

2B. The Great Tribulation In The World (6-18) (continued)

Note: At this point in our study we will examine the seventh chapter of Revelation, which is a kind of parenthetical pause between the opening of the 6th and 7th seals of the redemption book that the Lord Jesus Christ holds in His hand. Let me explain: Had not God chosen to insert this parenthetical pause in Revelation, there would have been no break or interruption in the logical unfolding of God's judgments upon lost humanity. However, as we study this next chapter, we notice that judgment is not the theme. Grace and mercy are the themes of this chapter. It is as though God, amid all this wrath and judgment, just before the worst of it falls upon the heads of lost humanity, decides to show us that there will still be grace and mercy in all this horror. This seventh chapter of Revelation is an answer to a prayer offered thousands of years ago. Habakkuk 3.1-2 reads,

- ¹ A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.
- ² O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.”

Notice Habakkuk's last phrase uttered, prayed really: “In wrath remember mercy.” This is what God does throughout the entire Tribulation. He remembers mercy. But because informing the readers of both the wrath of God and the mercy of God at the same time is extremely difficult, if not impossible, God has instead decided to insert this portion of Scripture as a means of informing us what He will be doing behind the scenes of terror and judgment.

(7.1) And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

1. “And after these things”
 - a. The phrase “and after these things” translates a phrase very similar to the one referred to in Revelation 4.1. John uses the phrase here to clearly show us that he is changing subjects from the judgments in chapter 6.
 - b. Things other than wrath have captured John's attention for the present time. What is so interesting to John?
2. “I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.”
 - a. Let no one doubt that God uses literal angels to superintend the affairs of nature, but you must ask yourself if wind, as a literal wind, plays a significant role in God's plan of the ages. If a literal wind does not seem to be a reasonable concept in verse 1, then you must ask yourself if the earth, wind, the sea, and trees symbolize anything in Scripture.

- b. Do cross-referencing and see that in Daniel 7.2-3, earth, wind, and the sea pop up:

- ² Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.
³ And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.

Here we see that Daniel uses the word “winds” to symbolize sweeping world powers, uses the term “land” to represent the nation of Israel (though no reference to the earth is made in this passage), and uses the word “sea” to symbolize Gentiles.

- c. You will never go wrong in your study of prophecy if you take Daniel’s lead and recognize that when symbolic language is used, the “sea” always refers to Gentile nations or peoples, and “land” always refers to the children or the nation of Israel.

- d. In Judges 9.7-15, an allegory uses trees as a symbol of governmental authority:

- ⁷ And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.
⁸ The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us.
⁹ But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?
¹⁰ And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us.
¹¹ But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?
¹² Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us.
¹³ And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?
¹⁴ Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us.
¹⁵ And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

- e. Taking all of these symbols together, we might surmise that someone will bring havoc upon the entire planet due to the opening of the first six seals and their corresponding judgments. However, before the final seal is opened, angelic beings will restrain four world powers from harming the Jewish people, the

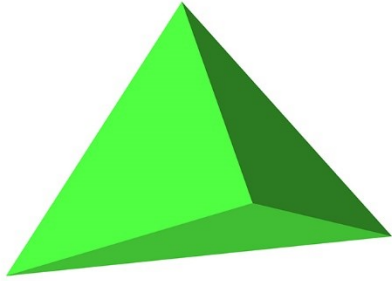
Gentile populations of the world, and the various governments that rule over humanity.

