

A Study on REVELATION CHAPTER 7

CHAPTER 7

- 1. After this I saw (perceived) four agents (messengers) standing upon the four corners of the Land (earth), continuously holding in their power (restraining) the four winds of the Land (earth), so that wind may not be blowing upon the Land (earth; soil), nor upon the sea, nor upon any tree (all tree and shrub).**
- 2. And I saw (perceived) another agent (messenger) progressively ascending (stepping up) from [a; the] rising of the sun [i.e., from the dawn or the east], continually holding a seal (or: signet ring; Vat. MSS 1160: seals) of the continuously-living God. And he uttered a cry with (by) a great (loud) voice -- to the four agents (messengers), to whom it was (or: is) given for them (to them; in them; by them) to act unjustly to (to violate, injure, wrong or hurt) the Land (earth; soil) and the sea --**
- 3. repeatedly saying,
"You may not act unjustly to (hurt; injure; wrong; violate) the Land (earth) nor the sea, nor the trees, until we may seal (impress with a signet ring) the slaves of our God upon their foreheads."**
- 4. And I heard the number of the ones having been sealed (impressed; imprinted): one hundred forty-four thousand -- ones (or: men -- masc.) having been sealed (imprinted) from out of every tribe of the sons of Israel.**
- 5. Out of Judah's tribe: twelve thousand sealed (imprinted)
Out of Reuben's tribe: twelve thousand
Out of Gad's tribe: twelve thousand**
- 6. Out of Asher's tribe: twelve thousand
Out of Naphtali's tribe: twelve thousand
Out of Manasseh's tribe: twelve thousand**
- 7. Out of Simeon's tribe: twelve thousand
Out of Levi's tribe: twelve thousand
Out of Issachar's tribe: twelve thousand**
- 8. Out of Zebulun's tribe: twelve thousand
Out of Joseph's tribe: twelve thousand
Out of Benjamin's tribe: twelve thousand sealed (imprinted).**
- 9. After these things I saw (perceived), and consider! A vast crowd (great multitude), which no one was able to number, from out of every nation (multitude; ethnic group) -- even of tribes and of peoples and of tongues (languages) -- standing before (in the sight of) the throne, and before (in the sight of) the little Lamb, having been clothed with bright white robes (or: equipment; uniforms), and palm trees (or: branches) [are] within their hands.**
- 10. And they are uttering a cry (are exclaiming) with a great (loud) voice, repeatedly saying, "The deliverance (Wholeness and health; The salvation) [is] by our God (in our God) -- by (in)**

the One continuously sitting upon the throne, even (or: and) by (in) the little Lamb!"

11. And all the agents (messengers) had stood and continued standing in a circle around the throne and the elders and the four living ones. And they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped (kissed toward) God, repeatedly saying,

12. "It is so (Amen)! The blessing, the glory (reputation), the wisdom, the gratitude (thanksgiving), the honor (the value; the pricing), the power (the ability), and the strength [is] in (by; for) our God, into the ages (eons) of the ages! So it is (Amen)!"

13. And one from out of the elders answered, saying to me, "These -- the ones having been clothed with the bright, white robes (or: uniforms; equipment) -- who are they and whence came they?"

14. And I had spoken to him, "O, my lord, you have seen, and thus know," and he said to me, "These are the ones continuously coming forth from out of the midst of great pressure (squeezing; tribulation), and they washed their robes (uniforms; equipment) and made them bright and white within the little Lamb's blood.

15. Because of this they are constantly before (in the sight and presence of) God's throne, and they habitually do public service to (in; by; for) Him, day and night, within the midst of His Temple. And the One continuously sitting upon the throne will pitch a tent (spread a covering or tabernacle) upon them.

16. They will no longer hunger, neither will they thirst, nor may the sun fall upon them, nor any scorching or burning heat, 17. because (seeing that) the little Lamb -- the One back up amidst the throne (or: the One again in the midst of the throne) -- will shepherd [other MSS: is continuously shepherding] them, and will guide [others: is continuously guiding] them upon springs of waters of life [others: living springs of water]. And God will anoint (or: wipe and smear out) every tear shed from out of their eyes."

Since the Gr. word $\gamma\eta$ (ge) means "earth, soil, land, a tract or region of land, thus a territory," we should first consider the picture that John was seeing. He saw four of God's agents standing on the four corners of the land. Was he seeing the entire earth, or did God simply show him a picture of his own country, or of the then known earth which apparently was then considered to be flat, and thus have four corners?

