The Mysterious 144,000 — Delivery Transcript

Revelation 7 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, September 26, 2021 · *Birth Pains*

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If you got a Bible, you can open it to the book of Revelation chapter 7. This is one more week in the book of Revelation before we take a little bit of a break. You know, if you are new to Broadview, the way we typically do church, we pick a book of the Bible and we move through it line by line, verse by verse, that way if you feel like the preacher's stepping on your toes, you know I'm not picking on you, I'm just doing the next verse, all right? That's kind of how we roll.

But the last couple of weeks in particular have been like drinking from a fire hydrant. There's been a lot of information. It was kind of difficult to take it all in. And if you felt like you were drinking from a fire hydrant, just imagine being the fire hydrant. It was wearing me out as well— the level of preparation that went into the last several weeks. And we're getting to a point in the book of Revelation where we're at a stopping place. We are finishing the seven seals today in Revelation chapter 7.

And there's two more groups of seven. There's the seven trumpets and the seven bowls. And each of them are thematically a cohesive whole. And so after a couple of weeks we're going to go back to the trumpets and do just that. But before that happens, we're going to take a two-week break and we're going to have a little mini-series that's going to prepare the way for a spiritual growth campaign we're doing as a congregation. Starting October 10th all the way through to November 21st, we're going to have a six-week spiritual growth campaign that asks you to do two things.

And they are challenging things, depending on your use of social media and your engagement with the Word. But we're asking you to consider going on a fast from all forms of social media or at least the forms that you are habitually engaged with— things like Facebook, Instagram. If you're spending hours and hours scrolling mindlessly like many of us do, I'm challenging you to consider fasting from that for six weeks and instead unplug

from the noise of social media and plug into the Word of God. Some of this is coming from personal experience and in leading groups of guys throughout the years.

When I raised the question, how many of you read the Bible on a daily basis, how many of you have a vibrant daily relationship with the Lord where you're praying and reading the Scriptures on a daily basis— and these are good, godly guys, leaders in the church— and most of them will say, if they're honest, you know, I don't do that like I want to. Maybe it's once a month or maybe I'll be good for a couple of weeks and then it kind of pans out. And I get busy doing other things.

And there's a desire, a general desire to know God, to commune with God, to interact and engage God in the Scripture and through prayer. But the discipline has not been there and the habit has not been developed and there's a disconnect. At the same time, for many of those individuals there is a sense in which they're spending too much time on the screen. If you've ever had an Apple device, you know the little thing they have called Screen Time. Does anybody else get a Screen Time notification every Sunday right before church?

That's when mine comes in and I'm like, I'm a terrible Christian. I spend so much time on this— YouTube, you know, YouTube's my thing. And it's, you know, it's mentally not super healthy, the things that social media algorithms are built to do. If you research this, they are built to play on our anger and our rage and our anxieties to get us all riled up and that's— you know, they're making a good profit, but it's not mentally healthy for us to spend hours and hours and hours on these platforms. And so in an effort to— if this is an issue for you— in an effort to kind of break the hold that screens can sometimes have over particularly younger people.

We're wanting you to unplug from that noise and plug into the Word. And so the social media fast is the first thing. The second thing is a Bible reading plan we're going to do as a church. And if you're not used to reading the Bible, if you have never done this before, we're making it really easy. We're going to do one chapter a day with hand-selected passages from the Gospel of Mark and the book of Ephesians, James, and 2 Thessalonians. And so these will be passages that should immediately resonate with you.

They're not going to be super, super complicated. You'll spend, you know, however much time you want to spend reading that chapter, praying, and then we'll give updates and encouragement and devotionals along the way. We're not going to do that on our social media channels because social media channels for our church are going dark. For those six weeks we will not post as a church on Twitter or Instagram or Facebook. And any posts or information that we do share or make will be through our church app. So if you don't have our church app, this would be a good day to download it.

Apple, Android, Amazon, whatever device you have, you can find our app in your app store. Just type in Broadview Baptist Church and you'll see a messaging feature in the app in the upper right hand corner. And if you sign up for that feature— if you click that button and create an account, you can use your Facebook login or you can create your own using an email. But when you create that account, you'll see groups to which you can belong. And one of those groups is called Off the Grid. That's the name of the campaign.

