

8. 144,000 Sealed from Israel

Revelation 7:1-8

The Book of Revelation

YouTube video link: <https://youtu.be/CITztjOZeDE>

In our last study, we looked at [The Sixth Seal Cosmic Disturbances](#), a time when signs in the heavens above coincide with earth-shattering events among the nations. Today, our focus is on what happens after the cosmic signs of the sixth seal, i.e., a continuation of events at some point during the second half of the seven-year period prophesied by the prophet Daniel (9:27). The fifth seal and Matthew's Gospel tells of a time of great distress or tribulation that occurs after the desecration of the temple in Israel (Matthew 24:15; and 21). Paul the Apostle also wrote about this desecration, saying that it happens when the Antichrist seats himself in the Temple of God, proclaiming himself as God, and demands worship from all the world (2 Thessalonians 2:4). This temple desecration will begin a time of distress for all believers in Christ who will not worship the Antichrist. The time of distress continues until cosmic signs take place, after which the Lord intervenes by sending His angels to gather His elected ones who will not bow their knees to the Antichrist. This will be the most significant rescue the world has ever seen! Just as God rescued His people in the days of Noah, providing an escape in the ark and in the days of bondage in Egypt when the angel of Death passed over every home marked with the blood of a lamb over the door of the Israelites's homes, God's people will be removed, spared and snatched away from God's impending judgment. God deals with His people in a separate specific way, both Jew and Gentile. Just as the blackest of storms give way to the most beautiful of sunsets, we see a bright ray of hope as God steps in to bring His justice and redemption. All those who belong to Him will be caught up to be with the Lord:

²⁹***Immediately after the distress*** of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.

³⁰***At that time*** the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, ***and they will gather his elect*** from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other (Matthew 24:29-31).

Does the Book of Revelation also talk of a gathering of God's elect after the cosmic signs? Yes! Revelation 7:1-8 tells of the specific sealing of 144,000 people from the tribes of Israel and, at the same time, the gathering of a great multitude from all nations, tribes, and tongues throughout the whole world (Revelation 7:9-17). We will look at the great multitude before the throne of God in our next study. For this study, we will look at the 144,000 sealed from Israel.

144,000 Sealed from Israel

¹After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back its four winds so that no wind would blow on land or sea or any tree. ²And I saw another angel ascending from the east, with the seal of the living God. And he called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: ³“Do not harm the

land or sea or trees until we have sealed the foreheads of the servants of our God” (Revelation 7:1-3).

We are told of the actions of five angels. Four are holding back devastating winds of destruction at the four quadrants of the world, while another tells them to wait until "we" have sealed the foreheads of God's servants. I take the “we” (v. 3) to be other angels who are sent to gather true believers in Christ from Israel and the nations of the world, just as we are told in Matthew 24:31.

In accordance with what Jesus instructed His disciples on the Mount of Olives, the Book of Revelation tells us that after several cosmic signs at the opening of the sixth seal, the angels gather the elect (everyone whose name is written in the Book of the Lamb), and they are all seen in heaven before the throne. Revelation 7:1-8 tells us of the specific sealing of 144,000 people from all the tribes of Israel.

⁴And I heard the number of those who were sealed, 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel:

⁵From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed,
 from the tribe of Reuben 12,000,
 from the tribe of Gad 12,000,
⁶from the tribe of Asher 12,000,
 from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000,
 from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000,
⁷from the tribe of Simeon 12,000,
 from the tribe of Levi 12,000,
 from the tribe of Issachar 12,000,
⁸from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000,
 from the tribe of Joseph 12,000,
 and from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000 (Revelation 7:4-8).

What do you think is the significance of the “sealing of the foreheads?” Do you see this as a physical marking or something that is a symbol of something spiritual, or both? What is the significance of the number 144,000? We can only speculate here.

This sealing of believers in the Messiah happens at the same time as a great multitude of Gentiles are caught up to the throne of God (Revelation 7:9). Nowhere in Scripture are we told that these 144,000 Jews are evangelists going around the world and winning a great multitude of Gentiles, as some teachers say. It goes against what God has told us that all of us have the responsibility to take the Gospel to all nations. There should not be a hint that the responsibility is removed from the Gentiles and given to the Messianic Jews to do the job. This teaching that the 144,000 are evangelists from the tribes of Israel is an assumption by those who believe in a rapture before the seven-year period, teaching for which there is no scriptural basis.

