

# Revelation 7

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[ 0 : 00 ] of Revelation chapter 7, and we'll see what the Word of God has to say together. It says, And I heard the number of those who were sealed, 144,000, sealed, from every tribe of the sons of Israel.

From the tribe of Judah, 12,000, were sealed, 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 Benazir, Verse 9, 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 answered, saying to me, These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they and where have they come from?

And I said to him, My Lord, you know. And he said to me, These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple. And he who sits on the throne will spread his tabernacle over them, and they will hunger no longer nor thirst anymore, nor will the sun beat down on them nor any heat. For the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd and will guide them to springs of the water of life.

[ 2 : 16 ] And God will wipe every tear from their eyes. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day you've given us. Lord, we rejoice in the blessing we have of gathering together, Lord, and we celebrate the reading of your word.

We pray, Lord, as we have read it, Lord, that the truth would captivate our hearts and minds, Lord, that it would help us to understand more of your character, more of your love and your mercy and your grace. And Lord, by understanding it, we would draw closer to you in this day and in this time that you have called us to live.

Lord, may you be glorified and honored. May you be exalted and lifted on high. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. The word of God is very clear as it points to the book of Revelation.

And I love the book of Revelation as we have looked at it. Revelation is not the revelation of things to come. It is not even a revelation of end time events, but rather it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. And we see who he is in light of the things that are to come. We see who he is in light of things that will transpire in latter days. That is referred to in theology as eschatology, the study of end times.

[ 3 : 24 ] One of the greatest reasons why I love the book of Revelation, even with all of its confusion and all of its hard passages, is that it is the fulfillment or it is the end point of all of Scripture.

It really is the thing that the Bible is pointing to from the very beginning because it shows us in the beginning and the events that happen in the end. It is the entirety of God's dealing with mankind. There is a book in the Old Testament called Habakkuk. Habakkuk was a minor prophet. It is a great and powerful book. It is very hard to find if you are not familiar with the Old Testament.

It is through those little books there leading up to the end of the Old Testament. It is a little before the book of Malachi. But Habakkuk had this great prophecy. Habakkuk chapter 3 verse 2 says this, Lord, I have heard the report about you and I fear.

O Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years. In the midst of the years, make it known in wrath. Remember mercy. Habakkuk 3 verse 2. I'll read it to you again because it is so powerful.

[ 4 : 23 ] It says, Lord, I have heard the report about you and I fear. What report could this be? Habakkuk had been probably given a picture of God's judgment, of God's wrath, of the fact that God is holy and man is sinful and that God will not allow sinful man to continue to live unchecked.

And we see the fulfillment of that in the book of Revelation. It says, I've heard the report and I fear. I'm trembling. O Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years. In the midst of the years, make it known. In wrath, remember mercy.

What we see in Revelation 7 is the fulfillment of this. In wrath, God remembers mercy. He revives his work in the midst of the years. Two times in this passage, Habakkuk says, in the midst of the years.

And in the midst of the years, that means in the series of events. If we are looking at it through the study of eschatology and we are trying to understand what is going on, we know that looking at the book of Revelation, we are divided into three ways, really.

The things that are, or the things that were, the things that are, and the things that will be. The things that were are given to us in Revelation chapter 1. It is really John on the island of Patmos seeing a vision of the risen Lord.

[ 5 : 31 ] He's on the Lord's day. He's in the spirit on the Lord's day. He says, and he sees the risen Lord. That's the things that were. The things that are are Revelation 2, 3, 4, and 5. 2 and 3 being the letters to the seven churches.

So here are the things that are. It is the seven churches. It's the church age. Our understanding, or my understanding of the book of Revelation, is that following Revelation 3, the church is raptured. Does it say that?

No, but we understand that we get a picture of the church in heaven in Revelation 4, and we see it throughout the book of Revelation. And we can go to other passages in Scripture and see the reason behind this, but we're not here to discuss that.

So you have the rapture of the church. In Revelation 4 and 5, you have the scenes of heaven. You have God on the throne in the midst of heaven, and God wrote ruling because of his creative work. I know this is repetitious, but it is also beneficial. God has the right to rule because he created it. And he who created it owns it, and he who owns it rules it, right? And we can say amen to that. Creator is the one who rules it.

[ 6 : 31 ] Then not only does he have the right to rule because he created it, he went a step further, and we see that in Revelation 5. He has the right to rule because he redeemed it. We see the lamb that was slain before the foundation of the earth.