You can join that group and get the daily updates. You'll get the Scripture passage. You'll get a little devotional, little prompts for prayer. And we're going to do it for six weeks and we're going to prayerfully expect God to move, not only in the lives of us individually, but in our life corporately as a church. I think one of the biggest hindrances to seeing God do what I believe He wants to do in our church is this absence of daily engaging God in the Scriptures and through prayer. I think our church desires this.

I think many of you would say, I want to have this kind of relationship with God. I just have not found myself having developed that habit. I don't know how to start, I don't know how to stay engaged, and it's just like anything. Have you ever tried to start working out and you did it all by yourself? It's really challenging to do that. Or if you change your diet, but your spouse doesn't and you see— this is what's happening in our house right now. I'm just getting on this health kick, and I'm still downing the Dr Peppers and Blue Bell ice cream every night, and she's like, I hate you.

It's not very kind of me to do that. In fact I should probably stop right now having confessed this to you all. But when you do it together, when you do it as a community you're more likely to succeed. And that's true spiritually as well. So if we can all commit to do this with one another. And again, you can do whatever degree. If you don't want to get off all the social, don't. But if it's a hindrance to your walk with God, if it's robbing you of time spent with the Lord, unplug.

Get off the grid and reconnect with God in the Word. It's six weeks, it's one chapter a day, and you're doing it with your church family. And I think if we can all commit to it, even if we have 80% commit to it, the Lord could do something really special in our church family. So we're starting October 10th. We're going to run it for six weeks. And then on November 21st, we will celebrate what God has done during those six weeks. Every Octo— every November— did I say October? November 21st.

Every November, the Sunday before Thanksgiving, we have a Thanksgiving meal in our church. We invite all the services, both campuses. We come and we break bread together or we eat dressing and turkey together. And before that we have a worship service where we, you know, praise the Lord and give testimony to the things for which we're thankful. But this year's Thanksgiving service will revolve around what God has done in our church those six weeks as we've intentionally fasted and prayed and engaged with God in the Scripture. And

I'm really personally excited to hear the cool stories that are going to come about as we pursue this spiritual growth as a church family.

So put that on your calendar November 21 for the climax of the campaign at 5:00 p.m for the service, 6:00 p.m for the meal, and then prayerfully consider to what degree God would have you engage in this enterprise, in this six-week plan. You'll hear more about it in the next couple of weeks, but I wanted to put it on your radar now. All the details you can read in the last weekly update that I sent out a week ago. And then in the next couple of days there'll be a new update with a new video to explain more about these things.

If you don't get those updates, just go to the website. You can sign up on the bottom, scroll down, sign up for the weekly update. But that explains why we're taking a break from Revelation, and today we're wrapping up Revelation chapter 7 to complete this little section we've been in. If you're new to our church, by the way, if you feel like, oh man, I got in right in the middle of this deal and I don't know what's going on, the book of Revelation is very easy to summarize in some ways.

The first three chapters were letters to various churches there in Asia Minor. When you get to chapter 4, which we did several months ago, you see John ushered up into heaven, and he sees this vision of heavenly worship. And John uses this what's called apocalyptic language. He uses symbols and metaphor and picturesque language to describe what he sees. He talks about a big throne at the center of heaven. And all of these amazing creatures that were around the throne. There were lights and glory and colors. You had these myriads upon myriads of angels.

You had these four living creatures with a face of an eagle and a lion[1] and different faces to represent all of creation. And you had twenty-four elders, which many think represent the people of God, Old Testament and New Testament people of God. They were like representatives. They were not themselves the people of God, but they represent the people of God. Some think that they're angels. Then when you get to chapter 5, and this, if you're taking notes, you can write this down. In Revelation chapter 5, we get to where we're kind of at today.

In John, the camera shifts away from the throne and to the Lamb. And the Lamb is, of course, Jesus Christ, and he is described as the lion from the tribe of Judah and the Lamb who was slain. There's this search that ensues in heaven and under heaven, on the earth and under the earth. They're trying to find someone who's worthy to take the scroll. And to open the seals, or to break the seals and to open the scroll. That scroll contained the future plan of God for the rest of the world.