So, who are these 144,000 from Israel? God is letting us know that He has not forgotten His promises to Israel. Messianic believers from the nation of Israel took the Gospel to us Gentiles under times of great persecution, and God will not forget their faithfulness and will bring forth a remnant from the house of Israel. Chapter seven goes along with what we read in Matthew 24:29-

31, i.e., that the rapture will take place after the cosmic signs and before God's wrath begins. The great multitude is made up of believers of all nations, Jews and Gentiles. We are told explicitly of 144,000 Jewish people sealed as part of the Church. I presume this to mean that they have responded to the call of God and are included in the Elect of God, the Church, for the Scriptures tell us: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." (The Greek word translated as "church" means *called-out ones*.)

In the winter of 1977, I lived in Israel for the first of three times. The first time lasted four months. Jewish believers in Messiah were few, and there were only three congregations that I knew of. In 2011, when I started arranging and leading tours, I began to have a Messianic believer tour guide, and when I asked him in January 2019; he told me that there were 200 Jewish Messianic congregations in the land of Israel, numbering around 20,000 Messianic believers enduring persecution at the hands of Orthodox Jews. The last information I heard was that the number of believers in Yeshua living in the land of Israel was around 30,000. I believe we are seeing God beginning a great work of calling the 144,000. The number of Jews coming to Messiah *Yeshua* may be an indication of the soon coming of the Lord. We don't know at what time the Lord will come, but we do know that, at the time of the end of the age, the Scriptures tell us there will be 144,000 Jewish Messianic believers who have responded to the call of Messiah and have the seal of God upon them: 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." ⁴Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel (Revelation 7:3-4). This same seal is placed on all believers, Jews, and Gentiles when they come to Christ. Paul wrote,

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were **sealed** with the promised Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13).

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were **sealed** for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30 Emphasis added).

What Does it Mean to be Sealed?

A seal is a mark of ownership and protection like the signature on documents today. A king or ruler had a signet ring with his symbol on his finger, which he put into hot wax to seal a document. Such a seal was placed on the tomb of Jesus (Matthew 27:66). To whomever the seal belongs, that person has the authority behind him to bring any legal action or judgment to whatever was sealed. More than six hundred years before Christ, God brought judgment on Israel for all the idolatry occurring in the Jerusalem temple. He had a mark put on the foreheads of those who were spared from the judgment:

³Then the glory of the God of Israel rose from above the cherubim, where it had been, and moved to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing kit at his side. ⁴"Go throughout the city of Jerusalem," said the LORD, "and put **a mark on the foreheads** of the men sighing and groaning over all the abominations committed there." ⁵And as I listened, He said to the others, "Follow him through the city and start killing; do not show pity or spare anyone! ⁶Slaughter the old men, the young men and maidens, the women and children; **but do not go near anyone who has the mark.**

Now **begin at My sanctuary.**” So they began with the elders who were before the temple. ⁷Then He told them, “Defile the temple and fill the courts with the slain. Go forth!” So they went out and began killing throughout the city. ⁸While they were killing, I was left alone. And I fell face down and cried out, “Oh, Lord GOD, when You pour out Your wrath on Jerusalem, will You destroy the entire remnant of Israel?” ⁹He replied, “The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great. The land is full of bloodshed, and the city is full of perversity. For they say, ‘The LORD has forsaken the land; the LORD does not see.’ ¹⁰But as for Me, I will not look on them with pity, nor will I spare them. I will bring their deeds down upon their own heads” (Ezekiel 9:3-10)

Peter the Apostle wrote: “For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17). Many of us long for justice and for sin to be judged, but God first disciplines those He loves (beginning at the house of God). We must introspectively look at ourselves before we pray for God's judgment to come. Those spared from the judgment in the Ezekiel passage were marked with a sign that they were to be saved and delivered.

