

From the Rapture to the Second Coming

Revelation 7: "144,000 Special Messengers"



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Let's Get Started

Today Christians are spreading the Word of God throughout the world by short wave radio, television, and the *Internet*. The Bible has been translated into almost every language of every nation. The world has repeatedly heard the message of salvation, and yet following the Rapture, there will be multitudes who have rejected the Bible and its message.

Jesus said, *This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end shall come* (Matthew 24:14). Everyone will hear his message and have the opportunity to accept salvation before they die or take the Mark of the Beast (Revelation 13:17).

Hold Back The Wind

Revelation 7:1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or

on the sea or on any tree.

After the first six seals are opened, four angels will stand at the earth's four corners to prevent any wind from blowing. This does not mean that the earth will become square. It is simply a symbolic expression meaning the angels will be standing at the four points of the compass: north, south, east, and west. They will control the winds of the earth. Without these angels the airborne plagues from the previous seals would spread around the world.

Key Symbols:

- ✓ Four Angles
 - *hold back the winds*

What Others are Saying:

J. Vernon McGee: I do not think that God would permit any period to continue on this earth in which there were not some of the human family turning to God, because that is his purpose. I do not think he would continue to keep this world running; I think he would shut it down, turn it off, and speak it out of existence if there were not folk turning to him. ^{7:1}

Tim LaHaye: The greatest revival the world has ever known is yet to come. It will not occur within the Church Age but during the Tribulation Period. ^{7:2}

The Angel From The East

Revelation 7:2 Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea:

Christians have always believed in angels. It would be impossible to believe the Bible without believing in angels. They play a prominent role in God's plan for mankind. This is especially true of the stories about Jesus and the judgments of Revelation.

Angels are divided into different categories or ranks. Some rank higher than others, and some serve Satan and not God. We do not know who this angel from the east is, but we do know that he will have authority over the other four angels. The four angels will have the power to harm the earth and sea, but just before they unleash their great power, the angel from the east will intercede with a loud voice and stop them. He will have the seal of the *Living God* in his hand, and it will be used to mark a group of special messengers.

Key Symbols:

- ✓ Angels from the East
 - *seal of the Living God*

What Others are Saying:

Hal Lindsey: Although the subject of angels is usually associated with fairy tales or myths, these creatures are spoken of very matter-of-factly in the Bible and they play a very important part in the predicted judgments of God on earth. ^{7:3}

Related Current Events

El Niño, the weather phenomenon that turns up in the tropical Pacific every three to five years, is expected to have a massive impact on weather patterns around the world the coming year. Climatologists warn that current El Niño could be the worst in 150 years, as the mass of warm water in the Pacific Ocean grows to 1½ times the size of the continental United States. That's much stronger than the 1982–1983 El Niño, which left an estimated 2,000 dead and \$13 billion in damages around the world, according to the World Meteorological Organization, the weather agency for the **United Nations**. ⁷⁻⁴

The Mark of God

Revelation 7:3 "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God."

The four angels will be commanded to hold back their destructive forces until God's servants can be sealed (Ephesians 1:13). Nothing will happen to the land, sea, or trees until these special messengers are protected.

The Bible does not say what this seal will be. We are told only that these believers will be protected by some type of mark. Since the beginning of creation **God has been marking** (Ezekiel 9:4; Genesis 4:15) his people. God's mark will be placed on their foreheads. It will be an actual mark that will show others that these are God's people.

What Others are Saying:

- ✓ **Dennis Pollock:** Nowhere in the Scriptures are we given a picture of a God who contemplates his creation with an unruffled, distant, purely logical view. The God of the Bible is an emotional God—he rejoices, he becomes grieved, he takes delight in his people, and he becomes very angry when his creatures default, rebel against the commands he has given them. ^{7:5}

Related Current Events

- ✓ The world's top atmospheric scientists are now in agreement that the recent rapid climate changes are at least partially caused by human factors. (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Second Assessment Report, 1995). A recent report predicts increase of tropical diseases, a rise in sea level, more destructive weather patterns, extinction of plant and animal species, and crop failure in many parts of the world. The report continues to suggest that

unless drastic changes in emissions levels occur, the rate of global warming will escalate. ⁷⁻⁶

144,000

Revelation 7:4–8 Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000, from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.

God will seal 144,000 of his servants, but they will not come from the Church or any particular denomination. Instead, all 144,000 will come from the twelve tribes of Israel, the Jews.