- f. Who might these four great world powers be? One might speculate that they are the forces of the antichrist located in Europe, #1, the forces of the so-called southern confederacy, #2 (which would be the combined Arab Muslim nations of the middle east and north Africa), the forces of Gog and Magog to the north, #3 (which would be the Russian Republic), and the Asian hordes from the east, #4, with their millions of soldiers.
 - g. You can see why divine intervention would be necessary to stop these four powers if you consider the four winds symbolic references to world powers. Such an array of military might have never before assembled. Therefore, for a while, at least, God's plan requires stability among the Gentiles, among the nations, and for Israel. This restraint by the angels will provide that stability.
3. But what if John is not using symbolic language here? What if he is literally reporting what he saw in this first of two visions of Revelation chapter 7? We have already seen that cataclysmic events will occur during this period. What if John's vision provides us yet another glimpse of what will happen and a spiritual behind-the-scenes explanation of why certain things will happen? That is, if this is literal, we are told from what John saw "The 4 angels will turn off, for a brief interlude, the essential engine of the earth's atmosphere."¹
 4. An observation before we proceed: For centuries, some believed the world was flat, though seafaring men always knew the world was round. Since the Roman Catholic Church relied so little on the Word of God, some who were aligned with Rome also believed the world to be flat, ignoring the Biblical evidence for a round planet. Then the world was proven to be a rotating spheroid by empirical evidence.² What happened then? People ridiculed the Bible because Scripture refers to the world's "four corners" (Isaiah 11.12; Revelation 7.1). Guess what happened when engineers and scientists from the USA began launching sophisticated satellites that could photograph and measure the Earth's geographical features? They observed the Earth to be slightly tetrahedral.³ Know what that is? A tetrahedron is a three-dimensional figure that has four sides and four corners. Once again, the Bible is right, and scientists are just trying to catch up.

¹ See footnote for Revelation 7.1 from John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 2001.

² The Coriolis Effect (<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/coriolis-effect-1/>), Foucault's Pendulum (<https://www.britannica.com/science/Foucault-pendulum>), and an even more ancient Greek mathematician's calculations (<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/history/ancient-greeks-proved-earth-round-eratosthenes-alexandria-syene-summer-solstice-a8131376.html>), are three proofs the earth is a rotating spheroid, in addition to remote satellite photos of the earth (https://www.nasa.gov/sites/default/files/latestfull_3.jpg).

³ <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/earth-is-not-round/> and BENJAMIN KENDALL EMERSON; The tetrahedral earth and the zone of the intercontinental seas. *GSA Bulletin* 1900;; 11 (1): 61–106. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1130/GSAB-11-61>



This is a tetrahedral figure, the Earth being a slightly tetrahedral spheroid.

(7.2-3) ² And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, ³ Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

1. “And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels”

a. The angel referred to in verse 2 has authority over the angels referred to in verse 1. Why do we know this? He issues a directive to the four angels mentioned in verse 1. Having the seal of the living God (whatever it means to “have the seal”), he must be an angel of very high station.

b. Some believe this angel is the Angel of the LORD, the Lord Jesus, Himself. Why? Because of the seal he possesses. If that seal is the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 1.13 and 4.30, this angel *is* the Lord Jesus. Remember, the Lord Jesus did appear to men several times during Old Testament times as the Angel of the LORD. Read Ephesians 1.13 and 4.30:

¹³ In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

³⁰ And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

If this angel possesses this seal, and if this seal is the Holy Spirit of God, by Whom individuals are sealed unto the day of redemption, then this angel could very well be the Lord Jesus Christ.

c. But what if this angel is himself sealed? What if this angel has a seal with which he seals God’s servants, but the seal is not the Holy Spirit? “To the prophet’s contemporaries ‘seal’ would have connoted the branding of cattle and the tattooing of slaves and soldiers, esp. those in the service of the emperor who could be recognized by this mark if they deserted; the marking of a soldier or the

member of a guild on the hand, brow, or neck to seal him as a religious devotee, i.e., a member of a sacred militia. The mark in this case was a sign of consecration to the deity; it could refer to the mark prophets might have worn on their forehead, either painted or tattooed; or it could refer to the phylactery worn on the forehead and hand (s. Ford). The idea of the sealing would be to mark one's property and show ownership (Swete)."⁴

