

## Revelation 7 | The Kindness of God Revealed in His Plan for Israel and the Martyrs

### Sermons about Israel available online (Keynote slide)

In Chapter 6 we saw God's judgment being brought to earth

- In Chapter 7 we see **a brief reprieve** from that judgment
- In order that God can be shown to be caring for His people—Israel and the Church—in the midst of great tribulation on earth (**Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10**)
- The vision John is seeing switches from true horror (the wrath of God) to a glorious picture of God's kindness toward His people (Israel and new believers who are martyred) (**After this I saw... 7:1**)

#### Verse 1

- The angels are pictured as holding back the winds (Symbol for God's judgment)<sup>1</sup> = Reprieve

#### Verse 2

- Another angel is pictured as appearing from the east (**from the rising of the sun**)
- The east is symbolic of hope and rescue for God's people<sup>2</sup>
- This angel had the **seal of the living God**
  - God is called the **living God** throughout the OT when He is about to intervene on behalf of His people (cnt. dead idols)
  - A seal speaks of a way of showing, preserving and protecting ownership
    - **Ephesians 1:13-14 (NIV)**

So, God's judgment has come to earth—its bad (chapter 6)

- There is a sudden reprieve (**7:1**); an angel appears from the east with **the seal of the living God**—a picture of ownership, protection
- What is He going to do with it?

#### Verse 3

- Judgment is held back for a moment until this particular group is sealed
- Called "**the bond-servants of God**"
  - A bond servant is an old term for a servant who chose to serve and obey their master
  - These are those who choose to serve and obey God (who is it here in particular?)

#### Verse 4

- **Israel/Jews** that become followers of Jesus (some say this means the church—but I disagree)
  - This seems pretty clear (**12 tribes**)
- This is showing us (John was being shown) that in the end times many, many Jews will turn back to God though the Messiah (See: **Revelation 14:1-4**)
- Many, many = **144,000** (12,000 x 12)—**Twelve is a special number of completion** (12 tribes, 12 apostles, 12 gates and 12 foundation stones in the New Jerusalem, etc)
  - 12,000 from each tribe may be literal or it may mean a large and complete number according to God's choosing

What we are saying here—what I believe the text is telling us—is that **God is not done with Israel**

- They figure prominently in God's plan for the end—they always have
- Remember, what is happening in Revelation is that God's kingdom (His righteous rule) is coming to earth fully and finally (Plan to redeem and restore the world)
- Remember, this Kingdom was first promised to Israel
- **Jeremiah 33:14-17 (NLT)**

This Kingdom came when the **righteous descendant from King David's line**—Jesus—came the first time

<sup>1</sup> See for example Jeremiah 49:36ff

<sup>2</sup> See for example Ezekiel 43:1-5

This Kingdom will come in fullness ("Thy Kingdom Come") when the Messiah King comes the **second time** (Revelation 19-22)

- He will do what is just and right throughout the land

When Jesus came the first time, He came to Israel—to the Jews

- Though many did not believe—many did! Not done! (Romans 3:3-4<sup>9</sup>, NASB)
- The first Church was made up of all Jews! The apostles! All Jews (Cf. Paul went first to the Jews)
- **Then**, the Gospel went to the rest of **the nations** (Gentiles)—as was always the plan
- Genesis 12:1-3 (NASB)
  - In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed...
  - I.e. The promise of the Messiah and His Gospel for the whole world (but to the Jew first)
  - Romans 1:16 (NASB)

Because the Gospel has gone to the nations (as was always the plan) does not mean that God is done with His **first chosen nation** (Israel)

- All the promises and the covenant by which we are saved were given first to Israel
  - Jeremiah 31:31-33 (NASB) and Jeremiah 33:14-16 (NASB)
- Those who are not Jews (Gentiles) but have come to believe in Jesus have been "grafted in" to the promises made to Israel (promise of salvation still valid, even if many have rejected)
  - See: Romans 11:17-29

### This is what is pictured in Revelation 7

- All Israel will be saved (Israel—Jews—returning to God through Jesus the Messiah)
  - All (Romans 11:26) does not mean all—but a full and complete number (12,000 x12)
  - Romans 11:23 = saved by belief in the Messiah
  - This is exactly the case with the 144,000 (Cf. Revelation 14:1-4)

So, what is pictured in Revelation 7 is God's plan for Israel beginning to come to fruition (being saved)

- The 144k on earth are preserved (sealed) in safety through the tribulation, as a testimony to the power and grace of God and as a channel through which the gospel is preached<sup>3</sup> (missionary force)

We also see in this chapter, God's plan for another group of believers

- Verse 9 (from every nation...) = (martyrs during the tribulation)
- See verses 13-14
- A future reality for those who get saved during the Tribulation (Rev 13:15; 17:6; 18:24; 20:4)
  - Matthew 24:9-13 (NASB)
  - This is what it looks like for those who endured (did not abandon their faith—overcame)
  - Revelation 2:7, 17; 3:5, 12, 21 (NASB)

This is God's kindness revealed again and shown to John in a vision during a reprieve from judgment—to keep perspective (room for repentance—many, many, many saved)

### Verses 10-12

- Every time we get a glimpse of the saved in heaven they are on their faces worshipping
- And, they are greatly cared for by Christ Himself

### Verses 15-17

- The ultimate, loving care and kindness of God for His people in Christ
  - We serve Him; in His presence (temple); He covers us (Tabernacle) (v. 15)
  - No hunger or thirst = completely satisfied; no heat = free from discomfort and exposure (v. 16)
  - Jesus is our shepherd; guides us into eternal life and joy; wipes our tears (v. 17)
  - Grief, sorrow, trials and tribulation are over when we get there

Even for our current sorrows and tribulations... (Romans 8:18, NASB and 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, NASB)

<sup>3</sup> John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 149.