Remember that this is a book of symbols and figures. With this in mind, I chose the word "land" to translate the Gr. $\gamma\eta$, since it seems appropriate to the picture being described. This also would have spoken to the situation and understanding of those first century Christians to whom this was written. Whether the picture was global or localized, the message is the same.

"And thou, son of man, Thus said the Lord Jehovah to the ground [Adamah] of Israel: An end, come hath the end on the four corners of the land (earth). Now is the end unto thee, and I have sent Mine anger upon thee, and judged thee according to thy ways, and set against thee all thine abominations." (Ezk.7:1-3, Young) Here, the Lord's judgement was against all of Israel, typified by the phrase "the four corners of the land." He was judging "the ground of Israel," typifying their Adamic nature. "For thy ways against thee I do set," (vs.4) speaks of one of the means of His judgement. Again in vs. 9, "And not pity doth Mine eye, nor do I spare; according to thy ways unto thee I give, and thine abominations are in thy midst, and ye have known that I am Jehovah the Smiter."

In Jer. 49:34-39 we see a message from the Lord concerning Elam. In vs. 36 He says, "Then will I bring in against Elam four winds, from the four quarters of the heavens, and will scatter them to all these winds -- and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come." And in vs. 37-38, "... and will send after them the sword, until I have made an end of them; and I will set my throne in Elam -- and will destroy from thence king and princes, declareth Yahweh." But note the turn-around in vs 39, "But it shall come to pass, in the after-part of the days, that I will bring back the captivity of Elam, declareth Yahweh." (Rotherham) An interesting picture. He sets his throne (rule, dominion) in a Gentile nation -- after He scatters them -- then in the end He brings them back. A similar story to that of His judgements upon Israel. He holds to His pattern!

"I saw a vision, in the visions of the night, and noted the four winds of the sky rush out upon the Great Sea! And four Great Beasts arose from the sea, different from one another." (Dan. 7:2-3, Fenton) Once again the four winds usher in God's judgements.

Zech 6:5, in the LXX reads, "And the agent (messenger) that talked with me answered and said, 'These are the four winds of heaven: they are continually going forth to stand before the Lord of all the earth.' " The Tanakh reads similar, here translating the Heb. "ruach," spirit, as wind.

Then we have Matt. 24:31, "And He will send His messengers with a sound of a great trumpet; and they will gather His chosen ones from out of the four winds, from the points of the heavens, as far as their extremities." Also, Isa. 11:12, "And He will lift up a standard ['a Root of Jesse,' vs. 10] to the nations, and will gather the outcasts of Israel, and the dispersed of Judah will He collect, from the four corners of the earth." (Roth.)

So we see that the four winds are in service to the will of the Lord, to scatter those whom the Lord is judging; to bring up beasts out of the sea of humanity; to apparently hold and/or gather His chosen whom He has all over the heavens. But the obvious purpose for which He is using them in ch. 7 of the Unveiling, is to bring judgement upon the land. God had His agents controlling these powers. Now if no wind at all were allowed to blow upon the land, there would be serious weather problems. Barclay has an interesting comment on these winds: "It was the belief of the ancient peoples that the winds which came from due north, south, east and west were all favorable winds; but that those which blew diagonally across the earth were harmful. That is why the angels are at the corners of the earth. They are about to unleash the winds which blow diagonally."

In vs. one we see the winds being restrained. They cannot blow upon the land (a figure of Israel, as a whole), nor upon the sea (a figure of the rest of humanity), nor upon any tree (a figure of the specific planting of the Lord; the occupants in His Garden; that which brought perpetual harvest to His people).

In vs. three we see why this judgment is being restrained: "until we may seal the slaves of our God upon their foreheads." It seems obvious that once the sealing is complete, then the winds will begin to blow and bring injustice, hurt, injury, violations. Is this God's pattern, which is the same yesterday, today and into the ages, that He will first complete His work in His chosen firstfruit of each generation and land before He allows those winds to blow? Are they the reason for the restraining of 2 Thes. 2:6&7, until they may be

birthed?

