

5. The Seven Seals of the Book of Revelation 2nd Coming of Christ

When we read of the future as Christians, we sometimes forget that God is sovereign over the affairs of men, which means that He knows everything and that nothing happens to us as Christians that is outside of His control and His permissive will. Not all things that happen to us are God initiated; however. We don't have to look far in our world to see that evil sometimes reigns, seemingly unchecked by God. God permits some things but only for a time. At different times He has intervened on behalf of His people in answer to prayer. Last week we explored the thought that there has been, and will be, angelic intervention on behalf of God's people, both Jew and Gentile, that have entered into covenant with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

I remember being fascinated when I saw *Against All Odds*, the documentary series that shows a number of eyewitness accounts of angelic interventions in the five wars Israel has fought since their birth again as a nation in 1948. One particular story is of Commander David Yinni, during the 1973 Yom Kippur Day of Atonement war, as he was preparing to retreat in the darkness of the night from the Syrian army, he realized that he and his men were trapped in the middle of a minefield. He ordered his men to clear the mines using their bayonets. With the Syrians not knowing of their presence, they began to slowly crawl on the ground and were digging 30 inches deep, carefully disengaging the mines. The slightest mistake and they were in peril of being blown up. Worse than that, though, was the fact that dawn was coming quickly and with it, the Syrian forces would see them. In desperation one of his men prayed. Suddenly, a windstorm came upon them. It was so strong that by the time the storm moved on, it had literally blown 30 inches of topsoil off clearly revealing all the mines. The Israeli soldiers could see every single mine and was able to quickly make their escape unharmed.¹

No matter how scary these things are that we read, we must remember that we are eternal creatures and that this life is not the end. Many of us have prayed for God to stretch our life to be full of faith, but we avoid any situation where we have to depend on God. A life devoid of stories about what God has done in you or your family is a life of spiritual poverty. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are not the only things we are to search for. As believers earthly things alone will never fulfill us. We are strangers and pilgrims in this world (Hebrews 11:13), **and are being trained and prepared for the next.**

This is the reason that I have talked about the snatching up of the saints (rapture) over the last two studies before speaking about the seals and trumpets. We need to see the glory that is before us to encourage our hearts in the Lord. The scriptures tell us that Jesus endured the cross for the joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). There is a joy that God has set before us. We need to focus on that as we look at these passages about the last days.

It will greatly help us in our understanding of the Book of Revelation, if we begin to see that the book has an outline to it. The outline is found in chapter one. ¹⁹“Write, therefore,

¹ http://www.jewishsoftware.com/products/Against_All_Odds_Israel_Survives_6_DVD_Set_1290.asp

what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later (Revelation 1:19). Chapter one is a description of what John has seen. Chapters two through three are letters that John was told to dictate and send to specific churches in Asia Minor at the time that John had his vision (**what is now**). The rest of the book, chapters three through twenty-two, is about the things that will take place in the time of the last days (**what will take place later**). Of the chapters that concern the future, **the first part is a chronological outline of the events, chapters 4-11**, followed by chapter 12 through 22 going over specific events that take place during the end times. This chronological outline is also reflected in Jesus' talk in Matthew 24:4-31.

The Scroll and the Lamb

In chapter four of the Book of Revelation, John the apostle is taken into heaven and describes the throne room of God (Revelation 4:1). In chapter five the scene is the throne room of God where all eyes are focused on a scroll with seven seals. The seals need to be broken to open the scroll. John the Apostle weeps because there was not found anyone worthy to open the scroll or even to look inside it:

¹Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" ³But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." ⁶Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders (Revelation 5:1-6).

It is very likely that this scroll is a revelation of the words that were kept from the prophet Daniel at the end of his prophetic writings. Daniel wanted further understanding of what he saw in chapter eleven and twelve, but he was told:

⁸I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?" ⁹He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, **because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end.** ¹⁰Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but **those who are wise will understand** (Daniel 12:8-10).

We cannot say dogmatically what the scroll represents but it very likely it represents the justice and judgments of God. The Day of the Lord cannot start until all seven seals that keep the scroll sealed are opened.