We see the lion of the tribe of Judah that is a lamb that was slain, but yet now is alive. And that is, he has a right to rule. I mean, think about this. Be amazed by this. God created it all, and then he took on flesh to redeem it all, and yet man still, to the greatest extent, to the majority of it, rejects it. It not only rejects its creator, man is in his sinful condition rejecting his redeemer. But God has a right to rule because of his creative authority and his redemptive authority, which means that if I created something and formed something, and I am the one who designed it, and I am the one who made it, then it rightfully belongs to me.

But if I lose that, now we're talking in human terminology because God never lost anything, but if for some reason I lose that, and then I buy it back, that means I redeem it, then it is doubly mine.

Not only did I create it, but I purchased it. That means I have the right to do with it what I will. And it is from this position that we see the rest of the book of Revelation.

[ 7 : 49 ] We see him opening up the seals, and we see the judgment, and we see in light of who he is, the judgment he brings upon man for who they are. And we began to see the opening of the seven seals.

We saw the four horsemen of the apocalypse. We saw that there was this false sense of security, this false peace with the white horse. And the false peace was followed by a horse of war, the red horse.

The false peace always brought about a certain war. And after war there became this famine, that is the black horse. And after the black horse there came death, that is the ashen horse or the pale horse.

These things followed very quickly after one another, and that is what we saw, and I'm trying to put this in time frame for you so that you can stand amazed at Habakkuk's prophecy, the beginning of the birth pangs of the tribulation.

Jesus spoke of these things in Matthew chapter 24, and he really referenced the four horsemen. Ezekiel saw the four horsemen himself and wrote to them. Isaiah spoke of the four horsemen, and these are the birth pangs or the beginning of the tribulation.

[ 8 : 50 ] And then seal number five and six were opened up. And seal five and six take us from the beginning to this event referred to in Scripture as the day of the Lord.

Now stay with me. I know it's getting deep. But the day of the Lord, to us, we say, well, it's the Lord's day. It's a great day. Well, in Scripture, this phrase, the day of the Lord, that means it's the day of his judgment, the day of his wrath, right?

The day of his authoritative power. We're not in the church age anymore when we're opening up the seven seals. So we're introduced to not just the birth pangs, but those birth pangs has been fully brought about.

He has given birth, if you will, to the day of the Lord. And now we have entered into what is referred to as the great tribulation. The four horsemen start for us the tribulation period, which, in the study of end times, is a seven-year period immediately following the rapture of the church.

This seven-year period begins with peace. There is a false sense of peace, and it really centers around one people group, that is the Jewish nation. We have a lot of Scripture that we would have to get to to really divide that out.

[ 9 : 59 ] I'm not going to take time to do it now, but maybe someday we'll have the opportunity. But for about three and a half years, Daniel refers to this in his 70th week prophecy in the book of Daniel.

For about three and a half years, there is peace. And at the midway point, that peace breaks. And really, everything falls apart. Because the world leader or the world ruler who had offered such peace now begins to wreak great havoc.

That individual we know is the Antichrist. That is the one taking the place. He is allowed to reign upon the world for seven years. Three and a half years of peaceful reign, three and a half years of tumultuous reign.

And in the midst of those years, remember Habakkuk. Let's go back to Habakkuk. I know I say a lot and I say it quickly. In the midst of the years, in the midst of the time, remember mercy.

In the midst of those times, during that great tribulation, really halfway through, God does what we see in Revelation chapter 7. And it is he stays true to his character.

[ 11 : 04 ] The temptation would be to read the book of Revelations and say, this is not the God I serve. This is not the God that I believe in because I believe in a God of love and mercy and grace. And I believe in a God of welcoming and a God of making peace with man.

But what I see in the book of Revelations is a God of judgment and vengeance and a God of holding man accountable. And the temptation, I'm saying that this is wrong, but the temptation is to say it must be two different gods.

But God is gracious because in the midst of that, he shows us he is still who he is. The problem is, is man is still who they are. Later on, we'll get to the book of Revelations and we'll see in a couple of chapters, well, man will refuse to repent.

And that shouldn't take us by surprise because we know many today who still refuse to repent. But I want you to see some truths of the enduring character of God, who God is or how he shines forth here in this passage, which is literally in the worst time in all of history.

That God stays true to himself. And friend, why do we look at it now? Because if this is who he is then, this is surely who he is now. Number one, we see the security he provides.