The list of tribes is unusual in that two of the original twelve tribes of Israel, Dan (Judges 18:30; 1 Kings 12:28-30) and Ephraim (Hosea 4:17)—will be left out. Most experts believe these two tribes will be skipped because they were both guilty of idolatry, thus disqualifying them as special servants of God. Some even believe the **False Prophet** (Genesis 49:17) mentioned in Chapter 5 will come from the tribe of Daniel

The tribes of Levi and Joseph will be added to make the twelve marked tribes of the Tribulation Period. As the **tribe of priests** (Deuteronomy 10:8, 9), Levi was not counted among the original twelve tribes of Israel. The **tribe of Joseph** (Numbers 13:11; 36:5) was also not one of the original twelve. Joseph was Ephraim's father, and it looks like he will replace his idolatrous son.

Key Symbols:

- ✓ 144,000
 - *marked men from the twelve tribes of Israel*

Warning!

- ✓ **Even though these verses are clear and straightforward, some people still want to spiritualize them. The Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, believe this refers to 144,000 of their members. However, the verse clearly states that the 144,000 will come from the twelve tribes of Israel which excludes all Gentiles. It is best to ignore the mental gymnastics and accept the literal interpretation.**

Listen To The Gospel

Revelation 7:9 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

Once God has sealed his 144,000, the whole world will hear his message. Multitudes will

believe and be saved. The **Antichrist** and his **False Prophet** will be furious and try to stop the revival by forcing new believers to **turn away from the faith** (Matthew 24:9-14). They will deny people food and medicine. Executions will be frequent and numerous. The number of martyrs will be more than any man can count.

These martyrs will be given white robes, symbolizing the righteousness of Jesus. They will also receive palm branches, symbolizing their triumphal entry into heaven. You may remember Jesus was also given palm branches when he **entered the city of Jerusalem** (John 12:12, 13) before his death. The martyrs will stand in the presence of Jesus before the throne of God.

Related Current Events

- ✓ According to a report by George Otis of High Adventure Ministries, over 1,500,000 Christians in Sudan have been murdered and another 1,000,000 have disappeared... More than 100 Christian pastors from Southern Sudan have been killed by crucifixion at Moslem hands. ⁷⁻⁷
- ✓ 1996 will be recorded as one of the most violent years for Christian persecution. The secular human rights group Freedom House has just completed a report proving that religious persecution is still a harsh fact heading into the 21st century.
- ✓ The Freedom House's Puebla Program on Religious Freedom studied eight countries with the worst records of religious persecution. Specific examples cited in the report included China's circulation of arrest warrants for 3,000 evangelical preachers. In Sudan, Christian children are apprehended in the southern part of the country, then sold at open-air slave markets for as little as \$15. Saudi Arabia has decreed there will be no public expression of Christianity. ⁷⁻⁸

Key Symbols:

- ✓ Multitude Before the Throne
 - *martyrs (Tribulation Saints)*

One Choice

Revelation 7:10 And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

This is a great worship service of victory and rejoicing whose central theme is salvation. The glory of salvation that belongs to God and his Son Jesus. God is the author of salvation and has narrowed the way to heaven down to one (Ephesians 4:5), the Lamb of God.

Key Point

- ✓ God, the author of salvation, has given us only one way to heaven, his Son.

Worship Before The Throne

Revelation 7:11 All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God,

This may well be the greatest worship service ever. When this multitude of Tribulation Saints stand before the throne praising and glorifying the Father and Son, all the angels of heaven will join in; followed by the twenty-four elders and four living creatures.

Notice all the different groups: the Tribulation Saints, the twenty-four elders (representing the Church), the angels, and the four living creatures. Everyone in heaven will participate in this service.

Sevenfold Worship

Revelation 7:12 saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

Amen indicates that the angels will agree with the Tribulation Saints. Salvation belongs to God and his Son, and they deserve the credit for getting this great multitude to heaven. Then the angels will break forth with a sevenfold declaration of worship: praise, glory, wisdom, thanks, honor, power, and strength all belong to God forever and ever.

What Others are Saying:

Hal Lindsey: Perhaps you've heard it said that the angels in heaven rejoice when one sinner is saved. I'm sure they're happy for the sinner who has been redeemed, but I have a suspicion that the real reason for their joy is that it gives them another opportunity to fall down on their faces and praise the one who made the sinner's salvation possible. ^{7:9}

Two Questions

Revelation 7:13 Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?"