Who is the only One that is able to open the scroll? Why is He seen as both a lion and a lamb? (Revelation 5:5-6) Why is He proclaimed worthy to open the scroll? (Revelation 5:9-10).

Christ, through His death on the cross as an innocent substitute, has won a complete pardon for all that receive the gift of eternal life. He has purchased with His blood men and women from every tribe, language, people and nation out of Satan's slave market of sin. He is represented as a Lamb, an innocent substitutionary sacrifice. The picture of Christ as a lamb would have been a powerful symbol of sacrifice to the Israelite people of John's day. Every year they would sacrifice a lamb at Passover, which would remind them of how the blood of the lamb upon their door caused them to be safe from death when they were in Egypt (Exodus 12:3; 12-13; 22-23). Like a Lion, Christ is also seen as triumphant. He has overcome the enemy with His victorious death on the cross. He alone, by virtue of His sinless life and sacrificial death, is the only one found worthy to open the scroll. Let's now read the opening of the Seals of the scroll in Revelation 6:1-17:

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Revelation 6)

¹I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" ²I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest. ³When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" ⁴Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword. ⁵When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!" ⁷When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" ⁸I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth. ⁹When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. ¹⁰ They called out in a loud voice, "**How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?**" ¹¹ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been. ¹²I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, ¹³and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. ¹⁴The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" ¹⁷For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (Revelation 6:1-17).

With each of the first four seals being opened we see a horseman going forth. Each horseman brings with him an effect upon the earth. Even though we see the heavenly living creatures giving the orders, “Come!” I don’t believe that these effects are initiated from heaven. The seals being opened are not the wrath of God. The judgment and wrath of God only comes at the opening of the seventh seal, that’s why chapter 8:1 says that a half hour silence takes place at the opening of the seventh seal and the scroll now being opened. With the opening of the first six seals it is as if the heavenly creatures are calling forth the horsemen as divine allowance being given for mankind to reap what has been sown. The fifth seal as it is opened brings persecution on earth (Verse 9) of Christ-followers that have been faithful to their testimony as believers and to the Word of God. I do not believe that God initiates persecution of believers—He sometimes allows it, but He is not the initiator of it. It is not biblical to say that persecution of believers is something that God does. So if the opening of the fifth seal brings an effect on earth that is not initiated by God, why do we think that the first four are? I do not believe the seals to be the wrath of God, for God is not the author of persecution of His people. The saints are asking God at the opening of the fifth seal as to how long must they wait before He avenges their blood (Revelation 6:10). This is not God pouring out His wrath but Satan using Antichrist to persecute the saints (Revelation 12:12). The Word of God **never** says that the first six seals are the wrath of God being poured out. Let’s now explore what effect takes place at the opening of each seal:

The First Seal

As we work through the seals, you will notice that the effects of the seven seals of the Book of Revelation are also the same as what Jesus said would happen in his talk with the twelve disciples on the Mount of Olives, known as the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24). This talk is an outline of the main events, whereas the Book of Revelation fills in more of the details. It might be helpful for you to have one finger in Matthew 24 and the other in Revelation chapter 6. When the first seal is broken, we are told of a rider on a white horse carrying a bow, but no mention of arrows. He is given a crown and he rides out as a conqueror bent on conquest. This sounds very similar to what we have already said about the Antichrist from other passages. The Antichrist mimics Christ, who at His coming will also be riding on a white horse (Revelation 19:11). The symbolism of the rider being a conqueror, but having no arrows reminds us that Antichrist will be a peacemaker. He will be a conqueror through deception:

He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power (Daniel 8:25).

The most intense struggle that exists in the Middle East and affects world politics is the conflict between the Jews and Palestinians. At the crux of that struggle is the issue of ownership of Jerusalem. The Jewish people say that Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the Jewish nation, whereas the Palestinians want the eastern half of it (The pre-1967 border). It is another fact that the Temple Mount, where the Jewish temple once stood, now has

two mosques and has been managed by a Muslim trust since 1187, when the Muslims regained the Temple Mount from the Crusaders.

