

Revelation Chapter 7

An Interpretation

Charles Dailey © 2015

Revision of 8/17 NASB Printed 1/10/2026

Introduction:

Following our view that history is being unfolded for the saints in the seven churches of Asia, we have watched as the four horse-men revealed successful warfare followed by civil strife, famine and death. The saints wanted to know if vengeance was coming and the answer was to wait a little longer. Then overwhelming changes took place in the Empire and we noted the collapse of paganism and the legalization of Christianity.

Now, great forces are about to be unleashed against the Empire, but they are held back for a little while.

(1) After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree.



- In the painting, the winds are behind the angels.
- After this, that is, after the opening of the sixth seal in the previous chapter.
- B. W. Johnson:
I saw four angels. The vision that appears before his eyes

is that of **four angels** at the **four** points of the compass, **holding four winds** to prevent them from rushing in destruction upon the earth. These certainly represent four destructive powers which are held back for a time from the **land**, the **sea**, and the vegetation of the earth.

- These were good **angels** holding back **winds** of great violence from harming the **earth**.
- **Sea, earth** and **trees** might be understood literally or they may be symbolic language for **nations** and **governments**.

Discussion: What are some ways that God controls world political powers as he was doing in this verse?

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



- **B. W. Johnson:**

I saw another angel. The picture is that of an angel having **the seal of the living God**. The seal was a mark of ownership. The **seal of God on the forehead** would mark those sealed as God's.

The **seal mark** on the forehead would be visible to everyone; hence the seal in the forehead has been understood to be the public confession and profession of Christ. **This angel** would thus symbolize a great and successful movement to evangelize the race.

Do not harm the earth. The **four winds** are forbidden to do their work of destruction until the sealing has been accomplished; or in other words, until the preaching of the gospel has wrought a certain result.

- This **angel**, like the wise men, came from the east and spoke **loudly**. He had God's **seal** of authority to restrain the **four angels**.
- There was a definite time goal that had to be met before the winds could be loosed. The **bond-servants of God** had to be **sealed on their foreheads** first.

(4) And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

- John didn't see the sealing, but he **heard** the results.
- Those **sealed** were **the sons of Israel**. A sizeable, but countable, number among the Jews came to Christ.
- The sons of Israel were numbered in Exodus 30:12:

When you take a census of the sons of Israel to number them, then each one of them shall give a ransom for himself to the LORD, when you number them, so that there will be no plague among them when you number them.

In this case, each man had to give a ransom for himself to the Lord. In the New Testament, Christ gave Himself as a ransom for all.

1 Timothy 2:5-6 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.

- Here in Revelation 7, the people of God were also numbered.
- The list that follows is not identical to the listing of the sons of Israel in Genesis.

(5) from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, (6) from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, (7) from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, (8) from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.

- The names of the sons of Jacob are interesting. Leah and Rachael were making prophetic statements as they named their sons:

| | | |
|--------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Judah | = I will praise the Lord | Genesis 29:35 |
| 2. Reuben | = He has looked on me | Genesis 29:32 |
| 3. Gad | = Granted good fortune | Genesis 30:11 |
| 4. Asher | = Happy am I | Genesis 30:13 |
| 5. Naphtali | = My wrestling | Genesis 30:8 |
| 6. Manasseh | = Making me to forget | Genesis 41:51 |
| 7. Simeon | = God hears me | Genesis 29:33 |
| 8. Levi | = Joined to me | Genesis 29:34 |
| 9. Issachar | = Purchased me | Genesis 30:18 |
| 10. Zebulun | = Dwelling | Genesis 30:20 |
| 11. Joseph | = God will add to me | Genesis 30:24 |
| 12. Benjamin | = Son of his right hand | Genesis 35:18 |

- Now notice what happens when the meaning of the names are combined, *in the same order*, into a paragraph:

I will praise the Lord for He has looked on me and granted good fortune. Happy am I because my wrestling God is making me to forget. God hears me and is joined to me. He has purchased me a dwelling. God will add to me the Son of His right hand." (The words in light face are supplied to complete each thought.) -- © 2003 Word of Truth Radio.com

- The order listed is the listing here in Revelation. Dan is omitted and **Joseph** is included. **Joseph** had two son who were considered half tribes originally.
- When the sons were named, the order was slightly different. The change came here in Revelation.

Discussion: What Old Testament promises are fulfilled in verses 4-8?

(9) After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, 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; (10) and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."



- John is reporting two groups in this chapter 7.

