

Revelation 7

I. Revelation 7:1–3

The Four Angels and the Sealing: Restraint Before Judgment

A. The symbolism of the “four _____,” “four corners of the _____,” and “four _____”

1. The “four corners” language is a common biblical way of speaking about the whole earth, not a claim about earth’s _____. The point is scope: what is about to happen affects the entire created order.
2. The “four winds” are a symbolic way of describing _____ forces that, once released, bring upheaval. In prophetic literature, winds often function as agents of _____, _____, or divine _____.
3. The angels “holding back” the winds presents judgment as _____. Chaos does not simply break loose. It is depicted as withheld until God’s purpose is ready to move forward.

B. The cultural and Old Testament background for “_____” God’s servants

1. The command is to delay harm “until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”
2. “Seal” language (sphragizō in Greek) carries ideas of _____, _____, and _____. In the ancient world, a seal marked something as belonging to a specific person and safeguarded it from unauthorized interference.
3. The strongest Old Testament echo is Ezekiel 9, where a mark is placed on the foreheads of the faithful before judgment falls on the city. Revelation draws on that logic: God distinguishes those who belong to Him _____ judgment unfolds.
4. The forehead location signals _____ identity and _____ allegiance. Revelation repeatedly frames discipleship as lived loyalty, not hidden belief.

C. Interpretation variations: what the sealing does and does not mean

1. Option 1: _____ protection, not exemption from suffering (common across many readings)

- a) – The seal signifies belonging to God and protection from ultimate spiritual harm, even if believers still suffer _____.
 - b) – This fits Revelation’s larger pattern where faithful people may be _____, but are not abandoned.
2. Option 2: Protection from a specific set of _____ (common in futurist readings)
- a) – The seal marks a group that will be protected during a defined _____ period of end-time judgments.
 - b) – This reading emphasizes that the text says “do not harm” until sealing occurs, suggesting some form of _____ preservation.
3. Option 3: A sacramental or _____ identity marker for the church age (idealist emphasis)
- a) – The seal functions as Revelation’s symbolic way of describing the church’s secure identity throughout the entire period between Christ’s exaltation and return.
 - b) – The focus is less on a _____ of protection and more on the _____ reality of belonging.

D. Most balanced conclusion:

1. The sealing primarily communicates divine ownership and secure identity, and it implies protection in the sense Revelation most emphasizes, protection from ultimate defeat and final condemnation, while not requiring the idea that believers will be spared all earthly suffering.

II. Revelation 7:4–8

The 144,000: Numbered Covenant People and the Tribal List

A. The symbolism of “144,000” and the meaning of “numbered”

1. John hears a number, 144,000, described as sealed “from every tribe of the sons of Israel.”
2. The number is highly structured: _____ x _____ x 1,000. In apocalyptic symbolism, 12 commonly signals covenant _____ (tribes, apostles), and 1,000 can function as a large completeness number.
3. The act of “numbering” signals _____ and care. In Scripture, numbering can signify that God _____ His people, _____ them, and loses none of them.

B. The tribal list and why it matters culturally and theologically

1. The list is unusual compared to many Old Testament lists:

- a) – _____ is omitted.
 - b) – _____ is omitted by name, while _____ appears.
 - c) – _____ is included.
 - d) – _____ is listed first, which is not the standard birth-order pattern.
2. These differences push readers away from treating the list as a simple census copy. Revelation is doing theological work through the list, shaping identity around the Lamb's messianic line (Judah) and around a purified, reconstituted people.

C. Interpretation variations

1. Interpretation Option 1: A _____ number of ethnic Israelites (futurist and some preterist readings)
 - a) In this view, the 144,000 refers to Jewish people, either Jewish believers in Jesus or ethnic Israel more broadly, who are specifically sealed for a particular _____ in the end-time scenario (often understood as witness, preservation, or a remnant).
 - b) The wording "from every tribe of the sons of Israel" is taken in a straightforward _____ sense.
 - c) Strength: Takes the wording about Israel and tribes at face value and preserves a distinction between _____ and the _____ that some theological systems emphasize.
 - d) Limitation: The tribal list is _____ and does not match historical tribal realities in a simple way, which raises questions about whether strict literal tribal enumeration is the author's intent.
2. Interpretation Option 2: A _____ number representing the whole people of God (idealist and many "eclectic" readings)
 - a) In this view, 144,000 symbolizes the _____ covenant community, the church, portrayed with Israel language because the church is understood as God's _____ people, now gathered around the Lamb.
 - b) The structured number (12 x 12 x 1,000) is treated as symbolic fullness, not a literal headcount.

