

35. The Book of Revelation—7:1-8

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(3-17-21)

For the audio & video for this weeks' study click [here](#).

In our study in the Book of Revelation, we have moved into the bulk of the book —the judgments that are recorded in Chapters 6-19, also known as the Seal, Trumpet, and Bowl judgments.

Last week, we finished looking at the 6th Seal judgment which unleashed some terrifying cosmic disturbances in the heavens prompting many of the unbelievers on earth at that time to pray to the creation to kill them rather than them having to face the wrath of the Lamb (Jesus Christ).

The narrative then flows into Chapter 7 which begins with the words—**“After these things”**.

It's the same phrase that was used by John to begin Chapter 4—which in the Greek is *“meta tauta”*.

This is an important phrase in the Book of Revelation, connecting what comes before it with what comes after it—and yet forming a line of demarcation which also separates what comes before it with what comes after it as well.

In other words, the 6th Seal is finished (end of Chapter 6) and now between the 6th seal (Revelation 6:12-17) and the opening of the 7th seal (Revelation 8:1) there is a *‘pause’* to give us some time to ‘catch our breath’ so to speak as we pause to take in or think upon what we have just seen (thru John's eyes).

But also, to allow some things to take place before the opening of the 7th seal which will begin the 7 trumpet judgments—which is no doubt why John puts ‘meta tauta’ to begin Chapter 7.

What is coming is connected to what has already taken place—and yet separate in scope.

Revelation 7:1 (NKJV)

¹After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.

“...the ‘four corners of the earth’...

- *“Aha!”* the skeptic would shout—*“The Bible can't be taken literally because everyone knows the earth is round. How, then, can it have four corners?”* (God knows it's round—Isaiah 40:22)

The U.S. Marines ran an advertising campaign a few years back that said *“Our Marines are stationed on the four corners of the earth”*—it's not literal but figurative language.

Even so with this statement here in verse 1 of Chapter 7—it is not literal, it's simply a figure of speech—much like when people say today—the *“four points of the compass”*.

Stopping the winds implies the—*“calm before the storm.”*

God controls all of nature—during the day of His wrath, He will use the forces of nature to judge mankind.

Revelation 7:2-3 (NKJV)

²Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, ³saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

Things were *sealed* back then for a couple of main reasons—to show *ownership* and to *secure* or to protect.

Paul the apostle uses this idea to teach on the security of the believer in Christ—

Ephesians 1:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Paul is telling us that as soon as a person believes the gospel and receives Jesus as Savior—at that very instant they are saved and sealed with the Holy Spirit.

By saying this Paul is drawing from a practice that was very common in his day.

In those days many people couldn't read or write, so a man would have a signet ring made that could be used to represent his signature.

The ring would then be pressed into wax or some other soft substance that would eventually harden and act as his *seal*.

These seals would be used for a number of purposes—I'll mention a couple of the more common uses.

1. Ownership

A seal spoke of ownership and would have been very familiar to Paul's readers.

A merchant from Ephesus would often sail across the Aegean Sea to Greece or some other place and buy merchandise putting his seal on it signifying that he had bought and paid for it and it now belonged to him.

The merchandise would then be loaded on a ship and sailed to the port of Ephesus where he would go down to the dock and claim his property by showing the shipper his signet ring.

The seal made from the buyer's signet ring spoke of *ownership*.

When you received Jesus Christ, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit—in other words God bought and paid for you with the blood of His Son.

He sealed you with the Holy Spirit declaring His ownership of you—it's a finished transaction—a done deal!

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

2. Security (protection)

The second thing a seal spoke of was *security*.

Matthew 27:65-66 (NKJV)

⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make *it* as secure as you know how."

⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.

Once something had been sealed with the Roman seal—only someone greater than Caesar could break that seal.

- Since **God has sealed you in Christ** with the Holy Spirit the moment you put your trust in Jesus—you are absolutely secure.

You're secure because to break that seal it would take someone greater than God and since no one is as greater than God—you have nothing to worry about—you are eternally secure!

"Yes, but I can still blow it and lose my salvation." → *"Again, are you greater than God?"*

Romans 8 is one of the greatest Chapters in all the N.T. to prove the absolute eternal security of the believer in Christ.

It starts with *"No condemnation"* (salvation) and ends with *"no separation."* (hell)

Romans 8:38-39 (NKJV)

³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 1:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Are you "in Christ" this evening—if you are, then you are secured there safely forever.

If not, then you're outside the safety and protection of Christ and the wrath of God abides on you.

What you need to do to escape the judgment of God is to accept Jesus' offer of marriage and make a commitment to Him by inviting Him into your heart as Lord and Savior.

When you do, you will be placed safe and secure in Christ, sealed with the Holy Spirit and guaranteed that your voyage through life will end in heaven where the Father will claim you as His possession forever.

That is the same idea of what is being communicated in Revelation 7—God seals His servants in their foreheads in contrast to the **"mark of the beast"** that Antichrist will give those who follow him on their foreheads (Revelation 13).

This sealing in Revelation 7 is a sealing to show *ownership* (these people belong to God)—and further, they were sealed for *protection*.

God has preserved Israel through past judgments that He has brought upon nations they were living in at the time—the 10 plagues upon Egypt being one example (Goshen being one example—Explain).