As we have already stated, the Antichrist will make a peace treaty, which the prophet Daniel says will start a period of seven years (Daniel 9:27, the 70th week of Daniel).

In Matthew 24, when the disciples asked Jesus, “what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” the first thing Jesus answered was:

"Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many (Matthew 24:4-5).

How has the world seen this phenomenon already? What names can you recall of people claiming to be a “messiah” or “anointed one”?

The first thing that Jesus talks about concerning signs is that of deception at work in the world. How that is true of our day! Not only is deception at work in the world, but deception as to who is anointed to lead the whole world. Leading up to and into the 70th week of Daniel, the world will see a number of people claiming that they are the Christ, the anointed one. The final manifestation of this will be that Antichrist himself will come with lies and deceit and will claim that he is the Christ, the one that the world has been waiting for to bring peace and salvation! He will overcome nations and come to a throne over the ten-nation confederacy (see the first session notes) by deceit, and proud boasts of what he will accomplish. Jesus said to the Jewish people,

“I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him (John 5:43).

If this passage does refer to Antichrist, it is entirely possible that the nation of Israel will buy into Antichrist’s lies and that he will be the guarantor of a peace covenant that will see the Temple rebuilt on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Antichrist will be believed in and received as their savior until he proclaims himself as God and sets himself up as God in the Temple itself in the middle point of the seven year period (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Daniel 9:27). It’s interesting to think that Islam is also expecting a great prophet to arrive. They call him the 12th Imam, or the Mahdi. This is the one that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad talked about at the General Assembly of the United Nations on September 26, 2012. My personal belief is that the Antichrist will not be a Muslim, if he was, the Jewish people would never accept him as their messiah.

The Second Seal

The breaking of the second seal brings a second horse, *⁴Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other (Revelation 6:4).* This obviously is talking about war. This man of peace, the Antichrist, after he takes power will bring about a series of wars. Flip back to the book of Matthew and read Jesus’ teaching His disciples on the Mount of Olives:

⁶You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom (Matthew 24:6-7).

It is possible that this is a war that we read about in the first study, when we talked about Antichrist gaining power of a 10-nation confederacy. We saw three nations or leaders that were brought into subjugation by him (Daniel 7:24). It is very likely that there is more than one war that takes place, for we read of wars, plural, and rumors of wars. It may also be the time when we read of a nation situated to the far north of Israel that will launch an attack on Israel. Most commentators believe this nation to be Russia, allied with Persia (Iran), Libya and Turkey, as well as other nations (Ezekiel 38:1-15, and 39:2. (Chapters 38-39 of Ezekiel have not yet been fulfilled). This attack happens after a re-gathering of Jewish people from all nations back to the land of Israel (Ezekiel 38:7-9), an event that is happening in our day. There is no other day in history prior to the homecoming of the Jews and the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 when this could be fulfilled so perfectly. God has been gathering His people Israel back to their land, which is another sign of the last days, and something that has to happen before the end of the age. The State of Israel is made up of Jewish people from all nations, and Jews have returned to their homeland from all corners of the earth. We can see how the scene is being set in our day for events that the scriptures tell us are yet to come. Let's flip back to the Book of Revelation and continue to read:

The Third Seal

⁵When the Lamb opened the third seal; I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!" (Revelation 6:5-6).

The result of the wars in the beginning of the 7-year period, the 70th Week of Daniel, is that now famine begins to take hold on the earth. This could be the result of nuclear weapons being used with fallout spreading over fields destroying crops. It could also be the consequences of globalist control of food and raising the prices to manipulate and control other countries that are dependant on the West's food supply and grain. The famine might also be the result of Antichrist's seeking to force people to take the mark in order to use the grocery store to buy food. At the present time (September, 2014), this writer has become aware that Hedge funds are buying up farmland as an investment against inflation as the value of the dollar decreases due to the debt problem of the USA. Whatever the cause, we are told that a day's wages will only manage to buy enough food for the day for a small family. The pair of scales represents food being weighed and rationed. Barley was usually fed to animals and was low in nutrients hence the lower price of barley. In the Olivet discourse too, Matthew records Jesus saying that famines will follow the wars. He also adds that there will be earthquakes as well:

There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are the beginning of birth pains (Matthew 24:7-8).