- d. "And now, a word about the seal. Notice, the seal belongs to *"the living God."* This is a phrase in which the followers of Jehovah have always delighted. It is used in contradistinction to the dead gods of the heathen. The gods which are the figment of the imagination of men, and which are made by hands of men, are all dead. Our God is not a created thing, but the eternal living Creator of all things. Man could not fashion Him; He fashioned man. Isaiah gives to us a picture of the heathen man making a god (Isaiah 44:9-17). Elijah on Mount Carmel proves the power of the living God, while the false prophets of Baal received no response from their dead deity (1 Kings 18). Only in the living God will His followers find strength in their conflicts with their enemies (Joshua 3: 10). Only in the living God can a thirsty soul find satisfaction (Psalm 42:2). Hosea reminds Israel that only by the mercy of God did they become children of the living God (Hosea 1:10)."⁵
 - e. Whoever the angel is, he cried with a loud voice. The word "loud" comes from the Greek word *μεγάλη*, with the word "voice" translated from the Greek word *φωνή*. A voice like a megaphone, then, is what is conveyed here. Very loud, indeed. Because he is giving loud and commanding directions and ascending from the east, I think this is *not* the Lord Jesus Christ. In John's visions, the Lord Jesus Christ is still standing before the throne of God with the redemption seal in His hand, preparing to open the seventh seal. Therefore, I think this is an extremely high-ranked angel, but an angel still and not the Lord Jesus.
2. "the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea"
 - a. This phrase clearly shows that the four angels mentioned in verse 1 are responsible for inflicting harm and damage to the landmasses and the oceans. This strengthens my belief that the "four winds" mentioned in verse one are literal. So, angels who would be wreaking havoc are restrained for a while.
 - b. Let it also be observed that this portion of Scripture shows that God has authorized four angels to wreak environmental havoc during the Great Tribulation, something the environmentalists would never admit to. Since environmentalists tend to look upon this Earth as the mother of us all, as Gaia, they cannot abide the notion that when God begins to pour His wrath on sinful humanity, He will

⁴ Fritz Rienecker & Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, 1980), pages 828-829.

⁵ Lehman Strauss, *The Book Of The Revelation*, (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1963), page 173.

do so, in part, by bringing on humanity eco-destruction such as this world has not seen since the Flood.

3. Verse 3: “Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.”
 - a. Apparently, special servants of God are marked by a seal, much as we find in Ezekiel 9.4-6:
 - ⁴ And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.
 - ⁵ And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:
 - ⁶ Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.
 - b. This sealing is so vital that judgment stops and is held in abeyance while the sealing occurs. These servants occupy a very significant place in God’s plan! They are significant!
 - c. Notice where they are sealed. Let me ask you a question: Where will Satan have the servants of the antichrist sealed? The same place. Satan does always try to imitate and counterfeit the work of God.
4. Summarizing verses 1, 2, and 3, a high-ranking angel, who is likely not the Lord Jesus Christ but a created being, orders four angels to hold at bay four world powers. These world powers are prevented from harming Gentiles, Jews, and governments until these special servants of God are sealed on their foreheads. That is what these verses mean if the winds are symbolic.
5. However, if the four winds are literal winds and John is telling us of climatological events yet to come, then what we are told here is that there will be no environmental damage done until these special servants of God are sealed on their foreheads and marked as special servants of God. I believe that the literal interpretation is the proper view of these three verses.

- (7.4-8) ⁴ And I heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand* of all the tribes of the children of Israel.
- ⁵ Of the tribe of Juda *were sealed twelve thousand*. Of the tribe of Reuben *were sealed twelve thousand*. Of the tribe of Gad *were sealed twelve thousand*.
- ⁶ Of the tribe of Aser *were sealed twelve thousand*. Of the tribe of Nephtalim *were sealed twelve thousand*. Of the tribe of Manasses *were sealed twelve thousand*.
- ⁷ Of the tribe of Simeon *were sealed twelve thousand*. Of the tribe of Levi *were sealed twelve thousand*. Of the tribe of Issachar *were sealed twelve thousand*.

- ⁸ Of the tribe of Zabulon *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin *were* sealed twelve thousand.
1. Wrath is suspended in the Tribulation, until 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes are sealed. “If language means anything, these sealed ones are literal Israelites.”⁶ Do you notice anything about the 12 tribes mentioned? There are a number of things that strike me as curious:
 - #1 Judah is listed first. Though born fourth of Jacob’s sons, the tribe of Judah is preeminent in this listing of the tribes, undoubtedly because it is the tribe into which the Lord Jesus Christ was born.
 - #2 The tribe of Levi is listed with the other tribes. Levi is usually left out of Old Testament lists of tribes, and Joseph’s two half-tribes, named after his sons Ephraim and Manasseh, are listed, making the number of tribes named equal to 12. This must mean that one of the tribes is omitted.
 - #3 Notice that Manasseh, one of the half tribes, is listed. But also notice that Joseph is listed. If John used the name Joseph to refer to the other half-tribe, Ephraim (remembering that Joseph had two sons by his Egyptian wife, Manasseh, and Ephraim), then we know that both half-tribes are listed. That would mean the tribe of Dan has been omitted for some reason.
 2. Why would the tribe of Dan be left out and Ephraim be represented by Joseph’s name? Did John make a mistake? Even if Scriptures were not inspired, which they are, John would not mistakenly leave out one of the tribal names. Remember, this man is a Jewish believer. He knows which tribes are which as well as he knows his name. A possible explanation is found in the Old Testament.
 3. In Deuteronomy 29.19-29, Moses wrote,
 - ¹⁹ And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst:
 - ²⁰ The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven.
 - ²¹ And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law:
 - ²² So that the generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the LORD hath laid upon it;

⁶ Strauss, page 171.

