

God's Servants Protected & Rewarded

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Date: 11 July 2021

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[0 : 00] Take out your Bibles with me, please, and turn to the last book of the Bible. Not the one called Concordance, the one before that, the one called Revelation.

Book of Revelation, we are now coming to the seventh chapter. Revelation 7, I want to read the text.

We're going to look at all of chapter 7, Lord willing. And we'll pray and we'll dig in. So, if you're able and you would like to stand in honor of the reading of the Word, I will read.

Revelation 7, beginning of verse 1. After this, I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree.

Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun with the seal of the living God.

[1 : 16] And he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the earth and sea, saying, Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.

And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel.

12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed. 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben. 12,000 from the tribe of Gad.

12,000 from the tribe of Asher. 12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali. 12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh. 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon.

12,000 from the tribe of Levi. 12,000 from the tribe of Issachar. 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun, 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph, 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.

[2 : 33] After this, I looked, literally I saw, and behold, look, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice, Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, Who are these clothed in white robes? And from where have they come? I said to him, Sir, you know.

He said to me, These are the ones coming from the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 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 shelter them with his presence. They shall no longer hunger, neither thirst anymore.

- [4 : 20] The sun shall not strike them nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd.
- And he will guide them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.
- So reads the word. Let us pray. Father, grant us as always your spirit to enlighten us, to convict us, to encourage us, comfort us, challenge us.
- Father, give us eyes to see what we need to see. Help us to see what we need to see here. There are a lot of details.
- Father, help us to focus on those which are important. That you want communicated first and foremost. This we ask, Lord, that we might honor you in Christ's name.
- [5 : 23] Amen. Please be seated. How do you all deal with interruptions?
- You're pretty amiable. You just go with the flow with that? Is that... No? Yes? Yeah, you're good with interruptions? Just yesterday...
- Interruptions, delays. Just yesterday I received a Father's Day card from Zach. Nice. I don't...
- You know, it was nice. I... You know, I... It's like, what's this? It's a Father's Day card. Oh. Oh. Had some rude comic inside, but, you know.
- A man standing next to an old car that said, I think it still runs, but it's got some exhaust problems. And inside it said, this card reminded me of you for some reason.
- [6 : 29] So it was a little delayed. A little delayed. We're looking at a delay here. We've been in chapter 6, which is this lamb is breaking the seals.
- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. And all of a sudden, before we get to 7 and open the scroll, chapter 7. What happened to seal number 7?
- What happened to the open scroll? Well, we're going to wait for that. There's a delay. There's an interruption. It's kind of like, you know, the shows you watch that end in a cliffhanger.
- Tune in next week to see what happens. Will they survive? Will Archie ever propose to Monica?
- I don't know who they are, but, you know, Will Lassie save Timmy? Cliffhangers. There's lots of interruptions, you know, that interrupt our work, our projects.
- [7 : 36] Things get delayed. Focus is lost. It's simply inconvenient to have interruptions. I don't know about you, but I like things to have closure.
- And so we've gone 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Verse 7. Verse 7. It's interrupted. The Lamb is breaking the seals.
- We will finally see what's inside the scroll. Remember, chapter 5 opens up with the Father on the throne, and he's holding the scroll.
- And then the drama of heaven is, who's worthy to open the scroll? No one is found. No one is found. In heaven, on earth, under the earth.
- And then finally, one of the elders speaks and says, fear not, the Lion of Judah has conquered, and he is worthy to open the scroll. He alone is worthy to open the scroll.
- [8 : 35] And he hears about a lion, and when he turns, what he sees is not a lion at all, but a lamb slain. He can open the scroll.
- So the scroll is so important. So finally, chapter 6, he begins to open the seven seals that are keeping the scroll closed.

And so we've gotten through six, and now we're just waiting for one more, and finally that scroll will be opened, and we will see what's inside. We end, excuse me, chapter 6, after the sixth seal is broken, and there's an earthquake, and sun, moon, stars, sky, mountains, and islands are removed.

People are hiding in rocks and caves from the wrath of the Lamb. And the last statement in chapter 6 is for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?

Who can stand? And now we're on pause. We come to chapter 7.

[9 : 47] Who's going to stand? It's as if God changed the channel on us. We're waiting. Look at that. Seventh seal.

Nope. Meanwhile, back at the ranch. It's a change. It feels like an interruption, but it's not so much an interruption as it is an interlude.

A pause. To explain and clarify. Because with that last question, who can stand? We have wondering, you know, all these plagues, this judgment of God, the wrath of the Lamb is coming upon the world.

But there's an unanswered question. What about the believers? What about those believers that are still alive when all this is happening?

What happens to them? Are they going to be taken up in all these plagues? What happens to them? Who can stand? What about them? And I think that's what chapter 7 is answering. One, who can stand?