Notice that Jesus said in verse 6 (Matthew 24), when talking about wars, “Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.” He is letting us know that we are only in the beginning stages of what will happen. He calls these preceding years the beginning birth pains, likening this seven-year period to the birth of a baby (verse 8). As we approach the coming of Christ, the world is in the throes of hard labor. The destructive events are more painful and closer together.

The Fourth Seal

⁷When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" ⁸I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth (Revelation 6:7-8).

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When the fourth seal is opened we see that four different things have wiped out a quarter of earth's population currently at 7 Billion people, estimated to be 8 Billion in 2024. The four things we are told happening at the opening of the fourth seal are sword, famine, pestilence or plague and the wild beasts of the earth is accompanied by persecution.

The color of the fourth seal pale horse mentioned is significant, as the Greek word used here is the same root word from which we get the word *chlorophyll*; it describes the pale, ashen-green pallor that is characteristic of a decomposing corpse. Its rider is named Death and we are told that permission is given (“They were given power,” Verse 8) for a fourth of the population of earth to be killed by sword, famine and plague, and by wild beasts. Let's think about each that is mentioned. First of all the passage states that some are killed by sword (Verse 8). We should not take that literally, the sword speaks of violent means. Before we think that kind of violence can only happen elsewhere and not in the USA, the Denver Post on February 15, 2013, reported that Homeland Security, an arm of the Federal Government charged with security in the USA, had bought 1.6 Billion rounds of ammunition. This is enough to fight a war such as the Iraq war for twenty years, remember though, this is for homeland USA. They have also bought 2717 armored personnel carriers all having gun ports.²

To be killed by sword sounds like persecution with people being hunted down and killed. The famine that started at the third seal is also continuing and plague also adds to the death of a quarter of the population. What could the plague be? Is this Ebola? What would happen if a pestilence or plague were to break out? Martial law would be declared

² <http://www.forbes.com/sites/ralphbenko/2013/03/11/1-6-billion-rounds-of-ammo-for-homeland-security-its-time-for-a-national-conversation/>

in an attempt to contain the spread. This would mean that trucks would not be able to get into affected areas, further causing the famine to be worse. **How can we explain wild beasts?** How many wild beasts are left on planet earth even at the present time? The Greek word used is *thērión*, and although it is mostly used for animals, it could also be indicative of people who have let their inner beast nature dominate their lives to such a degree, that they are likened to wild beasts. When people are dominated by selfish greed or hunger find themselves backed into a corner, they will act in a predatory way, out of a beast-like need for preservation, especially in a time of famine when men find it difficult to feed their families. Consider the two scriptures below that speak of men behaving like beasts:

I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous **beasts**— men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords (Psalm 57:4).

But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute **beasts**, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like **beasts** they too will perish (2 Peter 2:12).

Jesus also talked about what happens on earth at this time of the fourth seal. Turn again to Matthew's gospel:

⁹"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be ***hated by all nations*** because of me. ¹⁰At that time ***many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other***, ¹¹and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹²Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³but he who stands firm to the end will be saved (*sōtēria* translated *saved* here can also mean delivered). ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:9-14).

Jesus tells us that in the last days, wickedness will increase (verse 12), and that the love of many will grow cold. What is the correlation between these two things, what's causing it, and do you see this coldness creeping into our culture today?

Jesus tells us of a time when we Christians will be hated by all nations because of Him (v.9). This persecution of the saints will result in a powerful outpouring of the Spirit bringing about a great harvest of people being saved as the gospel is being preached in power. **Jesus speaks of this powerful move of the Spirit throughout the world in verse 14.** We can look at this time as terrifying, but I believe it will be a time when many will turn to Christ, when they hear of His miraculous work amongst the church, healing and protecting His people in a multitude of ways. Expect God to work wonders amongst you. The enemy will not have everything his own way. This will be a time when the deception that is currently at work will be clearly seen by those who are followers of Christ. The church of the day will be powerful and totally reliant on the Spirit. They will do exploits by the power of the Spirit of God:

And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that **do know their God** shall be strong, and **do exploits** (Daniel 11:32 KJV).