[ 12 : 17 ] We see the security he provides. John says, and after these things, that's a common repeated phrase in the book of Revelation, is introducing a new vision. John is literally just seeing one vision after another vision after another vision.

And after he saw the sixth seal being opened, then all of a sudden he saw this vision. He says, and after these things I saw, he said, four angels on the four corners of the earth holding the wind back. People say, well, this doesn't make sense. The earth doesn't have corners. The earth is spherical. That is, it is round. Many people, I believe rightly so, Bible scholars point to the fact that this is pointing to north, south, east, and west, right?

The compass corners. And they're standing on the four corners. But I believe it was a scientist by the last name Morris. I can't believe, I can't remember his first name. Somebody said, well, I think it's this Morris. And it might be, but it's okay.

He said, in actuality, today's science, now I'm speaking of today's science. This is one of the reasons I have to wear glasses. When I say today, most of the time I'm reading books from the 1800s, okay? Okay. So, in his days, science has actually proven that the world is not exactly

spherical.

[ 13 : 23 ] That there are four very distinct corners to the shape of the earth. Now, they're not corners like we would think that this room has four corners, but four really knows of where the winds proceed from.

And it's pretty amazing to read science as it goes through all these things. But either way, we're looking at the points of the compass, the four corners of the earth. And the angel's standing there holding the wind back.

What is this showing us? That God is in control even of the events that are going on at this time. This is something we've looked at through the breaking of the seals, right? That God allows, or really, he is the one opening the seal because it is the Lamb who is Jesus.

But what we see here is he also knows when and how to tell it to stop. So, he just says, stop. As a matter of fact, before the seventh seal is open, there is 30 minutes of silence in heaven and on earth.

Everything is just quiet. But for here, at this time, what we see is John says, I saw four angels at the four corners holding back the four winds so that everything was still. Think for that just for a moment.

[ 14 : 21 ] Everything on earth, still. These winds are destructive winds. We'll see them in just a minute or a little bit later on when we read the book of Revelations. We get into the sounding of the trumpets and we see exactly what these winds do.

We see God in his powers, omnipotent power, restraining his judgment for a moment. In the midst of the years, he's going to do something. And what is he doing? He says, I saw an angel ascending or another angel ascending, verse 2, from the rising of the sun.

What does that mean? That means from the east, right? The rising of the sun. Now, for those of you who have been with me on Sunday nights, I know it's been a long time since we've been on Sunday nights. The east means something in scripture.

Remember that? The east means something in scripture. I kind of catch you up from that. Anytime men moved from the east, that means they were heading west, they were moving from the presence of God. That starts in the book of Genesis.

And when he put them out of the garden, he moved from the east, right? He moved them away from him, moved them away from him, moved them away from him. Even in the construction of the tabernacle, the entrance was on the eastern side. So you had to go in towards the east.

[ 15 : 22 ] That means you were going towards the presence of God. So this angel is ascending from the east. It is coming from the presence of God. And he says something here in verse 2. He's ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God.

We'll find out later in the book of Revelation that seal is the name of God. He has the seal of the living God. And he cried out with a loud voice of the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and sea. Look at this.

We're looking at God's security, the security he provides, saying, do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bondservants of our God on their foreheads.

He stops everything. He says, wait just a moment. No more destruction. By the way, the church is gone. The church is not present. We're not in the church age, right? No more destruction. No more havoc. Everything be still.

Stop. You cannot do anything else until I have sealed the bondservants of the God on their foreheads. This is a theme we see in Scripture. We see these themes of God's people being preserved in great danger.

[ 16 : 20 ] One of the greatest pictures of this was in the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah. Righteous Lot. You say, well, I don't know how righteous Lot was. I know the story of Lot. Be careful because the Bible says in the New Testament he is righteous Lot.

Righteous Lot's soul was being tormented because of what was going on inside of Sodom. And he was there. Remember when the Lord decided to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for their sin, right? He's going to rain down fire, hell, and brimstone.

But there's this great picture in the Old Testament where the angels come in and they're telling Lot he needs to leave. And there's this phrase that we often kind of run over when we're reading Scripture that the angels of the Lord tell Lot, we cannot do anything until you get out of here.

We cannot do anything. God had pronounced judgment. God was going to judge, but God was restraining his judgment until he removed his person, right? Lot was secure. Lot was living worldly, but he was also secure. He was living by the appeal of the eyes. He saw a land that looked good and he went to it. He was not living what we would call a Christian life, but the Bible refers to him as righteous Lot.

