

Saint Paul Sunday Morning Bible Class

Book of Revelation, Chapter 7 Notes and Questions

Chapter six ends with the first view of the Last Day (end of this world) in Revelation. There are more views of this Day to come. But, before we're introduced to the seventh seal which ushers in the second sevenfold vision, we go on an interlude and we are shown something beautiful and full of hope and comfort in chapter 7. Rev. Dr. Lois Brighton: "The purpose of Revelation 7, the interlude between the sixth and seventh seals, is to encourage John and his hearers – despite the fears and horrors already introduced by the first six seals and also in view of all the tribulations yet to be revealed."

Rev. 7:1

- "Four corners of the earth" – just a figure of speech that describes the entire cosmos – not offering a scientific description of the cosmos (perhaps this is why in the past people thought the earth was flat). These four angels are put in charge of the wind in the cosmos.

Rev. 7:2-3

- "The 'angel' who ascends 'from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God' in Revelation 7:2 is Christ Himself, for Christ is the One who bears the seal of the living God, i.e., the Divine Name (cf. John 6:26-29). He is the Divine Name Incarnate in Flesh. He also is the One who rules over all things. It is He who commands the angels to do His bidding. He is in complete control over the course of history. The Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity has often appeared throughout history as an Angel. Most often, when you see "the Angel of the LORD (Angel of YHWH)" in the OT, it is an appearance of the Son of God. Thus, it is not uncommon to have Christ appear as an Angel. We will see Him appearing as an Angel later in Revelation as well.

- ". . . until we have sealed the servants of God on their foreheads" – This is another reference to the sure and certain fact that the Last Day will not come until the last of God's elect children are saved. Christ commands the angels to refrain from destroying the current earth and heavens to make way for the New Heavens and Earth until that Day. "The seal of the Living God" = The Divine Name – the seal that is placed on the foreheads of the servants of God is the Divine Name they receive at baptism. Every Christian, as part of the royal priesthood, bears the same Divine Name upon their foreheads as the High Priest in Israel bore upon his (Ex. 28:29-41), and as THE HIGH PRIEST, Christ, bears as well. This is awesome imagery identifying who Christians are, namely high priests who are granted access into the very Holy of Holies. See 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:11-14, 30; Rev. 9:4.

- Why the Living God? Because this is the True, Living, Creator, the One and Only God, nothing like the pagan deities, who are dead and nothing.

Rev. 7:4-8 (The 144,000)

- The 144,000 is used symbolically to refer to all believers of all times (from the beginning of creation until the end, when Christ returns). Why 144,000? When we break this number down, we have our answer ($12 \times 12 \times 1000 = 144,000$). 12 is a number that signifies God's people, i.e., believers. The fact that we have two 12s here multiplied together signifies believers of the Old Testament (before Christ came) and believers of the New Testament (after Christ came). There were 12 Tribes in the OT and 12 Apostles in the NT. Thus, $12 \times 12 =$ OT and NT believers. This produces 144, which is then multiplied

by 1000, which is God's number of absolute completeness. 10 is a number of completeness, and when multiplied three times (10 x 10 x 10) it means ultimate, absolute completeness. Thus, 144,000 signifies all believers of all times. The text reveals this fact to us. John first hears the number of those sealed (which means those who have been sealed with faith by the Holy Spirit – cf. Eph. 1:13) in Rev. 7:4. Then, immediately after hearing the number, he looks and sees “a great multitude which no one could number” (Rev. 7:9). The 144,000 equals this great multitude that cannot be numbered, which, as said above, refers to all believers of all times.

- The 12 tribes do not represent national Israel, but rather depict, provide imagery, for the New Israel, the Christian Church. The Church has its roots in ancient Israel. What better way to depict the Church than with the faithful tribes of Israel. The Church is a continuation of Israel (cf. Acts 10:47-48; 13:46-48; 15:14-18; Rom. 4:16-17; 9:6-8, 24-27; 11:17-24; Gal. 3:14, 27-29; 6:16).
- Christ's Church, made up of individual Christians, is sealed for protection as earthly history marches forward towards the End.

Rev. 7:9-12

- “A great multitude” = the full and complete Church Triumphant, the heavenly saints, who have received their white “robes,” no longer wearing their baptismal “garments.” This is the eternal experience that all believers will have – a permanent, glorified, resurrected state. Here, St. John is given a vision of the Last Day, when all believers of all time (the “144,000”) will be gathered together for eternity. The “palm branch” symbolizes worship and the worship is directed to our God, namely the One sitting on the throne (Father) and the Lamb (Son). Those who have been “sealed” by the Holy Spirit join the angels in this eternal worship and praise.

Rev. 7:13-14

- These are the saints that have come out of the “great tribulation” – symbolizes the entire NT era, but also references the fact that things will get worse and worse as the End nears. Thus, we have pictured here the totality of God's people who are saved when the End comes. As we will learn in Revelation, Satan will be released for a “little season” just prior to the End. This will be the “Great Tribulation.” We'll hear much more about this later.
- We all know that blood stains, but here we are told that the Blood of the Lamb is the “spiritual detergent” for the “white robes” of the saints. The Blood of Christ shed on the Cross of Calvary cleanses us from all our sins. That same Sacred Blood is poured into the Chalice on our altar weekly in the Holy Eucharist to cleanse us anew from our sins. We must not miss the Sacramental meaning here – we need to be constantly cleansed from our sins and we are each time we partake of the Blessed Sacrament.

Rev. 7:15-17

- This is a short description of life in God's Eternal Kingdom. It is a condensed version of what we see in Revelation 21 and 22. This is Life the way God meant Life to be – the restoration of the Paradise of Eden, Life in the New Heavens and Earth where there is no sin, no tears, no hunger, no thirst, no mourning, pain, grief, etc., but only bliss, peace, comfort, glory, love, etc. This should be the Christian's focus, for it the Christian's “blessed hope.” It is what we look forward to; it is what sustains

us as we live in this vale of tears. We know that there is coming a Day when we shall dwell with our Lord in Paradise forever!

Study and Discussion Questions for Revelation Chapter 7

1. What are some examples of how God guides world events to the benefit of His church?

2. (Verse 3) What is involved in having your forehead sealed?
 - * What does the seal say?

 - * Can you be sure that you are sealed?

3. How would you answer those (like the Millennialists) who say that this seal is a literal visible seal?

4. How would you explain to the Millennialist that, on the Scriptures own terms, the 144,000 in Revelation 7:4 is not a literal number?

5. If only 144,000 were really to be saved, could God's invitation of the Gospel to all people be considered to be a sincere invitation?
 - * Why or why not?