The agent with God's seal arises from the dawn, from the rising of the Sun. This would seem to me to coincide with the coming of Light; God's day dawning in our hearts. "...until the Day may shine through and the Light-bearer (Light-bringer) may arise in your hearts." (1 Pet. 1:19)

The agent of the Lord's seal is continuously ascending, coming onto the scene, with the coming of Light. He operates in the realm of our hearts, until we are "... sealed (imprinted) by the Holy Spirit of the Promise, Who is a pledge (earnest) of our inheritance..." (Eph. 1:13,14) The seal also was a sign of ownership, "However, the solid (firm) foundation of God has stood, and at present stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows (knew by experience) those who are His (the ones being of Him),' and, 'Let everyone naming the Name of the Lord withdraw from injustice.' " (2 Tim. 2:19)

"The origin of this picture is very likely in Ezk. 9." (Barclay) Here we have a man clothed in a linen robe with the writing kit of a scribe (vs.2), and he is to "Pass through in the midst of the city, in the midst of Jerusalem, and you will mark a mark on the foreheads of the mortals who are sighing and groaning over all the abhorrences being done in her midst." (vs.4, CVOT) The six mortals, each with "his shatterer in his hand" were to pass through the city and smite (vs. 5), "Yet to any man on whom is the mark, you must not come close. Now from My sanctuary shall you start." (vs.6, CVOT)

The result of this sealing in Rev. 7 is seen in ch. 14:1 -- they are the same "one hundred forty-four thousand having His Name, even the Name of His Father, having been written upon their foreheads." The forehead is a figure for the mind. These have the identity (His Name) and the mind of Christ. They belong to Him.

Another facet of the seal is seen in Ex. 28:36-38, "You will make a blossom of pure gold and engrave on it like engravings of a seal: Holy [or: Set-apart] to Yahweh. You will place it on blue twine, and it will come to be on the turban; on the forefront of the face of the turban shall it come to be. It will come to be on the forehead of Aaron; thus Aaron will bear the depravity of the holy things which the sons of Israel shall sanctify for all their holy gifts; and it will come to be on his forehead continually for their acceptance before Yahweh." (CVOT) So an engraving of a seal is upon the forehead of the High Priest.

In vs. 4 we come to a number, which Malcolm Smith reminds us is "an idea." Vincent refers to this number as "the # symbolical of fixedness and full completion." Barclay says, "The number 144,000 stands, not for limitation but for completeness and perfection. It is made up of 12 multiplied by 12 -- the perfect square -- and then rendered even more inclusive and complete by being multiplied by 1,000." Malcolm goes into more detail on the number, noting that it is 12 X 12 X 10 X 10 X 10. He explains that 12 was the number of Israel, both of which represented God's plan and purposes in the world (12 being 3 [God in His triune aspect] X 4 [the worldwide aspect of the 4 directions]). The 12 X 12 would be a picture of the universal church: the 12 of the old covenant and the 12 of the new covenant. 10, he says, is the perfection of number: number completed. 1000 is 10 cubed (used three times: Triune). Thus, this number (144,000) signifies the perfect, completed called-out of God.

I would like to point out that the dimensions of the Holy of Holies was 10 X 10 X 10. So, when we see the number 1000 in this book, let us think of the Tabernacle; let us think of God's presence, His mercy, His ruling His people, His dwelling within the camp of His people,

the place of fullness and maturity, the 100-fold harvest, the place of entering into His rest: the high call -- all symbolized by the holy of holies in the Tabernacle.

Malcolm Smith points out that this listing is not a listing of natural Israel for the following reasons:

- 1) Reuben is always listed first in a listing of the natural tribes of Israel
- 2) Ephraim is left out. Ephraim was next in importance to Judah, and was often to speak of all of Israel, apart from Judah
- 3) Dan is left out -- you can't have an official listing of the tribes & leave a tribe out
- 4) Levi is included -- this tribe was not usually included in the list of tribes
- 5) There was no tribe of Joseph -- he gave his inheritance to his sons, and THEY became the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

"This listing is a list of persons, and the first, the Leader, of this list is the tribe of Judah. This is a company of people, and they are the true Israel, and their first-born is the Lion of the tribe of Judah Israel means: one who is conquered by God The idea of being numbered, to an Israelite, is synonymous with the idea of being redeemed. In Ex. 30:12-15, whenever Israel was to be numbered every man had to give atonement money." (Malcolm Smith)

Malcolm gives the list together with the meaning of their names, and sees here a description of the qualities and experiences of one who follows the Little Lamb:

Judah -- "praise," the first thing in a Christian's experience is praise centered in the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. "Enter His courts with praise..." (Ps. 100:4)