The rest of that plan was a culmination of healing the brokenness of this world, of taking heaven, bringing it down to earth, making injustice just, that hope that every Christian has

that God will make it right someday. That's contained in the scroll, but the scroll couldn't be unrolled unless the seals were broken, but nobody was worthy to break the seals until they found Jesus, and Jesus is exalted as this one who is uniquely worthy to break the seals and open the scroll, and so that's what he does. He takes the scroll, he begins to break the seals.

That's what Revelation chapter 6 is all about. And every time Jesus breaks one of the seals, there's a corresponding event that takes place on the earth and they're bad events. It's bad news bears for the world. Peace and prosperity are taken from the earth. You see war and poverty and famine and all sorts of bad mojo take place on the earth. There is mass death and martyrdom of believers. It is a season in which the people of God will require incredible endurance and patience, and we talked about that last week.

If you want to hear all about it. When you get to the end of chapter six, it culminates with these cosmic signs and wonders and really fanciful language of the earth about to receive the judgment of God. You would expect when you open Revelation chapter 7 to get the seventh seal, but you don't. Instead, when you get to Revelation chapter 7, which is where we're at today, you have a parenthesis or a pause. It's kind of like if you've ever watched a movie and the plot is developing and then, boom, you have a flashback.

And the color schematic changes and it becomes sepia toned and those flashbacks kind of fill in the gaps of what was taking place in the main narrative of the movie. Well that's a parenthesis, and that's what Revelation chapter 7 is. It's a filling in of the gaps to say, while this tribulation has been breaking out on the earth, here's what's been happening on the other side of the equation. And John gets this vision of heaven of these angels sealing 144,000 Jews, and then he has a heavenly vision of a vast multitude of people before the throne, just like we saw in Revelation 5, worshiping the Lamb who was slain.

So let's read our passage, Revelation chapter 7, and then unpack it a little bit. So John starts out in verse 3. You have these angels at the four corners of the earth. They say, do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we seal the servants of our God on their foreheads. And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000 sealed from every tribe of the Israelites. And then he actually lists all of the tribes. You got the tribe of Judah listed first, even though he wasn't the firstborn, but that's again that's a reference to Jesus, the lion from the tribe of Judah.

Then it goes down Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin these are twelve different tribes of Israel. There's a little bit of a mismatch on some of the names that's quite interesting. We don't have time to get into it. But you have a remnant of Israel there with the 144,000. And then after this, John says in verse 9, I looked and there was a vast multitude. From every nation, tribe, and people and language, nobody could number, we're talking billions of people standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

And they were clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb. Separate from that vast multitude are the angels and the elders. The angels stood around the throne, along with the elders and the four living creatures. They fell face down before the throne and they worshiped God. And their song is different than the vast multitude. In their song, they say, Amen. Blessing and glory and wisdom, and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever.

Amen. Then one of the elders, one of the twenty-four, comes up to John and he asks a question. John, who are these people in the white robes? And where did they come from? And I love the irony. John says, I don't know, bro. You live here, not me. You tell me, sir, you know. And then he told me, these are the ones coming out of the great Tribulation. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And for this reason they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple, and the one seated on the throne will shelter them.

They will no longer hunger. This is Old Testament language here. They will no longer hunger, they will no longer thirst. The sun will no longer strike them, nor will any scorching heat. For the Lamb who is at the center of the throne will shepherd them. He will guide them to springs of the waters of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eye. Now we could spend weeks, months going into Revelation 7. It is a controversial chapter because of this 144,000. There's a lot of ink spilt, a lot of debate on who these people are.

Some think they're the church, some think they are a Jewish remnant, some think— is it the Jehovah's Witnesses who believe they're the 144,000? There's a great show on the CW called The 100 that kind of plays into it; somewhat people think this is these post-apocalyptic people who are going to rebuild the world. A lot of ink spilled and we're not going to get into all the debate. I want to ask a bigger, more important question. And that question is, why does John put this group of 144,000 next to this other group, a vast multitude from every tribe, tongue, and nation?

And I think if you ask that question the answer is really fascinating. I don't think John does it by accident. It's an intentional, strategic decision to communicate something very important about the heart of God. If you're taking notes, I think that John puts these two people next to one another to powerfully illustrate the redemptive plan of God from the very beginning. And what I'm going to try to do this morning with the time we have left is to not only show you that plan that shows up in Genesis, but to show you how it is worked out through Genesis, throughout the prophets in the Old Testament and culminated in Revelation chapter 7.