- The first group is of Jewish heritage (vs. 4) and can be **counted**. Numbers in Revelation are usually figurative, so we take these figurative numbers to mean that the total of people could be **counted**.
- This contrasts clearly with verse 9 where there was a group **which no one could count**. Verse 9 reinforces our explanation of the meaning of 144,000 as a measurable number.
- This numberless **multitude** stood before **the throne** and the **Lamb**. They wore **white**, showing purity. They carried **palm branches** to celebrate, just as the crowds waved **palm branches** as Jesus entered Jerusalem.
- Their loud voices praise **God on the throne** and **the Lamb**. They are thankful for their **salvation**.

(11) 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, (12) saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanks- giving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

- The **angels** praised the success that **God** was having and His personal qualities as well.

(13) 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?"

- The question was not designed to learn from John—who could not possibly know the answer. It's purpose was to focus on **who** the people are and **where they came from**.

(14) 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."

- The elder now supplies the answer: **they came out of the great tribulation**.
- A reminder of the symbolic use of words is that these believers had **washed their robes** in **blood** and made them **white**. It is the **shed blood** of Jesus that brings purity before God.

Discussion: In the church world, there is a growing emphasis on justice and equality. What should the emphasis be according to verse 14?

(15) "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. (16) "They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; (17) for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

Discussion: God will wipe every tear from their eyes. There are many implications here. Identify a few.

- This description may have been foreshadowed by the time when Israel was in the wilderness after leaving Egypt.
 - God inspired workmen to build and furnish a tabernacle where His name was worshiped.

Exodus 31:1-5 Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. "I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of crafts- manship, to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship.
 - God supplied Israel's food in the form of manna so they would not be hungry. Exodus 16:35:

The sons of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.
 - He provided shade from the scorching heat Psalms 105:39:

He spread a cloud for a covering, And fire to illumine by night.
 - And water so they would not thirst. Exodus 17:6:

Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may

drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

- Moses was their shepherd:

Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people—where is he who brought them through the sea, with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them ... Isaiah 63:11 NIV

Now the Lamb will be Israel's shepherd.

- There had been plenty of causes for tears. Believers may have been torn from loved ones. They may have been tortured because of their public stand for Jesus.



- Tomlinson:

The theme has been the sealing of the servants of God, both of the Jews and the Gentiles. But while we have been absorbed in this task we must not lose sight of the fact that four destructive agencies were being withheld until this sealing was completed. These powers were restrained until some great work of the church could be accomplished.

The eighth chapter continues with the opening of the seventh and last seal, in the first division of which, this quartet of destruction is let loose under the symbolism of the blowing of four trumpets in succession. We shall find that these first four trumpets heralded the four tides of invasion which swept over the western half of the Roman Empire. But before these great catastrophes fell upon the western part of the empire, did the church experience a great triumph? Let US remember this is a book of great symbolism and this is a symbolic picture of great historical events connected with the welfare of the saints. We have already learned under the sixth seal that Constantine had embraced Christianity and by decree in A.D. 313 ordered the destruction of pagan temples and the abolishing of pagan worship in the empire.

Thus we see that the church of Christ had grappled with

the ancient pagan religions and, after centuries of trial and untold suffering, had won a glorious victory. The temples of Jupiter, Mercury and Mars were closed and their idol worship forbidden. If a person today could have visited Rome in the end of the second century he would have beheld a pagan world. Had they visited the eternal city in the latter portion of the fourth century he could have hardly believed his eyes, for he would have looked upon an empire blessed with churches filled with followers of the Christ.

Until this sealing of the saints was completed, the four winds of destruction were held back. It was a definite act of God to see that they were restrained from their missions of destruction until Christianity had captured the empire. Had these four destructive agencies done their work before this great victory of the church in the sowing of the seed of the kingdom everywhere, Christianity could never have survived the wreck of the empire and the passing of a civilization hoary with age.

Christ indwelling in the hearts of converted Romans helped them to rise above the ruins of the past. The invading hordes from the north laid aside their paganism and embraced the Christian belief from those whom they had vanquished.

- **John T Hinds:**

The purpose of the visions in this chapter must have been for the encouragement of the seven churches to whom the letters were sent. The hope of such glorious rewards would stimulate them in the struggles against persecutions, suffering, and death that had been pictured in the seals. In the same way such promises should encourage all saints to meet faithfully any trials they are called to face. So used, the lessons in Revelation are of great value to Christians in all ages.

Questions

1. John saw four angels holding back four winds. (Verse 1)
2. Another angel came from the west having the seal of God. (2)
3. There were 144,000 Gentiles in the story. (4)
4. The names of Jacob's twelve sons are precisely like the book of Genesis. (5)
5. An uncountable number of Jewish people were converted. (9)
6. The angels and elders were criticizing God. (11)
7. The blood of Jesus brings purity. (14)
8. Hunger, thirst and tears will not be present for those before the throne. (15-17)
9. God had inspired workmen to build the tabernacle in Exodus. (15)
10. God had kept Israel from hunger in the Exodus story (17)