Reuben -- "behold, a Son" This is a company of the sons of God

Gad -- "a great company; a troop" The many sons being brought to glory (Heb.2:10)

Asher -- "happy, joyful" Filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit

Naphtali -- "to wrestle and overcome" The overcomers; those who wrestle against principalities, authorities, and the system strength of this darkness

Manasseh -- "forgetting" These forget all their troubles & the things done to them (as did Joseph); their sins which have been forgiven; and, like Paul, the things which are behind (Phil. 3:13)

Simeon -- "hearing" These are sheep who hear His voice; they are blessed with ears to hear; they also obey

Levi -- "joined" These are joined unto the Lord; they are branches which abide in the vine; they are One Spirit (ICor. 6:17)

Issachar -- "a price was paid; a reward" These have been redeemed; they have also received the prize of the high call; they've run the race and won

Zebulon -- "a dwelling place" This company is the dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:22)

Joseph -- "add; increase; fruitful" The Spirit of God has been added to them, and they produce the fruit of the Spirit, bearing much fruit (John 15:8,16); their branches run over the wall (Gen. 49:22) to bring His fruit to those not yet in God's vineyard

Benjamin -- "son of My right hand" They have attained sonship, and are at the place of His power, authority and trust

These all are sealed, imprinted with God's character and identity, and the mark of His ownership also provides security through trials, testings and judgements which He brings upon His land.

Once again, the question is, did this sealing of Christ's followers happen in the first century

in the period when this letter was written to those specific churches? Is it something which will happen during, or at the end of the "church age"? Will it happen in the next age? Or, is the answer to all these questions, "Yes!"? Is this a principle of Christ that is being unveiled to us here? Recall the words of Jesus when He prayed for His followers in John 17:15, "I am not asking that You should carry (take away; lift up) them out of the world (organized system), but rather that You should keep (guard, watch over) them from out of the evil." Has not this been an observation of history? Remember the three Hebrew men in the fiery furnace? Daniel in the lion's den? He has made a promise to His people: "When you pass through water, I will be with you; through streams, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through fire [perhaps a sea, or lake of fire?], you shall not be scorched; through flame, it shall not burn you." (Isa. 43:2, Tanakh)

Here in Rev. 7, the act of sealing would seem to indicate that this will protect His chosen from the effect of the four winds.

Vs. 9 presents a new picture, but it is an expansion, a further unfolding of the same scene which began to be unveiled in ch. 4 and continued in ch. 5. Vs. 15 locates this vast throng as being "before God's throne." Now while we are speaking of their location, which has just been established, note vs. 15-17 where they will have God pitch a tent upon them, shepherd them, and guide them upon springs of waters of life. They serve as priests within His temple; they are protected from the elements and their needs supplied.

Is this an entirely new group, or another picture of the same group just sealed in vs. 4-8, above? What are the clues to their identity?

- 1) They are out of every nation (or, ethnic group), tribe, people, and language. Was this not where Israel was scattered? (Matt. 24:31; Isa 11:12, noted above)
- 2) They are clothed in bright white robes: the identity of the overcomer
- 3) They have been delivered (saved) and attribute this glory to God (vs. 10)
- 4) They have been in great pressure (tribulation) -- perhaps caused by the 4 winds?
- 5) They have the righteousness (white robes) which comes via the Lamb's blood
- 6) They are His sheep -- is that not what one "shepherds"? (vs.17)
- 7) They are within His temple -- are not we His temple? (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16). If they are within His temple, are they not a part of His body?

I would conclude that these are a picture of the ones who have just been imprinted with God's seal, and it was the pressure of this seal, as it imprinted His character and identity into them, that was the great pressure which they had just undergone. Here we have unveiled another aspect of Christ: the process, pressure, cleansing requisite to becoming a part of the body which has the character and identity of Jesus Christ. Of these I think it could be said, "It is no longer [them], but Christ." (cf. Gal. 2:20)

The tears they shed are anointed tears (vs.17). "As they pass through the Valley of Weeping, they make it a place of springs, as if the early rain had covered it with pools of blessings." (Ps. 84:6)