[10 : 52] And two, what about the believers? Do they have, if we're alive when all this is happening, which we are, some of this is already happening. What about them?

What do we have? So we have seen this, chapter 6, the seals are opened. Answers the question, what? What instruments of God, does God use in judgment?

We saw in the first four seals, the four horsemen, they are the instruments of judgment. They bring war, violence, famine, and death. They're the same elements, those first four seals are the same elements Jesus warned about back in Matthew 24, that they are the beginning of birth pangs, but they are not the end.

They are things that will be happening all through church history. Kingdoms and nations warring against one another, violence and famine and death will always be going on, but it's not the end, it's just the beginning.

They are warning signs. The four horsemen are warning signs all through the church age. Then we come to the fifth seal and everything changes, things are different. We expect more plagues, but what we get is a change of scenery.

[12 : 07] We're no longer on earth, now we're back in heaven. As the sixth seal is broken, we see, well, he sees souls, how do you see a soul? But don't ask detailed questions, this is a vision.

He sees souls under the altar, and their question is very, very important. How long, Lord, how long before justice happens?

We were killed unjustly. How long before you do justice and you avenge us? They're not asking for vengeance, they're just asking, when do you show that you are a just and holy God because you've been putting off your justice so long?

When do you finally bring your justice? So they're asking that question about the win, and his answer is justice will come when the last martyr has been killed.

There are a number of martyrs that God has decided must be killed, and when the last one dies, then the justice will come. It's delayed, it's waiting for the final martyr.

[13 : 15] When will that be? Only God knows. And so they're given comfort, they're given comfort, they're told to rest a little longer, they're given an answer. And then finally, seal six is open, and it looks like it's the end of everything.

The earthquake, the sun becomes black, the moon turns to blood, the stars fall from the sky to the earth. Has that happened yet? Okay, then no.

If we're talking about literal, now literal, that'd be tough for all the stars to fall to the earth. Because most stars are bigger than the earth, so there's not a whole lot of room on the earth for all the stars to fall in the earth. And they would have to come from way away to, anyway.

Are we talking literal here? But it sounds like the end of the world. The sky has vanished, the mountains, every mountain and island are removed from their places, so it's just catastrophic.

Right? That's the impression. And then all the kings and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, everyone, slave and free, hide from the wrath of God.

[14 : 25] And I think that's curious that they just hide. Why don't they ask for mercy? Why don't they repent? Because they know where it's coming from and they know who's bringing it.

They're hiding from the face of him who's seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. That's an odd phrase, isn't it? The wrath of the Lamb. Wrath of a lion sounds better, but this is the wrath of the Lamb who is also the lion.

Because they know the great day of their wrath has come and who can stand. They'd rather die than repent. And that justifies why God's doing it.

Why is he doing it? Because as much mercy as God has shown, as much time God has shown, as much patience as God has shown, to the very end they defy him.

To the very end they will not repent. We're going to see that repeated throughout Revelation. So it seems like in the sixth one we're getting a glimpse of the end.

[15 : 28] It's kind of like, here we go. One answer to the souls who have been martyred, who are under the altar, is here's what it will look like.

Here's a brief picture of what it will look like. God will bring justice. So we see the seals open. Now we come before the seventh seal is open we have an interlude.

We have this pause. We have this interruption. Before we see the scroll there's something else the Lord wants us to see. John sees it just as we see. John's simply recording.

He's a witness. He's just simply saying this is what I saw. This is what I heard. John's not making this up. He's just recording it down. Right? And he sees the servants of God.

And it's as if this is an answer to that last question at the end of chapter 6. Who can stand? Well, here's two groups of people that stand. And this is how they do it.

[16 : 31] These are the believers. So we have two groups. The group of 144,000 Israelites who are sealed, right, on earth. And then we have another group that's in heaven that are already come through the tribulation and now they're rewarded.

So we have two groups. One on earth, one in heaven. One has an exact number, 144,000, 12,000 from each tribe. And one that no one can count.

One that's innumerable. Okay? So we have some differences between them. We also have some things that are alike. So what are these two groups? And what is God saying to us?

What do we get out of this? And I think it's very, very important what we get out of this. Regardless of your final interpretation of some of the details, the overall truth is the same.

There are two viewpoints that we learn from this. Because both groups are called servants of God. Okay? One's displayed in one way as an exact number of Israelites.

[17 : 41] The other is described as this innumerable, multicultural, multi-ethnic group in heaven. But they're both servants of God. So we see two perspectives. One, in the first group, we see God protects his servants through tribulation.

Whoever those servants are, whoever the 144,000 are, they're sealed before the harm comes. They're somehow protected through the tribulations to come.

Okay? And the second group we will see is these are the folks who have come through tribulation, they come out, and they are rewarded. Whoever they are, they're rewarded.

So two important principles. One, God protects those during tribulation. He seals them. And secondly, after the tribulation, there's reward.