But the sealing of God’s servants in Revelation 7:2-3 reminds us of what God said to the prophet Ezekiel in Chapter 9 of his book—which I believe is a foreshadowing of Revelation 7 and God sealing of His 144,000 servants in the Great Tribulation—

Ezekiel 9:3-6 (NKJV)

³ Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, who *had* the writer's inkhorn at his side; ⁴ and the LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it." ⁵ To the others He said in my hearing, "Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. ⁶ Utterly slay old *and* young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom *is* the mark; and begin at My sanctuary."

Also, look at how God sealed Noah and his family in the ark to protect them from His worldwide judgment back then—and as such, they became a type of the 144,000 He seals from judgment during the Tribulation Period.

Who are these 144,000?

Many different groups have claimed to be the 144,000—for example:

- *Jehovah Witnesses are one of them. The J.W.'s originally claimed they were the 144,000 and when their group reached that number—they would all be taken to heaven. But when their group surpassed 144,000—then they had to get a “new revelation” and so they now say that only the first 144,000 of their group would live in heaven while the rest would live in God’s Kingdom on the earth.*
- *Historical Mormonism also claimed to be the 144,000.*
- *Ellen G. White and the Seventh Day Adventists claim to be the 144,000.*
- *Garner Ted Armstrong and his Worldwide Church of God claim to be the 144,000.*

Most Bible scholars either regard the 144,000 as the Church or as converted Jews, who get saved during the Tribulation Period—i.e. ‘Tribulation Saints’.

This is not a small issue in that—if these 144,000 are symbolic of the Church it means that the Church is definitely going into the Tribulation period!

Albeit, sealed from the judgments of God that He is pouring upon unbelievers because “*God won’t punish the righteous with the wicked*” and “*We [as members of Jesus’ Church] have not been appointed to wrath...*”

I really don’t understand the confusion—I think the Holy Spirit makes it crystal clear who these people are—

Revelation 7:4 (NKJV)

⁴ **And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred *and* forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed:**

One hundred forty-four thousand Jewish believers will be marked and sealed by God as His servants (evangelists) during the Tribulation.

To further clarify for all those who still might have some doubts as to the identity of the 144,000—the Holy Spirit goes on, in tedious detail, to list them—

Revelation 7:5-8 (NKJV)

of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed; ⁶ of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed; ⁸ of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.

These are 144,000 Jews—not Jehovah’s Witnesses or Mormons or the Worldwide Church of God people—or any other group or cult.

Why is it that so many groups make themselves the 144,000
or try to spiritualize the text
so as to write Israel out of the picture?

The answer to that is something called Replacement Theology.

Replacement Theology teaches that the Church has replaced Israel because the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah. This means that all of God’s promises to Israel were forfeited and passed on to the Church and Israel is now completely out of the picture—God is done with Israel and the Church has completely replaced Israel in the plan of God for the world.

Again, this is known as Replacement Theology—but it also goes by the labels “*Reconstructionism*” or “*Kingdom Now*” teaching.

This idea is by no means new—one pastor gives a good overview of Church history to help us understand some important points—

“Following Constantine’s conversion in A.D. 312, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. At this point, Christian teachers, thinkers, and theologians said, “*Uh-oh. We’ve been teaching the kingdoms of this world are going to fall—but now we’ve got a Christian in power in the person of Constantine.*”

So, Origen, a heavyweight Bible teacher and philosopher of the day said, “*I think we’ve been reading the Scriptures wrong. All of the promises given to Israel are simply allegories and illustrations.*” And as a result, the power and potency, the effectiveness and impact of the church decreased steadily.

Origen left the scene and was followed by Augustine, who was such a gifted proponent of the case for the allegorizing of the Old Testament, that even in some of today’s King James Bibles, headings of the sections that speak of blessings upon Israel read “*Blessings Upon the Church,*” while sections that speak of curses upon Israel read “*Cursing’s Upon Israel*” (Micah 6–7).

Augustine was eventually followed by Martin Luther. And Luther, although a giant of the faith, was terribly wrong on one issue—He hated the Jews. That’s why many Protestant pastors supported Hitler well into his regime...

God is *not* through with the Jews (Romans 11). Because the promises He made to them were *unconditional*, they cannot be forfeited.”

One hundred forty-four thousand Jewish believers will be sealed by God as His servants (evangelists) during the Tribulation—144,000 “Paul the apostles”!!.

And as we just said, to further clarify for all those who still might have some doubts as to the identity of the 144,000 people—the Holy Spirit goes on, in tedious detail to list them in verses 5-8—*“12,000 from this tribe, 12,000 from this tribe...”*

(And notice that Jews from all 12 tribes are sealed—there are not 10 lost tribes!—Explain)

There are 29 lists in the Bible of the 12 Tribes of Israel—that often place the tribes in different orders.

The original list appears in Genesis 35:22-26 and the last list (chronologically) appears in Ezekiel 48:30-34 which is speaking about the Millennial Kingdom.

But there is something wrong with the list of the 12 Tribes as they are listed in Revelation 7—something is missing.

Come back next week and we’ll look at what it is!

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Want to know more? Click [here](#).

Reach out to us [here](#).