- 23 *And that* the whole land thereof *is* brimstone, and salt, *and* burning, *that* it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath:
- 24 Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what *meaneth* the heat of this great anger?
- 25 Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt:
- 26 For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and *whom* he had not given unto them:
- 27 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book:
- 28 And the LORD rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as *it is* this day.
- 29 The secret *things belong* unto the LORD our God: but those *things which are* revealed *belong* unto us and to our children for ever, that *we may do* all the words of this law.

4. From our reading of the historical books of the Old Testament, we know the tribe of Dan was prone to idolatry after they moved from their original location in the Promised Land to the north country of Palestine, near the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon.
5. Remember, also, that it was Ephraim that dominated the ten northern tribes of Israel after the civil war had divided the nation when Solomon died and Ephraim's city of Samaria became the idol-ridden capital city after the separation from Judah, with her capital of Jerusalem.
6. It is possible that God will refuse the Danites during the Tribulation and alter the name of the Ephraimites during the Tribulation because of their past sins of idolatry. But does that mean that God has cast them off and forgotten them forever? No. Ezekiel addresses that matter. Ezekiel chapter 48 records the conditions that will prevail in Israel during the millennium. Though these two tribes might have been passed over or slighted by God in the Tribulation, He has not cast them off.
7. Beginning with Ezekiel 48.1, we have described for us the territory allotted to each tribe during the millennial reign of King Jesus:
 - 1 Now these *are* the names of the tribes. From the north end to the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazarenan, the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hamath; for these are his sides east *and* west; a *portion for* Dan.
 - 2 And by the border of Dan, from the east side unto the west side, a *portion for* Asher.

- ³ And by the border of Asher, from the east side even unto the west side, a *portion for Naphtali*.
- ⁴ And by the border of Naphtali, from the east side unto the west side, a *portion for Manasseh*.
- ⁵ And by the border of Manasseh, from the east side unto the west side, a *portion for Ephraim*.
- ⁶ And by the border of Ephraim, from the east side even unto the west side, a *portion for Reuben*.
- ⁷ And by the border of Reuben, from the east side unto the west side, a *portion for Judah*.
- ⁸ And by the border of Judah, from the east side unto the west side, shall be the offering which ye shall offer of five and twenty thousand *reeds in breadth, and in length as one of the other parts, from the east side unto the west side: and the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it.*

It is clear that in the millennial kingdom, the tribe of Dan's place is restored among the tribes and that there seems to be no distinction between Ephraim and Manasseh and the other tribes, either.

8. This ends John's first vision during the lull in the action, chapter 7. To summarize, "God will select 12,000 Jews from each of the twelve tribes of Israel to be His special servants throughout the Tribulation. We are not told what the seal is that He places on their foreheads, but whatever it is, it endows them with both protection and power from on high. The fact that these are Jewish groups indicates that there will be many Jews who turn to Christ as their Messiah at the outset of the Tribulation. We can only imagine what evangelistic success these 144,000 servants of God will have. They are often likened to the zeal of the Apostle Paul and those anointed with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:1-40)."⁷ The next vision begins with verse 9.

Note: "There has been much controversy concerning the following questions:

- (1) Will the whole heathen world be damned because the church has been caught up to be with the Lord in the air, and the dispensation of God's unlimited grace has closed?
- (2) Will any be saved on earth after the church is taken up?
- (3) If the Holy Spirit goes with the church, how can any work of the Spirit be carried on among the people of the earth? We will endeavour to answer these questions as we proceed to unfold the truths contained in this chapter.