There is promise. There is comfort. There is reward given to them. So let's look at this. Let's see the first group. They're easy to figure out. We got an exact description of who they are, right?

[18 : 48] He says, now he sees some things and hears some things. Verse one, he sees, first he sees four angels standing at four corners of the earth, which tells us that he must have thought the earth was flat, right?

And a square, four corners, right? Is that what he means? Do you think that's what he means? No, it's like saying four corners of the compass. Right? The four, north, south, east, west.

It's like saying that. He didn't believe the earth was flat. I saw four angels standing at the four corners. So they're all, four points of the compass, holding back the four winds of the earth that wind might not blow on the earth.

So they're restraining the four winds, whatever those are. Those winds, we find out in verse two, they're going to harm the people. They're going to harm the sea, the earth, the sea, and the trees.

Then he sees something else. Verse two, I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, the seal, with a seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who are holding back the winds who have the power to harm the earth and the sea, saying, verse three, do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God on the foreheads.

[20 : 03] Okay? So first of all, we have what he sees. What he sees is the four angels at the four corners representing, right, they're universal, they're earth, they're worldwide, to all four directions of the compass.

They're holding back the four winds, whatever those are. Those winds are symbolic of the harm that will come upon the earth and the sea and the trees. Okay? I think it's just the earth, sea, and trees.

I think it's just kind of general language for all of creation. The plagues that will come, whatever those are. So what are these four winds? Well, some believe the four winds are the same as the four horsemen.

Because back in Zechariah that talks about the four groups of horses, man, we read that. Zechariah talks about the four different horses and the different colors they are and they bring plagues and judgment, right?

Back in Zechariah chapter 6, verse 5, the four horsemen, horse riders are called the four winds. So, could be. Could be.

[21 : 06] Could be. Could be another description of the four horsemen. Which means that what is happening in chapter 7 is before the opening of the seals. if that's true.

Before the harm of chapter 6 comes, they're being sealed. Okay? Could mean that. I don't know. Could mean if the four winds don't mean the four horsemen, then it could be they're sealed before the scroll is opened.

Before the big stuff starts happening. So, I don't think that's as important to think about. The fact is they're sealed. They're somehow protected.

Now, the seal is the same word for the seven seals on the scroll. And what is the job of the seven seals on the scroll? No one who's worthy to open.

So, somebody with the authority, someone who's worthy has to break those seals, right? Someone with the authority. So, the seal is someone with authority to put that on somebody to protect.

[22 : 11] So, those seals are keeping the scroll locked up, keeping the scroll protected from being looked into. So, the seal on the forehead is some kind of mark.

Probably not a physical mark, but some kind of mark. God is marking his people before the plagues come. Okay? He's marking them. He's sealing them.

He's putting his ownership on them. In the same way that we're going to find out in chapter 13, the beast has a mark. He marks his people too.

It's a counterfeit mark. But he marks his people. That's how they buy and sell. That's how they survive. Because they give their lives, they give their ownership to the beast.

See what's happening here? So, God's marking out his own. He's marking his servants. Right? Before the plagues come. So, somehow they're marked. Somehow they're protected. It's a means of protection.

[23 : 13] I think it's the same as the New Testament describes because it uses the same word. They're sealed. When are Christians sealed?

Yeah, they are. When are Christians sealed? And how are Christians sealed? You know that? Mark of the Holy Spirit. If you have the outline, it's at the top of the outline.

The quote, it comes from Ephesians 1, 13 and 14. Speaking of Jesus, in him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, so when you heard the gospel, and you believed, what happens?

Right when you believed, you were sealed. With what? You were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.

every believer. Every believer. Every believer. When you hear the gospel, when you believe that gospel, when you are changed and we call it saved, right?

[24 : 24] Born again, have new life, you're sealed. That's what changes you, by the way. That's what gives you the new life.

That's what changes your values. That's what changes your direction in life. That's what changes your desires. That's how you know you're born again, by the way. You're not born again because you prayed a prayer. I can verify that.

I did it hundreds of times and I wasn't changed. You're born again when the Holy Spirit comes. God sends his Holy Spirit and it gives you life.

You were dead, now you're alive. Right? You were you were slave to whatever your natural desires are. Now now that's broken.

Doesn't mean we still don't sin. We still sin, but but the slavery's broken. So we're sealed. When we have the Holy Spirit, we have all kinds of power.

[25 : 24] We have power to resist. We have power to endure. We have power to overcome. That's our power. We don't we don't overcome temptation in our own strength.

It's not natural. We overcome in a victorious sense when we lean upon the Holy Spirit, when we walk with Him, when we draw strength from Him, when we say to God, I don't have the strength.

You must help me. Give me the strength. Give me the patience. If you're going to pray for patience, right? You said you're praying for patience.