And the language that's used, the imagery that's painted— without a shadow of a doubt in my mind, I believe this is John looking back at his Old Testament and saying, this is where

history is headed. This is what the end of history is going to look like, and it is the fulfillment of everything God promised from the very beginning. So let's start by understanding the 144,000. I'm not going to go into the debate. I'm just going to give you my view. I think these 144,000 people are a Jewish remnant. I think it's a remnant of Jewish people from twelve different tribes.

I know people will say the twelve tribes have been destroyed. There's no records, so on and so forth. And you know, I get all that, but it's not to say that the bloodline isn't there somewhere and it's not to say God cannot select a group of one hundred and forty-four thousand or more or less— it's not as though he cannot select a definite number of Jewish people to accomplish his purposes during the tribulation, which is what I think this reference is. You have the angels sealing this group of 144,000, which is a way of God saying, you belong to me.

I've got a purpose for you. And I think it's also a seal of protection of these Jewish people during the tribulation. So I think it's a reference to 144,000 people from the 12 tribes of Israel. Again, I don't want to get super technical on the number. Some say, is it literally 144? And am I one of the 144? How do you know? You know, the number 12 is used symbolically in the book of Revelation. You guys remember this? The number 12 references the covenant people of God. You had the 12 tribes in the Old Testament, you had the 12 apostles in the New Testament.

The number 24 is used symbolically in Revelation 5 to talk about the 24 elders, which represent the entire covenant people of God. When it comes to this number, 144,000, it's playing on the number 12. It's 12 times 12, times 10, times 10, times 10. All right, that's not Roby math. Okay, I had to get my calculator out to look that up, but that's what it is. It's 12 times 12, times 10, times 10, times 10, which is, I think, could be a symbolic way of saying they're all there— the definite number of people from the Jewish tribes that God wanted to seal and protect that's who these people are.

And so I think that's a reference to Jewish believers, not just Jewish people, but Jewish believers. And I don't know when they get saved or how they get saved. But my view is personally sometime after the sixth seal, when they see the cosmic signs and wonders, which is a fulfillment of all of these Old Testament prophecies about the day of the Lord. In Joel and Isaiah and Daniel, there's all of these references to the day of the Lord being preceded by the sun going black and the moon turning to blood and stars falling from the sky and earthquakes.

Well if that literally happens on the earth during this tribulation period, I think every Jew is going to know here comes the Son, here comes the Messiah, it's the day we've all been waiting for, and they're going to see that Messiah truly is Jesus of Nazareth. Because in Revelation 6, everybody knows it's Jesus coming to judge the earth. And I think that's when

perhaps they'll be converted, maybe before, maybe after. I don't know. But I think it's a reference to Jewish believers. So if it's Jewish believers here from the twelve tribes, then who is the great multitude?

I believe that great multitude is the church. But before we get to that, something I think we can learn from this great multitude, something that we've been singing about, that God has been ministering to our congregation this morning, is this group of people is a reminder for you and for me that even in the darkest night of the soul, even when tribulation is at its greatest level in your life, it's a reminder that God is a redeemer and God is able to redeem even the worst trials and tribulations. You see this throughout the Old Testament and New Testament.

What Satan intends for evil, what man intends for evil, God can work for good. That some of the most horrendous evils on this earth have been used by God to bring about incredible good. Take the cross of Christ as an example, the most horrendous act of human history to kill the Son of God who is righteous and pure to unfairly accuse him of things he did not do and then to execute the Son of God. There is no more evil act, and yet God used that act of evil to bring about the salvation of the world.

And in this tribulation period where God comes and puts a seal on these people, I believe it's God communicating to them and to us today. Just because things are difficult, just because you're going through the dark night of the soul, doesn't mean I'm not there, doesn't mean I don't care, and it doesn't mean I'm not actively right now using your pain to bring about good in your life, to exchange the ashes for beauty, the heaviness for a garment of praise. And I know many of you are personally walking through trials and tribulation.

I know that some of you are hurting greatly right now because of things that have happened in your life some of which you had no control of. And the point is, just because you're suffering doesn't mean God's mad at you. It doesn't mean that it's retribution for your sin. It could be just because you live in a sinful world and it's God's judgment on sin and a broken world in general. But don't just think of that pain as judgment. Think of it as God redeeming the trials and the hurt and the tears to bring about something beautiful in your faith.