[ 17 : 23 ] But the angel of the Lord said, we cannot do anything until you leave. And here we see this being played out again where it says that the angels were told to stop. You can't do anything until we put the name of the Lord on the foreheads of his bond servants.

These are the bondservants, the 144,000. There's been a lot of great hypothesizing throughout the years of who these 144,000 are. I know who they are not. They are not people that believe that they are part of the 144,000.

I don't recall out any particular denominations. Those who were still in these latter days, they are not those because it's very clear. They are not the church because the church has already been raptured. They are not those just waiting on some special calling or special person.

These are the 144,000 and the scripture is very clear that they are very distinct and they are also very Jewish. These are 144,000 Jewish individuals from the 12 tribes or from 12 tribes of the nation of Israel sealed in the midst of the years.

I told you that I believe that the tribulation period revolves directly around the Jewish people. And the reason I believe that is because this is something, another theme we see consistent throughout scripture. God's judgment is always around his people.

[ 18 : 36 ] The Egyptian captivity was a place, an incubator where God grew his nation. His nation rebelled against him. Then we have the Babylonian captivity, right? And one of the things that we find about the Jewish people is they were one of the most polytheistic people when they went into Babylon.

And when they came out of Babylon, there has never been a more monotheistic people, which means they went into Babylonian captivity worshiping many gods. They came out of Babylon only worshiping one god. And to this day, the Jewish nation still just worships one god, does not worship that god according to Jesus Christ, according to the truth, but still just focusing on this one god as a nation.

I know there are individuals and we can get through all that. But what we see is that God using captivities and seasons and trials to correct his people whom he called to himself. And the last of those would be the tribulation period.

Paul refers to this in Romans 9, 10, and 11, where after the fullness of the Gentiles, that is, after the complete number of the church, after the fullness of the Gentiles, God will begin to work on his people and calling the Jewish nation back to himself.

And it is really the worldwide events focusing there. And in the midst of those years, God does something gracious. He seals 144,000 by putting the seal of the Lord on them.

[ 19 : 52 ] Now this is amazing because what you see, and I know I'm giving you a lot of information, but we're looking at the security he provides. These 144,000 are believers in Jesus Christ who go through the tribulation untouched.

You remember when we looked at the opening of the fifth seal, you saw the martyrs underneath the altar of heaven. I told you they were believers who came to faith in Christ and they paid the ultimate price for their faith in Christ. They were beheaded. These are people who go through the tribulation untouched.

Why is that amazing? Because he who is on the throne during the tribulation is the Antichrist who wants nothing to do with people who believe in Jesus Christ. It would want nothing more than to rid the world of followers of Jesus Christ, who is trying to put himself in the place of Jesus Christ. And in the midst of all that, God puts 144,000 people and says, but you can't touch them. No matter what you do to them, you can't touch them. Friend, listen to me. When God seals his people, they are secure.

You say, well, that's great. That's great. Because during the tribulation period, some 144,000 Jewish people will have his name written across their forehead and they'll be sealed. No, what's great is the Bible says you are sealed until the day of redemption with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

[ 21 : 03 ] You are sealed until the day of redemption. And I don't care how difficult times get. I don't care how tumultuous the days are. I don't care how much seems to be coming against you. You are

sealed. And when you are sealed by, as a believer of Jesus Christ, friend, listen to me.

You are secure. You say, well, I know believers that are dying each and every day. Well, praise be to God that the thing we're hoping for is not this life. That would have been a great place for somebody to say amen, but I'll amen myself because this is not what we're longing for.

This is not what we were created for. The thing that we were created for, which is eternity in his presence, is secure no matter what anyone here does to us. We are sealed and secure.

We see the security that he offers, and he offers it in a broad display during the tribulation period, showing that even all of the attacks of Satan cannot destroy these 144,000 Jewish individuals.

You say, why are there 144,000? Stay with me. We'll just get to that. So number one, we see the security he provides. Number two, we see the sovereignty that he possesses. The sovereignty that he possesses.

[ 22 : 13 ] This means that God is in control. What is amazing about this passage, it says that he seals 12,000 from each of the tribes of the nation of Israel. And as you're reading that list, you say, well, something here doesn't seem right, right?