I said, don't pray for patience. Pray for strength. It's the same thing, but you know. Because how does God, if you pray for patience, how does God answer that?

Does He just make you patient all of a sudden? No. How does He do it? You okay, I'll get you. Okay, you're going to learn the hard way, which is the right way.

[26 : 30] But that's, the Holy Spirit is our power to resist. How are the believers in the rest of this book of Revelation able to not conform to the mark of the beast, to suffer because of it?

How are they able to do that? Why, strength of will? No, because they're marked. they have the Holy Spirit. They are empowered from above to do what is not natural.

Okay? That's what I think this is. I think this is just a picture of that ceiling. It's similar. So, remember back, remember the story of Exodus, right?

When God brought the people out of Exodus, He did a whole bunch of plagues first, right? Did ten plagues. Right? To wear Pharaoh down. God said at the beginning, I'm going to wear him down.

And I'm going to show that he cannot stop me, right? And I'm even going to harden his heart and make him go, you know. But remember how the plagues happened?

[27 : 36] Who did the plagues come upon? When every plague happened, who did it come upon? Egypt, right? Well, it's coming upon Egypt. Where's God's people?

They're over in this valley called Goshen. And every plague happened on Egypt and it said God made a distinction. Darkness happened over here, no darkness over here in Goshen.

Death over here, no death over here in Goshen. God made a distinction. He protected His people all through it. The final plague was the killing of the firstborn, right? The death angel comes.

How did God protect His people from the death angel? They took the blood of the Lamb, right? Well, that's mentioned in here too, isn't it? The blood of the Lamb. They put that over the doorway and the angel came in.

What? Passed over. Right? So God protects His people. See? So it's similar here. God is protecting before the plagues come.

[28 : 32] Not from death, though. Not from death. Because we have people dying. Christians are dying. But the plague is not upon them.

The plague is upon those who do not have the mark of the Spirit. So He sees. He sees angels. He sees the winds. He sees the seal.

Then He hears. Notice this. It's different. Now He hears. Verse 4. He hears the number of the seal, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel.

Who are these people? Well, pastor, just read verse 4. It's real obvious. These people are from every tribe of the sons of Israel. That's who they are. Right?

Are you sure? Want to read a little carefully? Every tribe. Okay? Every tribe. Well, if you go back and look at who the tribes are back in Genesis, there's at least one missing.

[29 : 36] So if it's every tribe, there's already one missing. Dan's missing. No Dan in this list. There's some other oddities. There's a guy named Manasseh.

Manasseh's a son of Joseph. Joseph's called a tribe and then one of his sons is called a tribe. So how does that work? Is that all the tribes? Now when they divided the land, how did he, you know, Joseph had two sons, right?

He's the 11th son born but his father treats him as the firstborn and so gives him a double blessing. Right? So he gets twice the land and so it goes to his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

So here's the list. Manasseh's in there but Ephraim's not and Joseph's in there. What's going on with this list? Here's something else in this list that is odd and different.

It's completely out of order from the Old Testament priority. Note that Judah is listed first, right?

[30 : 40] Anybody know which number son Judah was? He was not first. He was not second. He was not third. He was fourth. Good guess. Good guess. Fourth.

You probably already knew it but yeah. He's fourth but now he's first. Why is Judah important? Well that's an easy one, right? We have already heard about the Lion of Judah.

Jesus comes from Judah. The Messiah comes from Judah. So that makes sense that he's first. New priority. Okay? And if you read the Old Testament you find out that the first three sons weren't so hot anyway.

But neither was Judah so it's really not about who earns anything. Okay? Then notice that who's listed let's see one, two, three, four, five.

Who is Gad and Asher and Naphtali? Don't know. Haven't got that memorized from Sunday school? Don't know. Don't blame you.

[31 : 41] I didn't either. I had to look it up. Right? Who's Gad? I mean I've heard of Joseph. I've heard of Ruth. I've heard of Levi. Right? I've heard of Benjamin. Gad, Asher, Naphtali.

Who are those guys? Well when you look at the Old Testament they're at the end of the list. They're at the end of the list because they're not sons of the real wives. They're not sons of Leah.

Remember Jacob married he wanted to marry Rachel. He loved Rachel. It was beautiful. He wanted to marry Rachel. His father tricked him. Tricked the trickster into marrying the older daughter first.

Leah. Poor eyes Leah. Probably thick glasses. No, I don't know what she looked like. She was just described as having poor eyes. Whatever that means. Don't know what that means. So he had to marry her.

And he worked seven years for her. Well he ended up working 14 years for Rachel. But he had to marry. You know tradition, tradition, tradition. And then they were such a well united harmonious family.

[32 : 46] Remember the story right? How well these women got along. Jacob was such a good peacemaker wasn't he? He treated everybody equally. The women got in fights.

Right? And they started to compete. Right? Rachel, the loved one couldn't have children. And here's Leah, the unloved one just popping them out.

Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. That's the translation from the Hebrew. I think it's popped out. I think that's what it said. And so one, two, three, four.

Leah has four children. Judah's born. Praise the Lord. That's his name. Means praise. And then so Rachel's like thruster. I can't have children. So what does she do? Well daddy gave me the servant girl.

So here. Take my servant girl and have children by her. That'll be my children by proxy. So the maid has a couple children. Those are that's Dan and Naphtali.

[33 : 53] Okay. Then Leah has some more kids. And then finally Leah can't have any more children so she gives her handmaid.

And he has a couple more kids from there. Those are the that's the Gad and Asher. That's where Gad and Asher came from. They come from the servant girl. They come from not the wife but the servant.

The Gentile. The outsider. Hmm. Here's these holy twelve tribes right of Israel. It's already got Gentile blood going in there.

Makes it curious as to why those three. Dan's gone. John. Where's Dan? Don't know. Three from the bottom all of a sudden get elevated up into places of honor and priority.

Why? Was it a slip? Did John forget what the order was? I guarantee you John did not forget what the order was. Besides he's not he's writing it down but he's hearing.

[35 : 06] He's hearing. Judah. Reuben. Gad. Wait. What? Gad. Asher. Naphtali.

Naphtali. Manasseh. So he's got to be going nuts. Going what? This is weird. So on your outline I have the quote from or the list from Exodus.

Exodus. Speak Bill. One more hour. Speak. Sorry. Inside. Genesis 35 is the list.

So if you want the birth order of how the sons were born you know Joseph and Benjamin were actually the very last sons born because that's when Rachel died.

They were the 11th and 12th. So they're the very last in the birth order. so you read Genesis 29 and 30 you can get the birth order when they were birthed.

[36 : 02] but Genesis 35 is the very next list and it's exactly the same when you come to Exodus chapter 1 when they're in Egypt and he lists the names.

They're listed by priority. They're not listed by birth. So Genesis 35 now the sons of Jacob were 12. The sons of Leah notice how they're ranked.

They're grouped by the wife. First by Leah. Leah is the first wife. She is the wife of the covenant. She's the one that gets buried in the cave with Jacob not Rachel.

Okay? Priority. She's the covenant wife. She's first. Her all her sons are listed first. Reuben firstborn Simeon Levi Judah number four Ishakar Zebulun they're listed.

Then the sons of Rachel Joseph and Benjamin even though they're the last ones born they come in next. Then we list the sons of Bilhah Rachel's servant and the sons of Zilpah Leah's servant.

[37 : 08] Those are the ones that are so there's the the Old Testament priority is Naphtali Gad Asher at the bottom. New Testament priority something's changing something's different.

In Revelation 7 we have an inverted priority. what does that mean? Do you think it might be a clue? He just heard every tribe of Israel and then he didn't hear every tribe.

He heard a changed list. And some say it's not that big a deal. It's still I think it's a blaring hint. Something's different going on here.

something's changing. Maybe this isn't the Israel we think it is. The names are there. Well most of them.

So what does it mean? 144,000 any significance to that? Does it mean literally there's 12,000 from each tribe? Well that's what it says. So if you take it literally yeah. But in a book that every number seems to have a figurative significance is 144 mean literal?

[38 : 25] Probably not. Right? We have 24 elders. Where are they made up from? Well you have 12 apostles and 12 tribes. You probably have 24.

Might not be that but that's probably what it is. You have seven churches and seven seals and seven trumpets and seven bowls. What does seven mean? Fullness. Completion.

Seven churches that we write to are not all the churches that existed but they are representative of all the churches. So seven is representative of all. 12 is probably the same thing. God forms 12 tribes in the Old Testament.

Jesus picks 12 apostles in the New. Why? Because 12 is representative. 12 times 12.

So 12 plus 12 is 24. 12 times 12 is apparently is about 144. 12 then he add a thousand onto that multiply that is 144,000. 12 and 12. It's a perfect cube.

[39 : 26] By the way, 144,000 is the same number of this. Oh. At the end of Revelation when he describes the temple, it's 12,000 by 12,000 by 12,000.

the New Jerusalem in other words is a perfect cube. So are we going to live in a square?

Do you think that's what it means? Are we going to live in a square? Are there going to be elevators? It's I want to be on the 12th floor.

It's an exact cube, which by the way, the Holy of Holies was an exact cube. I wonder if there's any coincidence with that.

Paradise lost, paradise regained, paradise where there's a tree and all of a sudden there's a tree again. Oh, there's a river. There are four rivers. Now there's one river and that's all you need.

[40 : 34] There's a tree. Okay. Getting off here. So Revelation 7, these two groups. I don't think they're different groups. This is just me. This is how I take it.