So that being said, who is the great multitude? The great multitude, I think, is a picture of the church resurrected and raptured. In verse 9, if you want to look at it again, after this, I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, and people, and language, which nobody could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands. We saw these white robes in chapter 6 with the fifth seal. But they were given the white robes, they weren't wearing them.

Now they're wearing the robes. And you see this embodied language. They have hands, they are speaking, they're standing, they're clothed. I think this is embodied language, which

personally leads me to think that this is a reference to not just the church in general, but to the church resurrected and raptured out of the world. Again, not everybody agrees with me on that, so I'm not going to belabor this point, but it's a reference not to Jewish people, but to the church, Jews and Gentiles, but the bride of Christ that is being made right now as we speak— that before Christ comes again, he's making a people for himself, and this is that people in this great multitude.

They come out of the great Tribulation, you notice they're separate from the angels and the twenty-four elders. That leads me to think that this is the church. So the question again is, why does John put the church next to the Jews? Why does John put the Jews next to this picture of an end-times bride that is fully materialized and worshiping Jesus around the throne. And again, I think it's strategic. I think he did it on purpose. I think this is John's way of saying the promise of God given to Abram in Genesis chapter 12 is now being fulfilled in Revelation chapter 7.

If you're taking notes, this is a reminder that the Bible is a single story of redemption. And there is a scarlet thread that holds the Old Testament and New Testament together. It is not a bunch of disjointed stories. The Bible is one single story of redemption. And Jesus Christ is the point of it all. And you're going to see how Jesus unites the promise that was given to Abraham, fulfills it in his life, death, and resurrection. And through the church makes a new people for himself from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

So we're going to have to do this quick. I know we don't have time, but let me show you this. If you want to look in the Bible, you can. It's starting in Genesis 12. We don't normally do this, but I'm going to show you several different passages quickly, and then we'll tie it all together. Genesis chapter 12, if you don't know your Old Testament. You've probably heard the song Father Abraham had many sons. Anybody? Many sons had— everybody's got it down. So you grew up in church, evidently. All right, well, that comes from Genesis chapter 12, Father Abraham.

So look at what— this is what the Lord says to Abraham. Genesis 12, verse 2. Abraham, I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you. I will make your name great. And you will be a blessing. Circle that. You will be a blessing. I'm going to bless you to be a blessing. I'm going to bless those who bless you. I'm going to curse those who treat you with contempt, and all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you. So here's what I think. I think the innumerable multitude in Revelation 7 is first mentioned in Genesis chapter 12, verses 2 to 3.

All the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you. And you have all the people of the earth, a people from every tribe, tongue, language, and nation. Blessed because of the promise given to Abraham fulfilled in Christ that's displayed in Revelation 7. So let me show you how this materializes. Abraham is told to go to a land he does not know. Abraham obeys

God. There's a little bit of friction between him and his relatives, imagine that. But God reminds him of the promise again in chapter 13, verse 16. He says, I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust of the earth, your offspring could be counted.

In other words, there can be so many people you cannot count them, just like Revelation chapter 7. Keep going in Abraham's life. He still has no child. He thinks maybe I need to let this servant boy be the child of promise, but God tells him in verse 4 of Genesis 15, no, this one will not be your heir. The heir is going to come from your own body, from your own loins. Then he took him outside and he said, Abraham, look at the sky and count the stars. If you're able to count them— just like Revelation 7, a number that no one could count.

He says, Abraham, try to count the stars. You can't count them. This is what your offspring is going to look like. It's going to be that numerous. I did a little Google search this week, how many stars are in the Milky Way galaxy and it's 400 billion stars estimated. That's numbers so high only the U.S. government can count them, right? We're talking about a lot of people, and Abraham has this promise that's what your descendants are going to be. But he's being told this promise by the Lord, even though he has no children.

So the rub begins. You can imagine. Here's God's promise. Here's my reality. The two are not meeting together. What's going on, Lord? He's still old. He's 99 years old. He still has no child. But the Lord reminds him again in Genesis 17, verse 4. Abraham, even though you've made a mess of this— you've tried to take my promise into your own hands, you've made a mess of your family. Here's what I'm going to do. Here's my covenant with you. You will become the father of many nations. Your name will no longer be Abram, your name will be Abraham, for I will make you the father of many nations.