That's what you said. It's exactly what you said. Because, first of all, the tribe of Judah is mentioned first, and Judah is definitely not the firstborn. And you say, well, something doesn't seem right, because the Bible always puts the firstborn in his rightful position.

Well, not really, because there are some 19 various listings of the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel.

It's not always in birth order. And we also know that the two firstborn of Israel forfeited their birthright because of their wickedness and going and slaying and tricking the nations around them when this tragedy happened with their sister.

Remember that, right? When you go to the book of Genesis, understand that. And so Judah rose to the place of prominence. One thing you find throughout Scripture is that Judah always has more.

Judah has more land. Judah has more people.

Judah has more soldiers. Judah is the largest tribe. Judah seems to be in this rising place, and it should. Why? Because there is a lion from the tribe of Judah who is Jesus Christ our Emmanuel.

[ 23 : 20 ] So Judah is put first. And then some of you say, well, something doesn't seem right here, because I notice that there are two tribes missing. Number one tribe missing is Dan. What happened to the tribe of Dan?

That's what you said, right? I just don't know what happened to the tribe of Dan, because Dan doesn't seem to be there. And also, there is another tribe missing, and that is the tribe of Ephraim. Dan and Ephraim are missing.

You remember Ephraim. Ephraim was one of the sons of Joseph. It was Ephraim and Manasseh. Manasseh's in the list, but Ephraim is not. In the tribe of Dan's place is the tribe Levi. Levi is put there because Levi had no inheritance in the Old Testament because the Lord was their inheritance.

But they're here now because they're not looking at a land inheritance. They're looking at being the people of God. And then Levi takes the place of Dan. And Joseph takes the place of Ephraim.

Joseph was never listed in the Old Testament 12 tribes because his two sons were Ephraim and Manasseh.

And Joseph seems to take that, which means Ephraim kind of has a partial position there in this listing. But still, we're at this place where Dan is completely excluded. So that just doesn't seem fair.

[ 24 : 22 ] What we're looking at here is the sovereignty of God. That God chose 12,000 from each of these tribes distinctly and purposefully. One thing you need to understand about the tribe of Dan.

Dan was the tribe that introduced idolatry to the nation of Israel. Dan also was the tribe in which it was prophesied at the end of the book of Genesis that he will be a serpent in the way of his brothers.

That a serpent would arise from Dan. Pre-Christian Jewish thought. Okay, so this is before the church. Pre-Christian Jewish thought was that the Antichrist would arise from the tribe of Dan.

That he would come up out of this tribe. Dan, throughout the Old Testament, is full of rampant idolatry. And Ephraim follows that idolatrous tendency.

So we see God in his sovereignty saying, You have no part. You have no portion in this. We also see that God is sovereign in the fact that with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, when Rome came and besieged the city of Jerusalem and Jerusalem was destroyed, the Romans came in and completely overturned every stone in the temple.

[ 25 : 38 ] This is amazing because Jesus said that not one stone would be left on top of another. And they went in and destroyed the temple, Herod's temple, one of the great ancient seven wonders of the world. And the reason they did that is because Herod had overlaid so much of this temple with gold.

The Roman soldiers wanted the gold. They didn't necessarily just want to knock over all the rocks. It's that the gold had actually been overlaid on the wall. So they set it on fire to melt the gold so that they could get the gold out of the temple.

So they completely destroyed the temple. And when they set the temple on fire, they burned all the contents inside the temple. And inside the temple was the records of the genealogy of the nation of Israel.

That was the only place they were kept, which really is an amazing thing in Scripture because we see that even in Jewish theology or Jewish terminology, that there would be a descendant from the lineage of David who would sit on the throne.

And there's not but one who can prove his lineage to the descendants of David, and that is Jesus Christ. That's just pretty cool news because everybody else's ancestry has been destroyed. It was all burned up.

[ 26 : 39 ] But Jesus' ancestry has endured in the Word of God so that when he shows back up, and he will show back up, he'll say, I'll show you I have a right to the throne. It's right here in black and white.

The ancestry resides. So we see this here. But the second thing is that we no longer know who the 12 tribes are because they can't trace their descendancy back to the nation that's all been consumed.

So how in the world can we ensure that there are 12,000 from Judah, 12,000 from Manasseh, 12,000 from Levi, 12,000 from Simeon? How do we do that? Well, that's simple.

We don't. God is sovereign. God still knows who they are. And God knows the people he has called to himself. And in his sovereignty, he will ensure that 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes that he has chosen will be sealed.