I don't think they're two different groups. I think they're the same group from two different perspectives. Two views of God's people. The true Israel. See, we hear Israel and Revelation has already suggested this when we're going through the letters to the churches.

Remember, one of the churches was dealing with the synagogue of Satan that was filled with Jews who were not Jews. Remember?

Revelation has already kind of hinted at, okay, there's Jewish people, but they're not real Jews. There's a true Jew. A true Jew is one who believes inwardly. A true Jew is one who's been circumcised in the heart.

A true Jew is one who believes in Messiah. And no matter what your ethnic background is, if you don't believe in Messiah, you're not a true Jew.

[41 : 45] So we already get that hint. So I think the 144,000 is talking about who the true Jews are. The true Israel. So perspective one, whether you agree about that or not, doesn't matter.

What's the point is? God protects his servants through tribulation. Everyone who believes in Christ is given the seal of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is your protection, your guarantee, your strength, your enabling, your empowerment, your everything. Okay?

Jesus described the Holy Spirit as another like me. Same thing that Jesus did, you get him every day. We think, oh, I would love to have walked with Jesus.

I think we would all say that. We would all have loved to have walked with Jesus. But you know what? You already do. You already do. Now, you don't get to see him physically, but he says, I will never leave you.

[42 : 50] I will never forsake you. I will be with you always. How? The Spirit. It's my Spirit. He does what I do.

You have that. So, second, first perspective, God protects his servants through tribulation. Second perspective, what we see in the second group, is we see God rewards his servants who overcome tribulation.

Here's a second group we see in verses 9 and following, that are not on earth, they're in heaven, they have already come through tribulation, and now they're rewarded. They're described differently.

He rewards his servants who overcome tribulation. So, he hears, right, verse 3, he hears Israel. Notice verse 9.

After this, in other words, after I saw this vision, now I saw this vision. After this, I looked, literally, I saw. and behold, a great multitude, no one could number.

[43 : 52] So, remember now. Remember chapter 5? Who is worthy to open the scroll? The elder says to John, don't fear, the lion of Judah has conquered.

He's worthy to open the scroll. John hears that, remember? And he turns to look for the lion, and he doesn't see a lion, he sees a lamb. Same thing's happening here.

He hears Israel. He hears 12,000, 12,000, 12,000, 12,000, tribe, tribe, tribe, tribe, tribe, tribe, tribe. He hears that. That's what verse 4 says.

He heard that. It doesn't say he saw them. He saw angels. It doesn't say he saw the tribes. He heard the number of the tribes listed. After that, I looked, I saw.

What did he see? He heard Israel. He saw a multitude. I heard lion. I saw lamb. I heard Israel.

[44 : 53] I saw a multitude. I he expects to see one nation. He sees a whole bunch of nations.

In fact, representatives from every nation and every tribe and every language. they are all standing before the lamb.

They are wearing white robes. Remember, white robe in Revelation usually means they are purified. They are cleansed. In fact, it will talk about later how they have cleansed their robes by washing them in the blood.

They are holding palms. Palms. Remember palms? What are palms? We ever use palms? Yeah, Palm Sunday.

We have a whole Sunday for palms. What's the palms doing? What were they doing with the palms? Remember we're remembering the entry into Jerusalem, right? Jesus riding on a donkey.

[45 : 58] He is intentionally throwing down a gauntlet because everyone will know when he sits on that donkey, he sits on that foal, exactly what he's doing. He is doing Zechariah.

And he organizes the whole thing remember and he walks in and what do they do? The crowds get it. The crowds get it. Yeah, our king's here. They take up palm branches.

They quickly cut palm branches and they're celebrating. Palms are celebration of the victory of the king has come. So here they are. They're standing before the throne with the palms. Yeah. Yeah, he made it.

He entered. He died. He rose again. He made it. We didn't get it back then. We thought what's the death thing? That doesn't work. Okay, that's what they're doing.

And then verse 10, they praise. They give praise. They simply say salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. All salvation is God's.

[47 : 01] Everything has been of God. we talk about coming here as God's people to God's house on God's day because it's all about the Lord.

And that's what they're saying here in heaven. It's all about him. Salvation. Every bit of salvation is his. He saved me from sin. He saved me from my debt.

He saved me from my condemnation. He saved me from my enemy. He saved me from myself. all salvation belongs to him.

Right? And equally by the way to the father and the son. And then verse 11 and 12 we have the angels worshiping. Man, God starts getting worshipped, right?

Everybody else has to jump in. That's what heaven is going to be like. It's going to be salvation of God. Oh, I want to be out of this. It's like, right? The angels are going nuts. Not nuts.

[48 : 01] They're going, they're worshipping. But they really, you know, these multitude, they just have a simple, you know, salvation belongs to the Lord. And then the angels are like, oh, we want to expand on that.

Amen, we're going to expand on that. What do they do? So they say, amen. They have a seven fold blessing. Which seven again, okay, that probably means, covers it, right?