That's where our song comes from. I will make you extremely fruitful and make nations and kings come from you. Notice the language. An innumerable multitude, a number so high you cannot count it. It's like the dust of the earth. All the peoples of the earth. It's like the stars in the sky. You're going to be the father of many nations, people from every tribe, tongue, language, and nation. You will be extremely fruitful, and nations and kings will come from you. Abraham gets close to death and he's given a child. The child's name is Isaac.

Isaac is the heir of the promise. And God tells Abraham, I want you to give him back to me. I want you to sacrifice this child. It's a crazy story in the Old Testament. Abraham trusts God, he's obedient, he goes to put Isaac on the altar, and God provides a ram in the thicket. And then the promise is passed on to Isaac after that in Genesis chapter 26, verse 4. God says to Isaac, not Abraham, but Isaac, I'll make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky. I will give your offspring all of these lands and all the nations— I think I skipped one.

Did I skip one? All right. After that sacrifice of Isaac, here's what the Lord says to Abraham. One last time. He says to Abraham, I will indeed bless you and make your offspring as numerous as the stars in the sky. So notice he's pulling all of it together. Dust of the earth language, stars of the sky language. Father of many nations language he's bringing it all together. He says, your offspring will possess the city gates of their enemies. All the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring because you have obeyed my command.

So Abraham trusts God, and because of that act, he passes the promise on, not just from Abraham, but down to Isaac. We saw what he said to Isaac in Genesis 24— or Genesis 26:4. Isaac has a son that is named Jacob. He actually has a lot of sons, but only Jacob gets the promise. In Genesis 28, verse 14, here's what God says to Jacob. Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth, same language. You'll spread out from the west, the east, the north, and the south. It's exact language you see at the beginning of Revelation 7 of angels from north and east and south and west.

All the peoples of the earth will be blessed through your offspring. And sure enough, Jacob eventually gets married. He has children of his own. He wrestles with God about his purpose in life. God reminds him again in Genesis 35:11. I am God Almighty, be fruitful and multiply. A nation, indeed, an assembly of nations will come from you, and kings will descend from you. And he does. He is fruitful. He multiplies. He actually had two wives, which I don't recommend. He wanted Rachel, but it's a sad story actually. He wanted this beautiful girl named Rachel and his uncle instead gave him his lazy-eyed daughter Leah.

I can say lazy-eyed Leah because I have a lazy eye, but Jacob was upset about it. But anyway, he has children with both Leah and Rachel. And those children are listed at the end of Genesis 49. And it is the twelve tribes of Israel. It's the twelve tribes that you read in Revelation chapter 7, albeit there's a little bit of differences on three of the tribes. What I find fascinating is the promise that Jacob on his deathbed, he gives a promise to Judah. Remember, Judah, the lion from the tribe of Judah, Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise.

But there's a promise given to Judah at the end of Jacob's life. It's unbelievable. Here's what Jacob says to his son Judah. Judah, your brothers will praise you. This is in Genesis 49, verse 8. Judah, your brothers will praise you. Your hand will be on the necks of your enemies. Your father's sons will bow down to you. Judah is a young— what? A young lion. There's our imagery. My son, you return from the kill. He crouches; he lies down like a lion or a lioness, who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah.

The scepter was a ruling stick. I mean, you were the king, you were the sovereign. The scepter will not depart from Judah or the staff from between his feet until he whose right it is comes. That's talking about the Messiah. So until Messiah comes, Judah, you're going to be the heir of the promise. That tribe, you're going to be the heir of the promise. But when

Messiah comes and he arrives, the obedience of all the peoples belongs to him. And that's a reference to the Messiah. That's a reference to Jesus.

And so if you're taking notes, it goes from Abraham to Isaac, from Isaac to Jacob, from Jacob to Judah. And we could keep going. Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. But eventually that promise to Judah is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He is the seed of Abraham. Read— the whole book of Galatians is about this. That through the seed of Abraham, Christ blessed the nations. He blessed the nations with forgiveness of sin, salvation, and deliverance. That is the blessing we receive in Jesus Christ. That's what John is talking about in Revelation chapter 7. But it's not just that.