The Apostle Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit seals all believers to the Day of Redemption (Ephesians 4:30), and of course, this is what we read happening to 144,000 Jews in our passage in Revelation. After telling us of the work of redeeming a body of Messianic believers, Christ instructed John the Apostle to write also of a great number of believers taken from the Gentiles: “**a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb**” (Revelation 7:9). Some believe that the 144,000 is a symbolic number because, they say, Paul the Apostle wrote that *all* Israel would be saved.

The big question before many is how come there are only 144,000 from Israel when Paul wrote in the Book of Romans that all Israel would be saved?

...and in this way **all Israel will be saved.** As it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob (Romans 11:26).

About whom was Paul speaking when he said, “All Israel will be saved?”

Was Paul saying that all Jews in the nation of Israel will come to Christ, or was he saying that God has not given up on the people of Israel and will call to Messiah 144,000 out of the nation of Israel? This writer questions that the whole nation of more than eight million will be saved because Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah writing that only a remnant will be saved: “**And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: ‘Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved’**” (Romans 9:27). We must ask what Paul could be referring to when he said that all Israel would be saved?

The seemingly contradictory passages are found in Paul's letter to the church in Rome. In trying to understand why Paul seems to be contradicting himself, we need to examine why Paul wrote his letter to the church in Rome in the first place. When He wrote to the Corinthian church, it was to correct many attitudes of the flesh going on there. When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, it was to adjust many of their false assumptions as to what would happen in the end times. When he wrote

to the Galatian church, it was to correct the false teaching by the "Judaizers," who wanted the Gentiles to be circumcised and to keep the Law of Moses. So, what was the reason Paul wrote his letter to the church in Rome? Author Peter Tsukahira helps us here. In his book, *God's Tsunami*, Tsukahira writes:

The problem in Rome was a conflict between Jewish and Gentile believers over their respective places in leadership. Perhaps, this problem developed when the Jews who planted the church in Rome were expelled under Emperor Claudius [Acts 18:2]. Later, when they were able to return, the new Gentile leaders did not accept them back as equals since most of the congregation was by then Gentile, and Israel as a nation had rejected Jesus as Messiah. Paul heard about this growing conflict and the division between Jewish and Gentile believers, so he wrote to correct it.¹

It is possible that, because Paul had not planted the church, he started his letter by clarifying the Gospel he preached so that the Roman church would accept his recommendations to go forward with Jews and Gentiles in leadership. He writes in Romans 2:17-29 about those who call themselves Jews:

²⁸For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God (Romans 2:28-29).

In other words, he's saying that just being a Jew ethnically will not qualify one for eternal life. Further on, Paul writes his treatise on Abraham's faith, i.e., that Abraham was justified with God, apart from keeping the Law and trusting his works. He writes:

¹⁶That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations" (Romans 4:16-17).

The New Covenant spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah (31:31) is based on faith in the sacrifice for sin by the author of salvation, the Lord Jesus, the same faith that Abraham had (Genesis 15:6). After laying out clearly to the Roman church how they were to exercise their faith in Jesus in chapters one through eight, Paul was ready to write the real reason for his letter. He wrote that Jewish believers should not be excluded from leadership positions in the church because God will fulfill His calling to the Jewish people (Chapters 9-11). He shared a vital thought in chapter nine when he writes:

⁶But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷and **not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring**, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ⁸This means that **it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God**, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring (Romans 9:6-8)

¹ Peter Tsukahira. *God's Tsunami*. Printed by Peter Tsukahira. www.Gods-Tsunami.com, pages 53-54.

What is Paul saying here? Who are the children of Abraham? To what does “children of the promise” refer?

The Holy Spirit is promised to all of God's children, Jews and Gentiles alike; both will be sealed with the Holy Spirit.

When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:13-14).

A Partial Hardening Has Come to Israel.