One of the twenty-four elders will ask two questions: Who are they, and Where did they come from? He already knows the answer, but he will ask them anyway to make sure everyone else does.

What Others are Saying:

Tim LaHaye: These "Tribulation Saints" constitute a distinctive category, just as the Church and Israel or Old Testament Saints form a special company. Each group has its own relationship to Christ, depending on the period of time in which these individuals were converted. That these are believers is unquestionable in view of the fact that they have *washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the*

The Blood of The Lamb

Revelation 7:14 I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

This great multitude before the throne of God will come out of the Tribulation Period. They will be saved people; people clothed in the righteousness of Jesus; people who trusted in the shed blood of the Lamb (Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:22).

The elders' answer tells us what the 144,000 will be preaching. They will preach *the blood of the Lamb*. The fact that these 144,000 are Israelites will not alter their message.

Warning!

- ✓ **When most prophecy experts talk about the Great Tribulation, they are talking about the last three and one-half years of the seven-year period. But in this verse, the term refers to *all* those who have come out of the entire seven-year Tribulation Period.**

Suddenly

Revelation 7:15 Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.

This is a very special promise. On earth, the saved will not be safe anywhere. They will either starve, die of disease, or be murdered. There will be no way to escape the clutches of the **Antichrist**. Suddenly, they will find themselves in the throne room of God, **face-to-face** with Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:8), surrounded by angels, clothed in white robes, and protected by God (1 John 5:18; Psalm 121).

A Covering of Protection

Revelation 7:16 Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat.

The Tribulation Saints will face hunger, thirst, death from starvation and poisoned water, burning by the blazing sun, and suffocation by scorching heat. Once they arrive in heaven, though, it will never happen again. They will be in the **fortress** (Psalm 91:1-16; Psalm 46:1-11), the place a refuge of the Almighty God. It is a place of constant protection that cannot be breached. This is God's promise.

Key Point

- ✓ God promises in heaven we will never suffer again.

What Others are Saying:

Jack Van Impe: The World Watch Institute recently reported that carbon emissions, deforestation, and soil erosion are worsening. Birds are disappearing. Destructive insects are developing resistance to pesticides. The seas are producing fewer harvests of edible fish. Grain stocks are down. Tropical rain forests are dwindling. [7-11](#)

Grant R. Jeffrey: During the last thirty days another ten million hungry humans arrived on earth. Every month another five thousand animal and plant species become extinct as they succumb to the relentless population pressures on their precious and endangered habitat. [7-12](#)

Related Current Events

Some of the possible effects of global warming:

- ✓ Higher temperatures
- ✓ More droughts
- ✓ Agricultural growing areas shift north in Northern Hemisphere; south in Southern Hemisphere
- ✓ More severe tropical storms
- ✓ Flooding of low coastal areas and islands [7-13](#)

No More Tears

Revelation 7:17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

The Lamb, who stands in the midst of the throne of God, will preserve the Tribulation Saints. He will feed the saints from the tree of life (Revelation 2:7) and let them drink from fountains of living water.

This also tells us the saints are destined for a great deal of weeping before they depart this earth. They will face incredibly harsh living conditions, terrorizing circumstances, and the loss of loved ones. Their tears will have reason to fall, but when they get to heaven, God will wipe them away.

Study Questions

- ✓ What will the first four angels do? Why are they doing it?
- ✓ What will the 144,000 preach? Why is their message so important?
- ✓ What seven things do the angels say belong to God? Why do they belong to him?
- ✓ What is the difference between the twenty-four elders and the Tribulation Saints?
- ✓ Will God let people die for their faith?

[Go to Answers](#)

Chapter Wrap-up

- ✓ An angel will place the Mark of God on the foreheads of God's servants so that his judgments do not harm them. ([Revelation 7:2, 3](#))
 - ✓ God is not finished with Israel. He will seal 144,000 of them with his mark of protection. 12,000 will come from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. ([Revelation 7:4–8](#))
 - ✓ During the Tribulation multitudes will be killed on earth. These martyrs will find themselves in heaven standing before Jesus. ([Revelation 7:9](#))
 - ✓ A Great Worship Service will start in heaven when the Tribulation Saints, followed by the rest of heaven inhabitants, start worshipping God for being the author of salvation. ([Revelation 7:10, 11](#))
 - ✓ God promises that the martyrs will *never* again endure the hardships they suffered on earth, and he promises to wipe their tears away. ([Revelation 7:15–17](#))
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