This shows us, friend, listen to me. Man is not in complete control. God is in control of all things. He is not at a loss because man has destroyed some records.

[ 27 : 47 ] He is not at a loss because things don't seem to line up. God is sovereign. And he writes his name. Now, the reasoning behind these 12,000 from each tribe, these 144,000, these 144,000 sealed, secured believers who have been called through the sovereign grace of God, these 144,000 serve as 144,000 evangelistic witnesses to who Jesus Christ is during the most terrible time the world has ever seen.

And that leads us to the third thing. That God appoints not just 144,000 Jewish believers, 144,000 evangelists at one moment sealed.

When everything is under one world ruler, one worldwide ruler, one worldwide event, when everything is really brought together and all the world is looking at one another, now all of a sudden you have 144,000 evangelists.

Now, this is good news because we have seen throughout history what we call awakenings or great spiritual revivals where a number of people come, the day of Pentecost being the first one, where 3,000 people believed in Jesus Christ that day.

And their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. And we've seen over and over again, you have all these great, the Welsh revival, you have the Moravian believers who came out during the 1700s and 1800s, and they did such over a hundred year long prayer meeting, and they were bringing the gospel to all parts of the world.

[ 29 : 17 ] It was those who actually led to the conversion of Jonathan Edwards, who did all this other great work too. And we see the Wesleyan revival, and we see all these things that are going on, and people coming in great numbers, but we have never seen anything like is recorded in Revelation 7.

And what we're about to see, this is not the church, these are people who come as a result of the 144,000 evangelistic witnesses who are sealed and secured because of the sovereign grace of God during this great time.

So third and finally, or third we see, not finally, by the way, because there's four. I shouldn't have said finally, some of you got a false sense of hope, and I'm sorry about that. So third we see the

salvation he extends. God didn't just choose 144,000 just so 144,000 could walk around comfortable.

Pay attention to that. He didn't choose 144,000 just so 144,000 could endure. He chose them for a purpose, and he chose them to be evangelistic witnesses so that he could extend salvation. Now I'm just going to pause right there. If he's doing it that way then, he's doing it that way now, which means he didn't choose you and seal you so that you could sit comfortable and be still. He chose you and sealed you in the day that he's appointed you so that you could be his evangelistic witness for his glory.

[ 30 : 28 ] This is the enduring character of God. What God is like then is what God is like now. God chooses and seals his people so that they could be the proclaimers of his message.

Why? Because people need to hear the gospel. Some have said there's no greater motivation for the urgent pleading proclamation of the gospel than Revelation chapter 7 verses 9 and following. And we see this, this salvation he extends after these things. That's another vision, right? He saw the 144,000 being sealed. They are secure. They are chosen. God knew who they were in his sovereignty and his mercy and his grace.

And now we see the salvation he extends because of them or through them. After these things, he says, I looked and behold a great multitude. Now this is distinct and different than the 144,000 because this multitude says no one could count.

So we know this isn't the 144,000 because we can count them. It would take us a long time, but we can count them. John knew a very definite number. This number, no one knows. He says no one could count them. And look at this, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palm branches were in their hands.

[ 31 : 35 ] Tony Evans says, and I think very correctly here, and this is something that we need to understand as born-again believers in Jesus Christ, that we maintain our uniqueness, our cultural uniqueness even in heaven around his throne.

Because here you see them in all of their ethnos, that is their ethnicity. They are very distinct individuals from every tongue, from every tribe, from every people groups, gathered around the throne. It is not like once we are exalted and called to be in his presence and glory, all of a sudden we all look alike.

Praise be to God, we don't all look alike. Sometimes the fact that we look different creates chaos in the world. Does it not? And sometimes man wanting to fit other men in their image, and I'm not even talking about racial image, I'm talking about in all images, in even our society or our class, and we think that people ought to respond the same way we do, and they ought to talk the same way we do, and everybody ought to fit our bubble.

It creates this little problem. Well, that should never create a problem for the people of God, because the people of God are going to be gathered around the throne of God for all eternity with very distinct individuals who have been called to God from all different ethnicities and ethnos. They are going to be very clear, very distinct. This is why, as believers in Jesus Christ, friend, listen to me, this is not just some kind of racial thing, reconciliation thing, and all this. This is why, as people, believers in Jesus Christ, we ought to be those who share, proclaim the gospel with all people of all tongues and all tribes and all nations at all times, because those are the people we're going to be hanging out with for all eternity.