- c) Strength: Accounts for the highly stylized number and the irregular tribal list, and fits Revelation's repeated use of symbolic numbers.
 - d) Limitation: Requires interpreting "Israel" in a broadened covenant sense, which some readers resist or consider theologically loaded.
3. Interpretation Option 3: The 144,000 as a faithful _____ within the broader redeemed community (some historicist and mixed readings)
- a) In this view, the 144,000 are a distinct group within God's people, often understood as especially faithful _____, _____, or a purified _____, while the great multitude represents the broader redeemed.
 - b) This reading treats the numbering as a _____ distinction rather than total equivalence.
 - c) Strength: Explains why the chapter later introduces another group that is explicitly _____.
 - d) Limitation: Revelation does not explicitly label the 144,000 as a spiritual _____. The distinction can become speculative if pressed too far.
4. Most balanced conclusion:
- a) The text invites readers to see the 144,000 as a theologically shaped portrait of God's sealed people, emphasizing completeness, belonging, and readiness to stand, whether one locates that portrait primarily in ethnic Israel, in the whole covenant community, or in a representative remnant.

III. Revelation 7:9–12

The Great Multitude: International Redemption and Heavenly Worship

A. The symbolism of "a great multitude that no one could number"

1. John now sees what he could not count: an unnumbered multitude. The contrast with the earlier numbered group is _____.
2. The multitude is from "every _____, _____, _____, and _____," emphasizing _____ scope. Revelation portrays the Lamb's redemption as multiethnic and universal in reach.

B. White robes, palm branches, and the cultural meaning of victory imagery

1. White robes in Revelation consistently function as symbols of _____, _____, and honored status given by God.
2. Palm branches are associated with _____ and _____. In Jewish memory, palms were linked with festal joy, including the Feast of

Tabernacles, and in Greco-Roman culture palms could also function as victory symbols.

3. The image portrays a worshipping people who have come through _____ into public _____, not a private _____.

C. The content of the worship and what it teaches politically

1. “Salvation belongs to our God... and to the Lamb” is a direct _____ - _____ of allegiance. In the Roman world, salvation language and benefaction claims could be attached to rulers and empires. Revelation _____ salvation exclusively to God and the Lamb.
2. The angels’ response reinforces that heaven agrees with the saints. Worship is presented as the _____ description of reality.

D. Interpretation variations: timing and location of the multitude

1. Option 1: The multitude as the end-time _____ gathered after final tribulation (futurist emphasis)
 - a) The scene is read as future, depicting those who come to _____ during a final tribulation and emerge into heavenly worship.
2. Option 2: The multitude as the church triumphant across the whole age (idealist emphasis)
 - a) The scene depicts the ultimate destiny of God’s people across history, gathered into worship whenever and however they die, with final _____ still ahead.
3. Option 3: The multitude as those vindicated after first-century persecution and beyond (preterist with broader application)
 - a) The scene is read as intensely meaningful for _____ - _____ suffering believers, while also extending as a pattern to later persecutions.
4. Most balanced conclusion:
 - a) The multitude functions as Revelation’s assurance that the church’s future is _____ and _____, regardless of when one locates the precise historical fulfillment.

IV. Revelation 7:13–17

The Great Tribulation and the Shepherd Lamb: Identity, Cleansing, and Consolation

A. “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation” and the main interpretive options

1. The phrase “great tribulation” (thlipsis) can be read in multiple ways, and this is one of the chapter’s central debates.

B. Interpretation variations

1. Interpretation Option 1: A _____ end-time tribulation period (futurist emphasis)
 - a) "Great tribulation" is treated as a defined future period of intensified global distress before Christ's return, and the multitude is interpreted as those who endure it faithfully.
 - b) Strength: Fits a futurist timeline approach where seals, trumpets, and bowls escalate toward a final crisis.
 - c) Limitation: Can minimize the relevance of the text for the original audience if applied too exclusively to the future.
2. Interpretation Option 2: _____ - _____ tribulation, especially persecution and upheaval under Rome (preterist emphasis)
 - a) "Great tribulation" is read as the intense suffering experienced by _____ Christians, including persecution and the broader convulsions of the era.
 - b) Strength: Preserves _____ for John's first readers who were already experiencing tribulation.
 - c) Limitation: Must explain why the language and scope feel _____ and why Revelation continues to use tribulation patterns later.
3. Interpretation Option 3: The tribulation of the entire church age, intensified at the end (idealist and many eclectic readings)
 - a) "Great tribulation" is read as the defining condition of faithful witness in the present age, meaning the church suffers in _____ ways across time, with potential final _____ before the consummation.
 - b) Strength: Preserves both present relevance and future culmination, and matches Revelation's repeated portrayal of the church as a suffering witness community.
 - c) Limitation: Less tidy for those who prefer a _____ chronological map.

C. "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"

1. This is deliberate paradox. Blood _____, but in Revelation's symbolism the Lamb's blood _____. The point is _____: purity and acceptance come through the Lamb's sacrificial death.
2. The imagery ties _____, _____, and _____ to Christ's cross, not to the saints' self-achievement.

D. The promises: presence, protection, and the reversal of suffering

1. "They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night" portrays restored priestly _____, continuous _____, and _____ to God.

2. _____, _____, scorching _____, and _____ are the embodied vocabulary of suffering. Revelation promises reversal: the God who reigns is also the God who comforts.

E. The Shepherd Lamb: rule expressed as care

1. "The Lamb... will be their shepherd" fuses kingship and pastoral care. The one who rules does not rule like an empire. He shepherds, guides, and gives life.
2. "Springs of living water" signals abundant life, sustained joy, and restored creation.