Blessing. Blessing belongs to him. Glory. All the glory belongs To him. Wisdom. Nobody has wisdom but him. Thanksgiving, he's the only one that should be thanks. Honor goes to him.

Power goes to him. Might goes to him. Everything goes to him. Because everything comes from him. Amen. Then we have a question.

John to see him. John interrupts the scene. Oh, by the way, hey, John, who are these guys?

[49 : 05] You imagine John's like, how should I know? I'm just watching. I'm just watching. I don't know. You know. Oh, okay.

These are the ones coming out of the tribulation. That's who they are. By the way, it's not a tribulation. It's the. In fact, it's double emphasized in the Greek.

It's these are the ones coming from the tribulation, the great one. It's not just the great tribulation. It's the tribulation, the great one.

In other words, it's not any tribulation. It is the tribulation, which sounds like it's a pretty specific, particular kind of tribulation. Maybe the final one.

I don't know. I'm just telling you what I found out. So they're coming out of the tribulation. And they have what?

[50 : 01] More importantly, what have they done? They've washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. I like that. Before we have descriptions of people wearing white robes, right?

Okay, oh, yeah, yeah, how'd they get those? I don't know. They just have white robes. They're given to them. Here we're told, well, these people took their robes, their old nasty robes, you know, the ones with all the stains on them, the one that's all dirty, the one that's all tattered and torn.

They took that robe and they took it to the blood of the Lamb. I don't know how that works because you put it into blood, how does it come out white? Don't know, it's a Christmas miracle.

It's a Christ miracle, sorry. And they made them white. They washed them. And the only thing that can cleanse the stains on that old robe is the blood.

The blood of the Lamb. Well, is it simply because he bled? Why did he bleed?

[51 : 01] Why did he lay down his life? Remember, the angel told Joseph, you shall call his name Yehoshua. salvation, savior.

You shall call his name savior. Why? Because he will save his people from their enemies, right? Did I get that right?

From their enemies. No, from their sin, thank you. Please speak up when I get it wrong. From their sins. God pays. The blood pays for the sin.

Oh, we learned that in the Old Testament. Yeah, there has to be blood, right? The lamb has to be slain. The blood somehow makes an atonement. But then they got to do that every year. They got to do it over and over and over and over and over again.

It never really works. It's just a reminder. But then when Jesus dies once, once, once, it's good enough. It's finally good enough.

[52 : 07] Cleanses, washes, purifies. And because they are washed and cleansed and purified in the blood of the lamb, verse 15, therefore, because of that, therefore, they're always before the throne of God and they're serving him day and night in the temple.

By the way, is there time in heaven? Are there days and night in heaven? I don't think so, but it's just a phrase to give us an idea that they're always there. they're priests in the temple.

Interesting, huh? They're in the real temple, not the earthly they're in the real temple. And they're welcome before the throne. Can you imagine?

You know, you grow up and you have a bad, you know, you do what you do, you sin and you fail and you fall and you make mistakes and you do more than make mistakes, you make some really, really bad willful choices.

And you get yourself in trouble and you've got lots of stains, you know, and you've got really, you really, if people really saw you, you know, look good. I mean, we can look good, but we know we're not.

[53 : 14] And all of a sudden, wow, now I'm welcome to stand in the most holy place in creation? How does that happen? Not because of me, because someone else is blood.

God, now I can stand in his temple. And then notice this, all these rewards come. They're serving him, they're before the throne, they're serving him, they're worshiping, we already know they're worshiping.

And he who sits on the throne, that's the father, right? He who sits on the throne, what does he do? He shelters them with his presence. Literally, he tabernacles.

He spreads his tabernacles. So, remember, it's a picture of a temple. And the very first temple was a tabernacle, right? It was just a tent. They had the Holy of Holies, and they had the Ark of the Covenant, and they had the lampstand, and the table of bread, and the, right?

That was the temple. Now it's a whole other temple. The tent is now God. All of heaven is his temple. And that's where they're serving him.

[54 : 26] fascinating picture. And then they're rewarded. The Father tabernacles all over them. Chapter 21, we'll talk about how God now dwells with man.

He shelters them from all their comforts. Here comes the really good stuff, right? This is the stuff I think maybe appeals to us. I don't know. Appeals to me. They hunger no more. They thirst no more. The sun shall not strike them nor any scorching heat.

You ever been scorched by the heat? The sun ever too hot for you? Go to Arizona. No, go to Texas. No, go to Mexico.

No, there's hotter. There's always a hotter place. Heaven will be better.

there. Yeah. It's not that it. Yeah. I don't know how to describe it. They're sheltered from all discomfort.

[55 : 29] Verse 17. Why are they sheltered? Why is it they get all this removal of pain? Because the lamb. It's the lamb.