[ 33 : 05 ] Now, if that makes us uncomfortable, then we need to get right with Scripture. We need to understand that. We're going to be gathered together with people who don't look like us, don't act like us, don't talk like us.

I have a hard time understanding people who don't talk with a good southern drawl. I just do. You know, a lot of people who don't talk like me have a hard time understanding me, and that's okay. But it's going to be good when you put all that together, right?

And they begin to praise God together, and then you have this glory. And what you see here is that God is allowing different people to be together. So the question is, is how many different people you hang out with?

You say, well, not a lot. You know, I love the fact, and this is what I get excited about. I get excited when I can walk around, and people who don't look like me are still comfortable coming up to me. That's what I like.

I like being around people who don't look like me, don't act like me, maybe don't behave like me. You say, well, that doesn't make sense. What fellowship has light with darkness? Well, I understand. I'm not talking about fellowship. I'm talking about witness, right? And I love the fact that the people I'm intentionally trying to be around are not always like me, and I hope you're doing the same thing.

[ 34 : 06 ] Because reconciliation, by the way, it's not a White House event. It's not a government event. It's a church event. That's just the reality. And that's across all broad spectrums.

That's across all denominations. It's a church issue. I love the fact, until the home is right, the church will not be right. And I love how, I just want to stop right here.

I love how Tony Evans describes it. And he puts, by the way, he puts a responsibility on men. He says, men need to live with the right relationship with God. Because if the man's relationship with God is messed up, you have a messed up man.

If that man is married, now you have to follow me because it's a great picture. That messed up man now is a part of a family that is messed up because that man is messed up. So that messed up man has created a messed up family.

Now, if that messed up family joins the church, all of a sudden that church becomes messed up because you have at least one messed up family inside that church family. And one messed up family, as a result of that messed up man, now leads to a messed up church.

[ 35 : 07 ] And a messed up church is a part of a community. And when that messed up church is a part of a community, then all of a sudden, now you have a messed up community. And when that messed up community, which is a result of that messed up man, messing up his family, which messed up the church, messed up the community, becomes a part of the state, all of a sudden, you have a messed up state.

And that messed up state is a part of a nation, now you've got a messed up nation. That messed up nation is a part of the world, now you've got a messed up world. and that world's problems find their results and their core where?

With that man. Let's not make the world right. Let's make home right and see if we can let the world follow what the home does. I want to go ahead and tell you that will never happen.

You know why? Because this world is full of messed up men and will always be full of messed up men. Man is in a degrading condition, a downward spiral.

But the church ought to be the reconciling factor of that, showing and proclaiming as we see here the love and the grace of God so that as what we see in Revelation 7 verse 9, he saw these multitude of people gathered around the throne and they cried with a loud voice saying, Salvation to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

[ 36 : 18 ] And all the angels, look, the angels respond to their worship. 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 the sevenfold blessing.

Amen. Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen. And then one of the elders answered saying to me, These who are clothed in white robes, who are they and where do they come from?

Here's the question. Who are they? They're not the church. The church is already in heaven. That's the elders, right? Who are they? Like John does what we would do. Lord, you know. Now he's Lord with lowercase l, right?

It's not Lord Jesus. It's sir. It's almost like sir. Well, you know who they are. You tell me who they are. This elder said, who are they? And he says, my Lord, you know. And he said to me, these are the ones who come out of the great tribulation and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

These are those who responded to the proclaimed message of the 144,000. Now you see why God seals and secures his witnesses because he's calling people to himself.

[ 37 : 20 ] Some of you say, well, how can people believe in Jesus Christ during the tribulation period? Because God is doing his work. Remember that prophecy of Habakkuk. Revive your work in the midst of the years. What is the work of God?

God's work is calling men and women to himself. And the way he does it, he appoints 144,000 secure evangelists during the worst time that calls people worldwide.

They will reach every nation. They will reach every tongue. They will reach every people group. And people from all around the world literally will respond to their message. And they will accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Many of them will die a martyr's death. Some of them will die as a result of the wars and the famines and the plagues. Some of them will die as a result of the natural disasters. All of them will eventually die. But what you see here is they are in the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords when they die.

And they have come to faith in the worst time in history. And yet they are there saying, you are great, oh God. You are great, oh God. This is why I have such a hard time reconciling my mind with people who believe in Jesus Christ.