The 144,000 of Israel are sealed by God as His own, and also that a vast multitude of Gentiles out of all nations are saved (all of which takes place after the rapture of the church), is clearly taught in this passage. Let us now examine verses 9-17."⁸

⁷ See footnote for Revelation 7.1-8 from *Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible*, (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000), page 1375.

⁸ L. Sale-Harrison, *The Remarkable Revelation*, (New York: Sale-Harrison Publications, 1930), pages 89-90.

(7.9) After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

1. “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues”
 - a. The phrase “After this” translates that phrase that we have seen before in John’s Revelation, μετὰ ταῦτα. So, we again see this Greek phrase used when some significant change is taking place, or some gear shifting is occurring. Therefore, take note of this chapter’s second vision.
 - b. What a group of people John sees here. This is Bible language for a whole bunch of Gentiles. In addition, just why this great multitude of people is properly understood to be Gentiles, we will go into shortly.
2. “stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands”
 - a. We know that these folks are believers, for three reasons:
 - #1 They are in heaven, where only believers can be at this time. This whole scene takes place in heaven.
 - #2 They stand before God on His throne and before the Lamb, which only believers can do. Until a person has faith in Christ he has no standing before God or Jesus. That they stand before the throne of God indicates that they are saved people.
 - #3 They wear white robes, which only believers can wear. The white robes represent the righteousness of Christ. Without faith in Christ, righteousness will not be imputed to the believer. That means, no faith in Christ, no white robes.
 - b. What do the palms mean? If you were a Jewish Christian of John’s day, reading this passage, would the palms have a special significance for you? Yes, they would. John Gill’s observation about the palms in this verse: “the palm tree is well known to be a token of victory. So Philo the Jew says, the palm tree is *συμβολον νικης*, ‘a symbol of victory’. Conquerors used to carry palm tree branches in their hands: those who conquered in the combats and plays among the Greeks, used not only to have crowns of palm trees given them, but carried branches of it in their hands; as did also the Romans in their triumphs; yea, they sometimes wore ‘toga palmata’, a garment with the figures of palm trees on it, which were interwoven in it: and hence here palms are mentioned along with white garments; and some have been tempted to render the words thus, ‘clothed with white robes’, and ‘palms on their sides’; that is, on the sides of their robes. The medal which was struck by Titus Vespasian, at the taking of Jerusalem, had

on it a palm tree, and a captive woman sitting under it, with this inscription on it, 'Judaea capta', Judea is taken. And when our Lord rode in triumph to Jerusalem, the people met him with branches of palm trees in their hands, and cried, Hosanna to him. So the Jews, at the feast of tabernacles, which they kept in commemoration of their having dwelt in tents in the wilderness, carried 'Lulabs', or palm tree branches, in their hands, in token of joy, (Leviticus 23:40); and in like manner, these being come out of the wilderness of the world, and the tabernacle of God being among them, express their joy in this way; (see Gill on 'John 12:13')."⁹

c. Leviticus 23.40-43:

- ⁴⁰ And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.
- ⁴¹ And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. *It shall be* a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.
- ⁴² Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:
- ⁴³ That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God.

- d. The passage in Leviticus referred to the annual feast of tabernacles, in which the children of Israel spent one entire week praising God for caring for them while they lived in tents in the wilderness. It was one of the most joyous occasions of the year for the Israelites when they celebrated the feast of tabernacles.
- e. The fact that these believers are of all nations, kindreds, peoples, and tongues means they are not Jewish believers but Gentile believers. That tells us that they are not celebrating the feast of tabernacles up there. When John refers to the palm branches in their hands, he evokes a mental image of great joy and rejoicing to his readers.
- f. Why the whoop-it-up good time? Why the great rejoicing in heaven? Is it connected to these 144,000 Jewish people who have just been anointed? Yes, I think it is. Just how it is connected and just why all these believers are rejoicing; we will see as we progress.

(7.10) And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

⁹ John Gill, *The Baptist Commentary Series Volume I, John Gill's Exposition Of The Old And New Testaments, Vol 5* (Paris, Arkansas: the Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., reprinted 2006), page 741.