Paul carries on his thoughts on the rejection of Jesus by most Jewish people, telling us that God's plans are for many Gentiles to be brought into the New Covenant along with a remnant from Israel. The natural branches, the Jewish people, would be broken off until a specific time arrives, a time when the *pleroma* of the Gentiles has come in:

²⁴For if you [The Gentiles] were cut from a wild olive tree, and contrary to nature were grafted into one that is cultivated, how much more readily will these, the natural branches [believers from the nation of Israel], be grafted into their own olive tree! ²⁵I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you will not be conceited: **A hardening in part has come to Israel, until the full number [pleroma] of the Gentiles has come in.** ²⁶And so **all Israel will be saved**, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove godlessness from Jacob” (Romans 11:24-26).

In the passage above, I am using the NIV translation which translates it as *full number*. I believe this translation to be incorrect. The Greek word *pleroma* is better translated as *fullness* as in the ESV, KJV, NKJ, and NASB Bibles. Paul is saying that there will come a time when Gentiles who received the faith initially from Jews have come to full adulthood biblically (fullness) in their understanding; they will reach out to the Jewish people and make them jealous of their relationship with God through faith:

Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles **to make Israel envious** (Romans 11:11).

When Paul writes that all Israel will be saved, he is talking about the true Israel, i.e., all who have placed their faith in the New Covenant given to Israel (Gentiles as well as Jews) and are grafted into the olive tree of faith (v. 24). The natural branches about which Paul writes are ethnic Jews who have had their eyes opened to Who Jesus is, viz. the Messiah of Israel, and have placed their faith in Him.

I contend that when Paul wrote about all of Israel being saved, he said that there would be one body, i.e., one bride of Christ, composed not only of Jewish believers but also of Gentiles. All Israel means those called to the faith of Abraham, those who trust in what God does rather than what we can do.

I remind you of Paul's letter to the Ephesian church about the oneness of the household of faith:

¹¹Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, **who has made us both one** and has broken down in his flesh **the dividing wall of hostility** ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that **he might create in himself one new man in place of the two**, so making peace, ¹⁶and **might reconcile us both** to God **in one body** through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For **through him we both have access** in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹**in whom the whole structure, being joined together**, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:11-22).

God is at work in the nation of Israel, using true biblical believers among the Gentiles to break down the dividing wall of hostility (v. 14) between Jews and Gentiles so that Jewish people might finally see that their Messiah is for all who will walk in the faith of Abraham. What did Paul mean when he wrote about the dividing wall of hostility in verse fourteen above? Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century, wrote about the temple grounds partition wall separating the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of Israel; it had a limestone sign which was found in Jerusalem in 1871, with the words,

NO FOREIGNER IS TO GO BEYOND THE BALUSTRADE AND THE
PLAZA OF THE TEMPLE ZONE. WHOEVER IS CAUGHT DOING SO
WILL HAVE HIMSELF TO BLAME FOR HIS DEATH WHICH WILL
FOLLOW ²

Jesus came to grant access into the very Holy of Holies to all believers, tearing down the veil between God and man and the separation walls between Jew and Gentile (v. 18). We are all one in Messiah Jesus. The whole structure of the spiritual Body of Christ is being joined together (v. 21), and Jews, Arabs, and Gentile believers from all over the world are flowing together as one. What a beautiful testimony of God!

⁷Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. ⁸And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." ⁹So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith (Galatians 3:7-9).

² <https://www.bible-history.com/archaeology/israel/temple-warning.html>

Then, there is also what Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus:

This mystery is that through the Gospel the Gentiles are **heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together** in the promise in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3:6).

The Gospel has always been for the Jew to experience first, and then the Gentiles. It will be the same at the rapture of the saints:

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: **first to the Jew**, then to the Gentile (Romans 1:16).

There at the throne of God in Heaven, we see people from every tribe from all over the world, including the twelve tribes of Israel:

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. ¹⁰And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." ¹¹All **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 worshiped God, ¹²saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" (Revelation 7:9-12).

Notice that the Lord has said that every nation will be represented as standing before the throne. He doesn't exclude Israel. All believers are sealed and together will stand as one body before their Messiah. None who have come under the New Covenant are lost. All are given the opportunity, and God will bring in people of every nation, tribe, people, and language and clothe them in Christ's righteousness, symbolized as robes of white before the Lord. What a great day that will be. I hope to see all those who read these words standing with us at the throne of God.

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