We're back to the lamb again. The lamb is in the midst of the throne. He will be their shepherd. He will guide them to springs of living water. Remember Jesus said, I am the water of life. Come to me and drink.

There he is. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. That sounds like heaven, doesn't it? And by the way, all those thoughts that God dwells with man, that we're no longer hunger or thirst, that we're led to the streams of the water of life, the Father wiping the tears, all those promises are recorded also in chapter 21 of Revelation.

So we're getting a jump, peek, look forward. These are people that are already in paradise. So are these new promises?

Are these new promises, do you think? The wiping the tears and the sun not scorching and the no hunger and no thirst? That's New Testament, right? The Old Testament doesn't talk about that, does it?

[56 : 46] Well, actually, yeah, it does. That's why I asked it that way. It's not that creative, was it? So the Lord spoke of this promise of reward long ago, all the way back in Isaiah 49, promise to the Jews fulfilled in the true Jerusalem.

Isaiah 49, the context is really fascinating. Isaiah 49 says this, Now the Lord says, He who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord, and my God has become my strength.

He says, it's too light a thing for you that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel. It's too little of a thing for you just to work with one nation.

You deserve more honor than that. I will make you as a light to the nations, Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

This is Isaiah 49. Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, the Holy One, to the one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation. By the way, who do you think that is?

[58 : 08] Who is the one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation? That's the Messiah, right? Isaiah 53. The servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes, and they that prostrate themselves because the Lord who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.

He's speaking to Jesus. Who has chosen you, Messiah. Thus says the Lord, in a time a favor, I've answered you. In a day of salvation, I have helped you.

I will keep you and I will give you as a covenant to the people to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritage, saying to the, listen here, you will say to the prisoners, come out.

You will say to those in darkness, appear. They shall feed along the ways, on the bare heights shall be their pasture, there's a shepherd picture, they shall not hunger or thirst, here we go, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, why?

For he who has pity on them, Jesus the Messiah, will lead them, and by springs of water he will guide them. These are the same words we have in Revelation 7, right from Isaiah 49.

[59 : 31] And how is this promise of comfort possible? How can God bring the nations, how can he feed the prisoners, how can he bring people out of darkness?

How is that even possible so that they will never hunger or thirst and the sun will not strike them and they will come to springs of water? How is that possible? It's possible because God has said, you are more than one nation savior.

You will be the savior of the world. I will make you a light to the nations. God so loved the world that he gave his only son. He gave his son to all nations.

He comes to redeem them, he pays for their sins. He frees the prisoners and those in darkness. He shepherds the lost. Because God is holy and just, he will bring judgment.

That's what revelation tells us. He has postponed it, he has postponed it, he has postponed it, he has postponed it. But he will bring judgment. But God is also merciful and he forgives.

[60 : 46] And his son lays down his life, not for his friends, but for his enemies. He calls everyone to come.

He invites everyone to drink from the water of life. How about you? Have you come?

Have you taken the drink of water from his well? Do you know that God is holy and just and merciful? Do you recognize who God really is?

You know it in the deepest part of your heart. Do you acknowledge it? Do you recognize your own trouble with that? That yes, he's forgiving, but he's also a just and holy God and I'm accountable to him.

Do you recognize that you are accountable to him? You know it deep in your heart. I know it. Do you acknowledge it? You recognize your own rebellion.

[61 : 46] And then do you see that Jesus is your only answer? That you'll never fix yourself. You'll never, you need someone else to pay your price, to pay your debt, to fix your sin, to remove your shame, to cleanse your soul, wash your heart.

Do you believe? I don't mean the idea. Do you believe like verb believe? Do you trust? Do you lean on him? Do you abide in him?

Do you walk with him? If you don't, come. Just ask him. No special words, no perfect prayer.

Pray from your heart. Ask him. Ask him to change you. Ask him to forgive you. Ask him to wash you. Ask him to give you the real kind of faith. Ask him to even help you repent because that may be hard.

Ask him to help you to make the first step. And if you're a wandering saint, if you're struggling in your Christian life, maybe this last year has just been devastating for you, for your faith.

[63 : 01] Here's the reward of the one who will shelter you. Come, drink. Need a new drink? Right? I need a drink.

The sun's been scorching. I could use a drink. Not for my body, but for my soul. Come, come, come, come. Don't put it off.

If he's speaking to you right now, do not put it off. He is gently calling. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for this picture that is mysterious and we don't get all of the picture, but we see the big picture.

We see how you protect your servants and we see how you reward your servants. And Father, we don't need all the detail. We don't have to figure out all the details to recognize what it means to be a servant of you, to listen to you, to follow you, to lean upon you, to draw from you.

[64 : 08] Feed our soul today, Father. Draw us nearer to you that we might say with those saints above, salvation belongs to you.

Everything belongs to you. And we like it that way. Christ's name. Amen.