**Revelation**

*Lesson 18 – Revelation 7*

* Revelation 7:1-8 explains how believers are sealed so that they can persevere through the first four tribulations of Revelation 6. The rest of Revelation 7 reveals the heavenly reward for those who persevere and God is praised.

*Verses 1-3: Believers are Sealed*

1. This chapter interrupts the seals. 6 have been broken already but before we get to the breaking of the 7th seal, God gives John a vision for believers. Dispensationalists believe chapter 7 is in the future just like chapter 6, but chapter 7 is more like a parenthesis and if chapter 6 is between the comings of Christ, then this chapter is also between the comings of Christ.
2. John sees 4 angels standing at the 4 corners of the Earth. Remember 4 is the number for universal or worldwide. So this refers to the authority given to these angels over the whole world.
3. And these angels are holding back the 4 winds of the Earth so that no wind might blow on creation. Wind here is a symbol for harm or destruction. Look down at verse 2. The four angels in verse 2 are the same as verse 1. In verse 1 they are holding back the 4 winds of the Earth. In verse 2 they are called “angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea.” These 4 angels are the 4 horsemen of the apocalypse we looked at recently who have been given authority by God in Jesus Christ over the earth to bring it harm.
4. Zechariah 6:5 – “**5**And the angel answered and said to me, “These [4 chariots drawn by differently colored horses] are going out to the four winds of heaven, after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth.”
5. So we’re actually going back in time to before the 4 horsemen are unleashed upon the world. If we were to read this sequentially, remember that at the end of chapter 6, the mountains and islands are removed; the sky is rolled up like a scroll, etc. How can creation be undone in chapter 6 then suddenly creation is told not to be harmed yet?
6. Another angel comes forth in verse 2 holding “the seal of the living God.” This is the seal that God is going to put on His people to mark them out as His own. God seals His people as His own so that they are protected during the judgment that is about to be unleashed on the Earth.
7. And according to verse 3, these 4 horsemen/angels are to hold back their destruction until all the servants of God have been sealed on their foreheads.
8. We see this same thing in Ezekiel 9:4-5 – “And the Lord said to him [man clothed in linen], “Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.” **5**And to the others [6 men with weapons in their hands] he said in my hearing, “Pass through the city after him, and strike. Your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity.”
9. “Uppermost in John’s mind is certainly not physical security but protection of the believer’s faith and salvation from the various sufferings and persecutions that are inflicted on them, whether by Satan or by his demonic and earthly agents.” –Greg Beale

*Verses 4-8: The 144,000*

1. John hears a number. The fact that it is 12,000 from 12 tribes indicates the symbolic nature of this number. These are not just Jewish believers but all believers (verse 3 calls this number “the servants of our God”).
2. 12 is the number of completeness and 1,000 is symbolic for a multitude so we have 12x12x1000 = 144,000. The complete saints of the Old Testament (12) and the complete saints of the New Testament (12) which is a large number (1000) is represented symbolically as 144,000.
3. 2 Timothy 2:19 – “But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this **seal**: ‘The Lord knows those who are his,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the **name** of the Lord depart from iniquity.’”
4. Revelation 14:1 – “Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had **his name** **and his Father’s name** written on their foreheads.”

*Verses 9-17:*

1. The 144,000 is further confirmed as symbolic because when John turns to see this number that he heard, it’s no longer 144,000; it’s a countless multitude from every tribe, tongue, nation, and family – not just the tribes of Israel.
2. This fullness of God’s elect/saints is clothed in white indicating victory. This is a picture of all of God’s elect in heaven worshipping Him. They are waiving palm branches indicating a joyous celebration
3. Leviticus 23:40 – “And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.” This is the Feast of Tabernacles/Booths
4. Zechariah 14:16 – “Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.”
5. The saints are now pictured in the glorious worship around God’s throne and join in with what we saw in chapter 5 where the 4 living creatures, 24 elders, and myriads of angels are worshipping.
6. Revelation 5:13 – “To **him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb** be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever.”
Revelation 7:12 – “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our **God** forever and ever! Amen.”
7. In the midst of this praise, an explanation is given to John by one of the 24 elders as to who these 144,000 are.
8. Coming out of the tribulation = hardship and trouble that is characteristic of the entire church age between Jesus’ 1st and 2nd comings
9. 2 Timothy 3:1, 12-13 – “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty.**12**Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, **13**while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”
10. Daniel 12:1 – “At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.”
11. Matthew 24:21, 24 – “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. **24**For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.”
12. The tribulation, as we saw from the issues the churches face in Revelation 2-3, “consists of pressures to compromise the faith, these pressures coming both from within the church community through seductive teaching and from without through overt oppression. Sometimes the persecution is economically oriented. At other times the tribulation is heightened to include imprisonment and even death. The ‘greatness’ of the tribulation is the intensity of the seduction and oppression through which believers pass.” –Greg Beale
13. Washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb = salvation; 1 John 1:7 – “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” Hebrews 9:14 – “**14**how much more will the blood of Christ…purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”
14. And because of God’s salvation of His elect, they are now in His presence and serve Him as His priests.
15. Isaiah 49:10 – “they shall not hunger or thirst; neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for He who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them.
16. Isaiah 25:8 – “He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.
17. Revelation 21:4 – “**4**He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

**Message for Us**

1. We’re going to have to endure through God’s judgments upon the wicked just like faithful Israelites of old had to endure when wicked kings were on the throne of David and they also had to endure when they were taken into exile along with wicked Israelites. With Jesus’ victory on the cross and resurrection, God’s judgments are even now being poured out upon Satan and his demonic horde. And Satan and his horde are fighting back through wicked unbelievers and spiritual warfare, but instead of rapturing us out of it, God calls us to persevere through it and we are enabled to persevere. Why is our perseverance guaranteed? Because God has sealed us with His own seal upon us, and the seal is the Holy Spirit.
2. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 – “And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, **22**and who has also **put his seal on us** and **given us his Spirit in our hearts** as a guarantee.”
3. “Sometimes we are frightened and wonder how we will be able to be true to God until the end. We look at our hearts, and we know how weak we are. We fear that one day we will make shipwreck of our faith and be swept away. But God assures us: I have sealed you and made you secure; I will protect you from all interference and danger. Nothing shall separate you, dear believer, from My love in Christ Jesus’ (see Rom. 8:39).” –Joel Beeke
4. “The Lamb who took upon Himself our human nature, lived in the wilderness of the world, and suffered for us, will meet us when we get to heaven. He will supply all our wants and needs. That is what heaven is; that is what glory is all about—living in the presence of the Lord. God’s presence will overshadow us. It will be like living in the Garden of Eden, only much better. God’s presence will be everywhere, and we will be more alive than we have ever been. Heaven pulsates with life. Those who are there already are far more alive than we are today, and we will one day join those saints before the throne of God and of the Lamb.” –Joel Beeke