1. Ah, these people are airing it out, are they not? They are not holding back at all. John Gill observes that they “cried with a loud voice” “To show the strength of their affection, and the greatness of their joy, and how sensible they were of the favour they enjoyed, and how hearty they were in the following ascription of glory to God, and the Lamb.”¹⁰

2. And what did they say when they cried with loud voices? “Salvation to our God”

“The word rendered salvation--σωτηρια--means properly safety, deliverance, preservation; then welfare or prosperity; then victory; then, in a Christian sense, deliverance from punishment and admission to eternal life. Here the idea seems to be, that their deliverance from sin, danger, persecution, and death, was to be ascribed solely to God.”¹¹

3. “our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”

Notice the ever-present distinction between the First Person, Who sits upon the throne, and the Second Person, here termed “the Lamb.”

(7.11) And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

1. You might remember that in chapter 4, the angels praised God, resulting in the elders praising Him. Well, the believers praise God in verse 10, and then the angels respond here in verse 11. Nice turnaround. Notice, if you will, the posture of angelic worship. They are on their faces.

2. “These are unfallen angels, therefore they have never known the joy of experiencing salvation; however, they always rejoice in the salvation of sinners on earth (see Luke 15:8-10). They add their ‘Amen’ whenever a soul is saved. In a day such as our own, when there is so little worship, this awe-inspiring scene of men and angels worshiping the Lord stands out as one of the most blessed in the entire Book. Here is true worship indeed! The redeemed ones come before the Lord with all their possessions, and they worship before Him (Deuteronomy 26:10). Our possessions keep us from worship. We call ourselves wise when actually we are stupid. Wise men linger long before the Lamb and present their treasure to Him (see Matthew 2:1-12).”¹²

(7.12) Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

“Here a seven fold praise is given to God by the angels....”¹³ Take note of what is said by these sinless creatures that break out in this paean of praise:

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Albert Barnes, *Albert Barnes’ NT Commentary*, (Bronson, MI: Online Publishing, Inc., 2002), bible@mail.com

¹² Strauss, page 177.

¹³ Gill, page 742.

1. The word “amen” simply means “so be it,” or “it is true.” It is a word you should be familiar with.¹⁴ And you should practice the proper use of the word. The Lord Jesus Christ made use of the word during His earthly ministry. The word occupies a significant place throughout the Hebrew Scriptures as a way of participating in the worship of the one true and living God. We see the word so used here. We should take a hint.
2. The rest of these things (blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power, and might) are words associated with the worship and praise of God. Some of the terms describe God’s virtues and attributes. Other words describe the proper response of the creature toward our great Creator.
3. This verse, an angelic beatitude, begins with the angels saying “Amen,” and ends with John echoing their sentiments with his own “Amen.” Therefore, Amen it is.
4. “Substantially the same ascription of praise occurs in Re 5:12.... The general idea is that the highest kind of praise is to be ascribed to God; everything excellent in character is to be attributed to him; every blessing which is received is to be traced to him. The *order* of the words indeed is changed, but the sense is substantially the same. In the former case (Re 5:12) the ascription of praise is to the Lamb-- the Son of God; here it is to God. In both instances, the worship is described as rendered in heaven; and the use of the language shows that God and the Lamb are regarded in heaven as entitled to equal praise. The only words found here which do not occur in Re 5:12 are *thanksgiving* and *might*--words which require no particular explanation.”¹⁵

(7.13) And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

1. We have here God’s way of describing the look of puzzlement on John’s face. Remember the great multitude of believers mentioned in verse 9? It seems John does not know who they are. Reflect on this for a moment.
2. It seems that they cannot be Old Testament believers. When John and Peter were on the Mount of Transfiguration, in Mark chapter 9, they did recognize Moses and Elijah, who are Old Testament believers. Therefore, it makes sense that John would have identified some of this group if they had been from the Old Testament period.
3. It also seems that they are not Church Age saints since their representatives (the 24 elders) are sitting before the throne and do not stand. Besides, it would be reasonable to expect John to recognize at least some Church Age saints. After all, he is a Church Age saint. Would he not be expected to identify some of those martyrs he

¹⁴ My pamphlet titled “Amen! Clap!” is available as a downloadable file at www.ClassicalBaptist.Press

¹⁵ Barnes

served God with before their deaths, such as the apostles Peter and Paul and his brother James? It seems reasonable to suppose so.