There's actually one more connection. When he talks about no more hunger, no more thirst, no more heat, that the shepherd will guide you, that's from Isaiah 49. And I want to read this, make the connection, then we're done. But here's what Isaiah is going to say. Isaiah is basically going to say the promise is going to be fulfilled in the Messiah. Jesus Christ is the heir of the promise of Abraham. And it is through him that he's going to bless Israel. But he's not just going to bless Israel, he's going to bless the world.

He's not just come to deliver Israel; he's come to deliver every man, woman, boy, and child from their sin, so that they can have eternal life. And all of those who are in him, which the New Testament says— we are in Christ, Christ is in us. We receive the blessing, which means we receive salvation, we receive forgiveness. But we don't just receive the blessing, we also receive the purpose of the blessing. And the purpose of the blessing is to be a blessing. You are blessed to be a blessing. So let's read it in Isaiah.

This is about Jesus. He says of the servant who is Christ, he says, it's not enough for you to be my servant, raising up the tribes of Jacob or Israel. It's not enough just for you to take care of Israel. And to restore the protected ones of Israel. I think that's a reference to the remnant in Revelation 7. You're not just going to be the salvation— I'm not just going to make you a protected one of Israel. I will also make you a— what? A light for the nations, to be my salvation to the ends of the earth.

He culminates it in chapter 49, verse 10. Once you've done your work, the ends of the earth will no longer hunger or thirst; the scorching heat or sun will not strike them. Why? Because their compassionate one, the shepherd, Jesus, will guide them and lead them to springs. So Isaiah 49, that's what John is using to talk about Revelation chapter 7. He's saying the fulfillment of the promise is Jesus Christ. He is the suffering servant. He's the one Isaiah 49 said. Through him, I'm not just going to save Israel. I'm not just going to have the remnant sealed and protected.

He's going to be a light to the nations, and that people from every tribe, tongue, and nation are going to come to know him and love him and worship him and be saved by him. And

those who are in him, those who are in Christ, they're not just going to receive the blessing of salvation. They are blessed to be a blessing. Just like the Jews were blessed to be a blessing, we now, the church, are blessed to be a blessing. So you don't just receive the promise of God, sit on it and enjoy it, but you declare the promise of God to every tribe, tongue, and nation so that the world may know that Jesus saves.

And so we receive the blessing right now. We're shepherded by the Lord Jesus. Right? Look at chapter 7, verse 17. Is that up there? The Lamb who is at the center of the throne will shepherd them. He will guide them to springs of waters of life. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. That's our promise. That in Christ there's no more hungering, no more thirsting, no more sadness, that there's hope of a future, hope of heaven, hope of eternal life, eternal fellowship with the people we painfully say goodbye to today.

But that is not just for us to hoard. It's not just for us to sit on and enjoy. God has blessed us so that we might declare the excellencies of him who has saved us. And so we cannot make the same mistake that they made. Israel over and over again said it's just all about us and we're going to hold it to ourselves. Even the twelve apostles, it wasn't until Acts 8 that suffering and persecution caused unnamed disciples to go and plant a church in Antioch that the gospel finally broke past Jerusalem.

We cannot make the same mistake. God did not make a mission for his people. He made a people for his mission. He made a people for his purpose. The purpose of God is that his people would be a light to the nations, and his purpose has not changed. We have not gotten to Revelation 7 yet, which means we still have a job to do. And so if you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, the application is to receive the blessing. To be saved, to repent of your sin, to put your trust in Jesus Christ as Lord.

But if you are a Christian, which most of you in this room are, the application is to not just sit on the blessing, but to bless others with the blessing you've been blessed with. You've been blessed to be a blessing financially. This means incredible generosity to the mission of God. This means boldness to go and go on mission trips to open your mouth when you have opportunity to share the gospel, to not be quiet, to hide it under a bushel— no, I'm going to let it shine. That's the point of this passage.

And so as we close out this time, I want to challenge you to consecrate your heart to the Lord and say, Lord, are there any areas of my life where I have hoarded your blessing, but I have not been faithful to your purpose to bless the world with that blessing? The altar's open if you want to pray, I'll be happy to pray with you.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "a bear"; Revelation 4:7 describes the four living creatures as like a lion, a calf (ox), one with a human face, and an eagle—there is no bear. Source: Revelation 4:7 (CSB). ↩