With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but **the people who know their God** will firmly **resist him** (Daniel 11:32 NIV).

Men betraying each other (v.10) sounds like individuals that are depraved and giving full vent to the beast side of their nature, persecuting anyone that will not go along with Antichrist's mark and his rule and reign. The Lord delivers His people out of that time of great persecution by snatching His people up and out of it (v.13) as we have already gone into in detail when we went into Matthew 24:15-27.

The Fifth Seal

⁹When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. ¹⁰They called out in a loud voice, "**How long**, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, **until you judge** the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" ¹¹Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed (Revelation 6:9-11).

Doesn't it sound similar to Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse, where a time of persecution, death and people being killed by the sword will come to pass just before the mid-point of the seventieth week and will intensify after the Abomination of Desolation? The fifth seal ties in with the Great Tribulation or distress, where saints of God have been slain because of their stand for the Word of God and the testimony they have maintained. Notice that during **the fifth seal the saints are crying out for vengeance against Antichrist and his forces—these five seals have not been the wrath of God going on—it has been the wrath of Satan against God's elect because they are not conforming to Satan's desire to be worshiped!**

In Revelation 12, we are given insight of Satan being cast down to the earth by Michael and his angels (12:6) and a war erupting against the elect of God, the saints:

"Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury (KJV-"having great wrath"), because he knows that his time is short...Then the dragon was **enraged at the woman and **went off to make war** against the rest of her offspring—**those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus**" (Revelation 12:12, 17).**

This is the war that we talked about in the first session, when we looked at Daniel's prophecy concerning the Antichrist, that he would be "waging war against the saints and defeating them (Daniel 7:21). **This is not the wrath of God; this is the wrath of Satan**

against God's people. The Day of the Lord, the wrath of God, hasn't started yet. That doesn't happen until the seventh seal is opened.

The Sixth Seal

¹²I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, ¹³and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. ¹⁴The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place (Revelation 6:12-14).

Cosmic signs begin to happen at the sixth seal just as Jesus said in Matthew and Mark's gospel. Notice as well, that all those that have rejected the gospel start looking for caves to hide in—why? Who does it say they were hiding from?

¹⁵Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷For the **great day of their wrath has come**, and who can withstand it?" (Revelation 6:15-17).

The enemies of God are acknowledging that here at the sixth seal, the wrath of God, the Day of the Lord is now beginning. It didn't start years previously, as per-tribulation teachers would have you believe, God's Word says it starts at this point, right after the rapture of the saints, which happens next in chapter 7 of the Book of Revelation. I always wondered how the stars in the sky could fall to the earth but then I came across Isaiah's prophecy, which I believe ties in with what is happening at this point. Isaiah, under the inspiration of the Spirit, said:

¹⁹The earth is broken up, ***the earth is split asunder***, the earth is thoroughly shaken. ²⁰***The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind***; so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls—never to rise again. ²¹In that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below. ²²They will be herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished after many days. ²³***The moon will be abashed, the sun ashamed***; for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders, gloriously (Isaiah 24:19-23).

If a person were standing in the evening at any point on earth, looking to the horizon, the earth tottering on its axis would appear as if the stars were falling from the sky. What a terrible sight that will be! Jesus said that after the distress (thlipsis) of those days and the appearance of the cosmic signs, He would send forth his angels and gather together His elect:

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).