4. One of the 24 elders recognized John's look of puzzlement and asked him if he knew who these other saints were and where they came from. John's answer comes in verse 14.
- (7.14) And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
1. John said, "Sir, thou knowest." He kicks the answering of that question back to the elder who asked him because he does not know who the multitudes of believers are.
 2. The elder then informs him that these believers, the great multitude that stand before the throne, have come out of the Great Tribulation, or the last three and one-half years of Daniel's 70th week. We can be confident that this is what is meant, since a Greek article stands before the phrase "great tribulation," indicating that a very specific tribulation is being referred to, which is, as I have said, Daniel's 70th week.
 3. Additionally, they "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." What is this referring to? Isaiah 1.18 gives us a clue:
 - ¹⁸ Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.
- First John 1.7:
- ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.
 4. It is the trend of modernism to shy away from the blood of Jesus Christ as a critical consideration in God's dealings with sin. However, if we are to stay true to the teachings of the Word of God, and if we are to interpret such portions of Scripture as this one correctly, we must realize that the sacrificial shedding of Christ's blood for the remission of our sins is what makes it possible for believers to be clothed in the white robes of Christ's righteousness and to stand before the throne of God.

5. To put it another way, it is the blood of the Lamb, God's Son, that propitiates or satisfies the Father's righteous demands by expiating or purging sins.¹⁶ Nothing else will do.¹⁷

(7.15) Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

1. "Therefore are they before the throne of God"

- a. Why do the white-robed ones who came out of the Great Tribulation serve before the throne of God? The angel is pointing out to John that their service is the direct result of being clothed in the blood-cleansed righteousness of Jesus Christ.
- b. But this should be no surprise, for is this not the reason that lies back of every believer's service to God? Moreover, can the absence of such service to God be explained by the lack of cleansing in the blood of Jesus Christ?
- c. I am amazed at those who claim to be Christians, who not only *do* not serve God, they *will* not serve God. How can such claims be taken seriously, in light of Ephesians 2.10, which declares, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them," and Romans 12.1, which reads, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service*"?
- d. When a sinner's sins are washed clean in the blood of Jesus Christ, a new heart is given.¹⁸ This new heart is seen in a complete alteration in the believer's affections so that, no matter what dispensation or period of history he was born into, his heart desires to stand before the throne of God and serve.

2. "and serve him day and night in his temple"

- a. These believers are not a part of the bride of Christ. That blessing is reserved for those who have been saved before the Rapture. What evidence in this verse would imply that this is true?
- b. These Tribulation saints have the position of Temple servants in heaven. They will serve the Lord continually, night and day. This is a sharp contrast to the occupation of Church Age believers. What is the station of Church Age believers, the bride of Christ? Co-regent in heaven, ruling and reigning with the Bridegroom.

¹⁶ Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki & Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1999), pages 50 and 96.

¹⁷ Hebrews 9.22 considered with 10.4

¹⁸ Ezekiel 36.26

- c. How are we to account for such an enormous difference in station, those believers from one era being Temple servants, and those from another being the bride of Christ? An observation that did not originate with me recognizes that although God is no respecter of persons, He is a respecter of classes,¹⁹ of groups,²⁰ and of ages.²¹ To what are these distinctions to be attributed? To God's sovereign grace. He not only chooses whom to bless or not to bless but also chooses how to bless.
3. "and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."
 - a. Let us be reminded that it is God, the First Person, Who John observes sitting on the throne. As well, the Tribulation believers are before God's throne, serving Him night and day. However, this last phrase, "and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them," is particularly fascinating. The Greek word translated "dwell" is the word σκηνώσει. "This word properly means, *to tent, to pitch a tent*; and, in the New Testament, to dwell as in tents. The meaning here is, that God would dwell among them as in a tent, or would have his abode with them. Perhaps the allusion is to the tabernacle in the wilderness. That was regarded as the peculiar dwelling-place of God, and that always occupied a central place among the tribes of Israel. So in heaven--there will be the consciousness always that God dwells there among his people, and that the redeemed are gathered around him in his own house."²²
 - b. In Genesis 3.8, after they had sinned in eating the forbidden fruit, we read, "And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." The impression is given that "the voice of the LORD God," who I take to be the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ, communed with Adam at that time of day. But because of sin, that communion was broken, and such times of spiritual intimacy with the LORD God were brought to an end. Man was now estranged from the LORD God by his sin.
 - c. Jump forward several thousand years to where the children of Israel are encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai after their exodus. While there, God gave Moses the Law and instructions for fabricating the Tabernacle. Why build such a sanctuary? Exodus 25.8 informs us with God's Own words: "that I may dwell among them."
 - d. God's desire has always been to dwell among us. When that intimacy was destroyed by sin, God made a way with the construction of the Tabernacle and then the Temple. That was not good enough. Jesus came and dwelt among us,

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 1.26-29

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 10.32

²¹ John 3.29, where John the Baptist, though the pre-eminent prophet, is not counted among the bride of Christ, shows God a respecter of ages. The greatest of the past age will not enjoy the prestige of the least of our age.