[ 38 : 20 ] I'm not here to beat us up. I'm just here to motivate us, right? To rebuke us if we will. Why as believers in Jesus Christ who definitely do not live in the worst time as it's going to be, having such a downward, downcast look.

Because if he's worthy then, he's worthy now. And we proclaim his praises and we worship and endure him in his presence. Here we see the salvation he extends. God is in the business of extending his salvation to a worldwide event.

Fourth and finally, this is the last one. Look at the shepherd he appoints. The shepherd he appoints because these are gathered around his throne. What you see is they are wearing white. That means they are wearing the garments of victory.

They are wearing the garments of praise. They are clothed in his righteousness. And it is almost this great mystery. It says they have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb and they came out white.

They dipped their robes in his blood. That is their clothing, right? Their life, their righteousness. His righteousness is imputed to them. And they are clothed in his righteousness, not their own righteousness.

[ 39 : 19 ] And they're gathered around the throne worshipping. And look at what it says in verse 15. For this reason, they came to him and they're before him. They're wearing his righteousness. Now look at the reward which they possess. For this reason, they are before the throne.

The first reward they have is they are before the throne. That literally means they're in the front row. I mean, these people who come to faith in Jesus Christ during the tribulation, they have front row seats to the throne of God. The first place they go in glory is they don't want to talk to Peter.

They don't want to talk to Paul. They don't want to talk to you. They don't want to talk to me. They run straight to the throne. And they're right in front of the throne of God. And they're captivated by the presence of God. And they'll worship in the person of God. And it says, and they serve him day and night in his temple.

They are not only before him, they're serving him. What a reward it is. And he who sits on the throne will spread his tabernacle over them. They'll have his shelter and protection. We see this in Psalm 91 where it says that he will cover his wings and he will shelter those who believe in him. And they will hunger no longer. Now they've just come out of a time of great famine, the tribulation time, right? They will hunger no longer nor thirst anymore. Nor will the sun heat down on them. Why does that matter? Because the scorching heat during those days will be almost unbearable.

[ 40 : 25 ] And nor any heat. Here it is. Look at the shepherd he appoints. Why do they have all these rewards? Each one of these rewards are directly connected to the one who is leading them. The shepherd who is guiding them.

Look at what it says. For the lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd. The reason they have all this is because that lamb, he is shepherding them. And when he shepherds them, this is what they can expect.

To be in his presence. To be serving him. To be comfortable there. To no longer have a concern or a care. Have all their needs met. That lamb is shepherding them. Friend, listen. That lamb is currently shepherding you.

If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, the Bible says that we have a great shepherd of our souls who is Jesus Christ. That's the same lamb. The enduring character of God. This does not show us what he's going to be. This is a revelation of Jesus Christ. This is who he is. If he is this at that time, he is so much more this at this time.

[ 41 : 31 ] This is the shepherd of our souls. One more thing that we see here. God will wipe every tear from their eyes. By the way, I know we've had times with this.

A time that seems confusing. You say, see, I told you there are no tears in heaven. This is the first mentioning in the book of Revelation where the tears are wiped from their eyes. First mentioning. There's a second mentioning. This mentioning is directly connected to those who came to faith or come to faith during the tribulation.

Their tears are wiped away. The second mentioning is that every eye in heaven has his tears wiped away. That, by the way, is in Revelation 20. So what does that tell us?

There must still be tears going on up until that new Jerusalem and the new heavens and the new earth are created. But for those who come to faith in Jesus Christ during the tribulation, respond and rush headlong into his presence, their tears are immediately wiped away.

I believe that we will sorrow and we will weep and we will mourn for those who have not received the gospel. And I do not want my sorrow to be a direct result of my lack of witness.

[ 42 : 48 ] I do not want my sorrow to be a direct result of my silence. So may we be those who boldly proclaim the enduring character of God to a world that desperately needs to hear it.

Would you pray with me? Lord, we thank you so much. We praise you for giving us this day, for allowing us to gather together. We thank you, Lord, for your word.

And we know that at times it is trying and testing. And, Lord, at times it makes us uncomfortable.

But, Lord, we thank you for the truth that is there. We pray that our lives will be molded and shaped by it.

That we would be more conformed to your image. That we would walk out of here looking more like you and less like us. Lord, may we be your hands. May we be your feet. May we be your instruments and your tools and your hand.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

[ 43 : 59 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 46 : 29 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 48 : 59 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.