We are then told, after several cosmic signs at the opening of the sixth seal, again in accordance with what Jesus is instructing his disciples on the Mount of Olives, that the angels would gather together the elect (every one that is born again of God) and they are all seen in heaven before the throne. Verses 1-8 of Revelation 7 tell us of the specific sealing of 144,000 people from all the tribes of Israel. God is letting us know that those that are caught up at the rapture are composed of Jews and Gentiles. We are specifically told of **144,000 Jewish people** that are 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, the called out ones. I do not know if this is a literal or a symbolic number (12,000 x 12,000 equals 144,000), it is of note that the New Jerusalem that descends from above is: 12,000 stadia in length and 12,000 wide with walls that are 144 cubits thick (Revelation 21:16-17). **I think God is reminding us that He has not forgotten the Jewish people that inherited the promises and the Word of God, and that He will fulfill all that He has spoken to them.** Personally, I believe that He will bring a remnant of Jewish people through the fire of Antichrist's persecution to be included in His body, the Bride of Christ. Nowhere does it say that these 144,000 Jews were evangelists sent over the world to evangelize—I can't conceive of Antichrist letting 144,000 people travel across borders to reach this great multitude. None of these people will have a mark of the Beast upon them to enable them to travel.

The gospel has always been for the Jew to experience first, and then the Gentiles. It is 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 we are seeing people from every tribe from all over the world, including the twelve tribes of Israel. As we read the below passage, I would like you to make a mental note of all that are seen before and around the throne:

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).

Let's just *explore the thought that the rapture did occur before the seven year period* started. We would then have to come to the conclusion that those who were becoming Christians during the seven-year period were allowed to come in to the body of believers (the Church) even though we have already established the fact that there is no second chance after the door of salvation is shut at the catching up of God's people (Matthew 25:10 and Luke 13:24). **If there were two sets of believers, one raptured before the seven-year period and those saved during it, why don't we then see the pre-tribulation believers welcoming those arriving into heaven after having gone through the Great Tribulation?** We read of the angels, the elders, and the four living creatures standing around the throne, and God Himself with them, but no sign of any pre-tribulation believers in the welcome party (Revelation 7:9-14).

Instead we see those that have gone through the Great Tribulation (Distress, NIV) getting the opportunity to serve God day and night in His temple, and that God will spread his tent over them (a picture of marriage, Ruth 3:9), and wipe away their tears (Revelation 7:13-17).

¹³Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" ¹⁴I 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. ¹⁵Therefore, "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. ¹⁶Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷For 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" (Revelation 7:13-17).

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In the diagram above, I had to put the arrow symbolizing the rapture somewhere, but no man knows the day or the hour that He will come for His saints. We don't know at what stage in the second half of the seven-year period will be the rapture. I believe with all my heart that we will all appear, Jew and Gentile born-again believers, at the same time before the throne. We are made spotless due to entering the blood covenant that Jesus instituted at the cross and because of Christ's work at Calvary, we are without blame before our God and He Himself will wipe away our tears (Revelation 21:4).

Our God will not allow us to go through anything that He will not go through with us. He will sustain us and give us his grace for whatever is ahead for His saints. There is a story that comes to mind that was told by Corrie Ten Boom that illustrates this point. Corrie was a Dutch woman whose father owned a watch shop in Haarlem, Holland. When World War II broke out, this Christ-like family began providing "hiding places" for

persecuted Jews. She lived through many trials and persecution when her father was discovered and the family went to a concentration camp because of the help they provided to the Jews in hiding them from the soldiers. At one point, Corrie was afraid and did not think she could handle what was ahead. Her father asked her; “Corrie, when you and I go to Amsterdam, when do I give you your ticket?” She replied; “Why, just before we get on the train.” “Exactly” he replied. “And our wise Father in heaven knows when we are going to need things, When the time comes when you need strength, you will look into your heart and find the strength you need, just in time. **God will give you what you need at the moment when you need it.**” We are not to be fearful concerning the things of the future that we have read about. The reason God has given us this book is that He wants to reveal these things to us so that when we see them, we know how glorious is the end. We know who wins! Even so, come Lord Jesus!

Prayer: Father, I thank you that you have chosen me and called me your child. Whatever trials I may go through, please give me your enabling power and grace that I may glorify you with every decision I make. Please mold and shape my character to be all that you want me to be. Amen.

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