyrs who died as represented in 7:9 are those who die in the second half of the tribulation.

And then note how they got here! They are those who “***washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.***” This is a metaphorical way of saying they have come to know Christ as Savior, the Lamb of God Who died for their sins!

We have in the Bible what is called “The Scarlet Thread of Redemption.”

All the way through the Bible we see the theme of REDEMPTION. The word “redemption” means to deliver by paying a price. The Bible paints one consistent picture that the price of sin required a blood payment.

In Genesis, when Adam and Eve sinned, God provided “tunics of skin” for clothing (Gen. 3:21). Abel brought an animal offering to God which was acceptable (Gen. 4:4). In Exodus we have the Passover Lamb (Ex. 12). In Leviticus we have the sacrificial system and blood given for atonement on the altar (Lev. 17:11). Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 graphically portray the blood sacrifice of Christ. In the gospels, we have Christ introduced as the Lamb of God (cf. Jn. 1:29), followed by His crucifixion, considered in great detail. The book of Acts propagates the story, and the epistles further explain it. Revelation, 28 times speaks of Jesus in reference to the “Lamb” and concludes with Him coming “clothed with a robe dipped in blood” (Rev. 19:13).

This is the great issue! All those in heaven have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus. In Rev. 1:5 it says Jesus Christ is the One Who “washed us from our sin in His own blood.”

In Rev. 5:9 we find the saved of heaven saying Christ is worthy to take the scroll and open its seals because He has redeemed them by His blood. And finally in Rev. 21:27 we find that only those written in the Lamb's book of life will be able to live with God.

The only reason these are there is because of the blood of Jesus. This is the only basis for anyone ever getting to heaven! It's all about Jesus! Jesus paid it all – all to Him we owe!

Jesus paid it all, but we do have to appropriate Him as Savior and Lord by faith.

Slide # 15

Romans 3:25 (NKJV)

25 whom God set forth as a **propitiation** [satisfactory payment] by His blood, **through faith**...

Romans 5:1 (NKJV)

1 Therefore, having been **justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,**

The text now goes on to emphasize the destiny of these martyrs who have been cleansed by 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.

These martyrs of the tribulation period have the esteemed privilege to serve before the throne. They are ushered right into the throne room!

The word “serve” (Gk. *latreuo*) was used in relation to priestly or spiritual service (cf. Lk. 2:37; Heb. 8:5; 13:10).

At this point, there is still a temple represented in heaven (cf. 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:5-8; 16:1, 17), and there will be one on earth during the millennial reign of Christ (cf. Ezek. 40-48), whereas there will not be in the eternal state (cf. Rev. 21:22). The expression serving **“day and night”** is an idiom meaning continually. They continually serve God in a most intimate way before His throne as God dwells 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.”**

Never again will they know the privations they experienced in the tribulation. Running for their lives, they previously knew hunger and harmful exposure, but never again. Never again will they experience lack or harm! The tormenting conditions on earth are forever behind them.

The Lamb Himself will forever personally shepherd them. In the OT the LORD is shown to be the Shepherd of His people (cf. Ps. 23; 80:1; Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:23). In the NT, Jesus is depicted as the Shepherd of God's people (cf. Jn. 10:11, 14; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:2-4).

He will lead them to fountains of waters, or more literally, “**to springs of living water**” They will know nothing but the Lord's refreshing satisfaction. They will know the fullness of LIFE in every way. They will never thirst again in any way. Perfect satisfaction will define the bliss they enjoy!

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. The very same thing is said in reference to the experience of all God's people in the eternal state as seen in Rev. 21:4.

Tears in the eyes denote the sufferings and afflictions of God's people in this life. This will all be behind them. No more sorrow. No more afflictions. William MacDonald emphasizes they will enter into a destiny of 7-fold PERFECTION where everything is satisfyingly wonderful beyond what we can even comprehend.

Slide # 16

The Martyrs Destiny

Perfect nearness: - before the throne.

Perfect service: serve day and night in His temple.

Perfect fellowship: God will dwell among them.

Perfect satisfaction: neither hunger nor thirst anymore.

Perfect security: sun shall not strike them, nor any heat.

Perfect guidance: the Lamb will shepherd them and lead them.

Perfect joy: God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

The bottom line is that God promises a glorious future to those who choose Jesus Christ and put their faith in Him as Lord and Savior. You can write over their lives, “It will be worth it all!” Revelation 7 proves it!

The destiny of the rebel world is seen at the end of chapter 6, where they in terror cry out who can stand before the great day of God’s wrath?

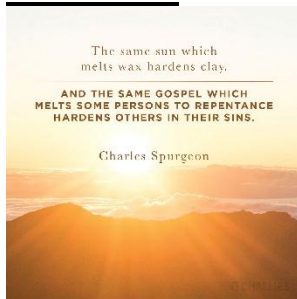
In contrast the destiny of those who come to repentance and faith is seen at the end of Revelation 7 where those washed in the blood of the Lamb will enjoy God and all He has for them forever and ever! What a contrast!

Remember that in Rev. 3:10 Jesus spoke of the hour of trial that will come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth. That is what the Tribulation Period will be. It will be a crucible to test where people are ultimately going stand in relation to God the Father and the Lamb! That is the great issue for time and eternity!

Ancient Harvesters used an instrument called a “Tribulum” to beat the grain to separate the wheat from the chaff. Tribulum is the word from which we get the word Tribulation. It illustrates perfectly what God will be doing in the Tribulation Period!

God is **going to beat** the world with His judgments, but out of that TESTING period will come a great harvest of souls, while the chaff of unbelievers will be blown away forever. Tribulation will separate the two. We see the one at the end of chp. 6 – the other in 7. We see unbelievers will not be able to stand, but at the end of the day, God’s people, because of their faith in Christ, will stand before the throne.

Slide # 17



Our response to the Lamb of God makes the difference!

1 John 5:12 (NKJV)

12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

It all comes down to Jesus! It’s all about Him! Do you have Him?