²² Albert Barnes, *Albert Barnes' NT Commentary*, (Bronson, MI: Online Publishing, Inc., 2002), bible@mail.com

but we still had the condemnation of sin hanging over our heads. Based on His sacrifice for our sins, He gave us the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Thus, God can now dwell among us through the Holy Spirit's presence.

- e. God's longing, however, has always been for an unencumbered communion with His creatures, in no way hindered by sin or restrictions of any kind. We see in this verse the beginning of God's great plan of redemption coming to full fruition. Sinful man cleansed by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, passed from mortal life to heaven, in God's presence and serving, and God dwelling among them.

(7.16) They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

1. The Tribulation saints John sees in heaven will have suffered under the most severe persecution while on Earth, and horrible torture.
2. Unable to purchase food or water without the mark of the beast, unable to find anyone who will help them for fear of reprisal, most of those represented here probably will have starved to death. Others were beheaded.
3. However, once they arrive in heaven, God will do more than make up for their deprivation. Truly did Paul write, "... the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us," Romans 8.18.
4. Why is there no hunger or thirst or sunlight or heat? This verse is a quote from Isaiah 49.10, and the reference to hunger and thirst and sunlight on them and heat has to do with the deprivations suffered by those who are persecuted, both the predicted Babylonian captivity Isaiah referred to and the terrible persecution of the Great Tribulation that these saints endured for Christ's sake.

(7.17) For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

1. "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them"
 - a. What tender-loving personal care the Savior will give to those who give up their lives for Him during that horrible time.
 - b. But notice that the Lamb is said to be "in the midst of the throne." What do you suppose that means? "not before the throne, as the great multitude are said to be, (Revelation 7:9); nor round about it, as the angels in (Revelation 7:11); but in the midst of it, being equal to him that sits upon it; sitting on the same throne with him, and having the same power and authority."²³ If you look back

²³ Gill, page 743.

to Revelation 5.6 you will see that there, too, the Lamb is said to be “in the midst of the throne.”

2. “and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters”

“The allusion is undoubtedly to the happiness of heaven, represented as fresh and ever-flowing, like streams in the desert. No image of happiness, perhaps, is more vivid, or would be more striking to an Oriental, than that of such fountains flowing in sandy and burning wastes.”²⁴

3. “and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes”

- a. There is no indication, from the context of this passage, that those tears result from anything but the persecution that these saints endured for their testimony.
- b. Isaiah 25.8 clearly shows that this wiping away of tears happens when the child of God goes to heaven: “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken *it*.”
- c. This is the description of when, for them, the victory of God over sin in their lives will be finally realized. This is the salvation from the presence of sin, which we all look forward to, a time when heartache and disappointment will be no more.
- d. This verse cannot be properly used to support the position that the tears mentioned here are tears of regret and shame. I say this because some use this verse to teach that some Christians will have such regret because of the way they lived their lives here on Earth that they will be very sorry when they get to heaven ... until God wipes away their tears. As you can see, the context does not support such a twisted understanding of the statement.

Note: “Chapter 7 of the book of Revelation serves as a review of the situation described in the previous chapters and emphasizes two important facts. First, God is going to judge Israel in the period of great trial, and 12,000 from each tribe, totaling 144,000, will be protected and sealed from the judgments which will fall upon the world in general. Second, a great multitude of Gentiles will also be saved, but many of these will be martyred, and a multitude of the martyred dead are found in heaven rejoicing in the presence of the Lamb and representing every tongue and nation. It is an indication that even in the tragic closing hours prior to the second coming of Christ to the earth, countless souls will find Christ as Saviour and be saved by His grace.”²⁵

²⁴ Barnes

²⁵ Walvoord, page 149.