In vs. 9, we notice that this group is carrying palm trees, or, perhaps, palm branches. What would this signify? "Palms are characteristic of oases and watered places (Ex. 15:27; Nu. 33:9) Jericho was known as the City of Palms (Deut. 34:3; Jud. 1:16; 3:13). The judge Deborah rendered her decisions under a palm bearing her name (Jud. 4:5). The palm was a

symbol of both beauty (Song. 7:7) and prosperity (Ps. 92:12) were used in the decoration of the Temple (I Ki. 6:29,35; 7:36) and were part of Ezek.'s vision of the new Temple (Ezk. 40:16,22,26). Palms were used in the construction of the booths for the festival of booths (Lev. 23:40; Neh. 8:15). In John 12:13, the crowd used palm branches to welcome Jesus to Jerusalem." (Holman Bible Dict.) All of these references bring interesting significance to the symbology of their carrying palm trees (or, fronds): 1) they are now come to a watered place, or are in an oasis by comparison to their surroundings; 2) they have "crossed the Jordan" into "the promised land"; 3) they are now qualified to judge as did Deborah; 4) they have been given "beauty for ashes (or, dust)" (Isa. 61:3, KJV), and have come to a prosperous place; 5) they are a part of the Temple; 6) they are celebrating the triumph of the Little Lamb, Who is the King come to the heavenly Jerusalem; 7) they are preparing to celebrate, or are signifying that this is the time of, the Feast of Tabernacles.

In translating the dative case in vs. 10 and vs. 12, I have chosen the word "by" instead of the usual rendering "to." Both words are legitimate renderings of the dative, but to me it seems more appropriate to indicate that God is the source and instrument (Dana & Mantey refer to this as "The Instrumental Dative") of their deliverance, and that the agents recognize that the blessing is by God; the glory is by God; the wisdom is by God; even the thanksgiving comes forth by His Spirit; honor is by God; and obviously power, ability and strength are by God. This is not to say that in so saying this they are not all attributing these things "to" God, for obviously they are.

Now we may tend to look to the future, to a time when we, or some, will utter the same exclamation as does this crowd in vs. 10. But should this not be "repeatedly" happening now? When the description of this great multitude is taken figuratively, can we not see that this is us now, and has been so of the Elect ever since the time that John wrote this? Was he not wanting those of churches in Asia to see themselves in this and take hope and courage?

The Greek for "robe" (used in vs. 9,13,14) is stolh (stole)and is from the verb στελλω which can mean "to equip; to arrange; to place in set order." Thus did I expand the meaning of robe to "equipment, uniforms," to give the sense that they had been equipped ("...the equipping of the saints for the work of service..." Eph. 4:12,NASB), arranged by His hand, and put in their own order (1 Cor. 15:23).

The circle of agents and their eulogy in vs. 11-12, were already seen in ch. 5:11-12, where they gave a similar eulogy. So, once again, we can see that this is part of the same scene. It is from scences such as these that some see in the Unveiling "a heavenly worship service."

A further comment on vs. 15: this vast multitude perform public service "within God's Temple," and they do it NIGHT & DAY. Night & day speaks of the realm of the earth, for it is the turning of the earth that creates day and night. So although the scene is "before God's throne," and speaks of the heavenly, or spiritual, realm, this company is serving His body (temple) which is, as Jesus was (John 3:13), in heaven and on earth at the same time. Because there is both day & night, we are given the clue that this scene takes place in time, not in the timeless realm of the spirit, or what many call "eternity."

In vs. 16, we see that they will not thirst. This would be because they drink of the water that He gives them (John 4:14) and "shall under no circumstances be thirsting into the age." As to their no longer hungering, they have now passed through the dealing of the Rider of

the 4th seal, the Pale-horse Rider, Who killed them with hunger for God and His Word; Who brought in the famine of the hearing of the Word of the Lord.

They have passed through their wilderness experience, and the burning heat of the baptism of fire, the scorching of the desert wind, as the burning of the desert sun did its work on their flesh. They were left as a valley of dry bones, with nothing of the flesh left upon them, but now they have been revived and are continuously before God's throne.

They dwell with Him, within His tabernacle -- and are His tabernacle -- and He is continuously shepherding them and guiding them upon the springs of the waters of life. They not only drink of the water of life, but they are upon these waters, as Jesus and Peter walked upon the water, having authority over it.

This chapter is seen by some (including Malcolm Smith) to be parenthetical, being inserted between the opening of the sixth seal and the opening of the seventh (ch. 8:1). The 6th seal brings the signs in the heavens, with resulting effects upon the earth (land). Similar occurrences are taken up again during the blowing of the trumpets in ch. 8:8--9:2 (during the 1st, 3rd, 4th & 5th trumpets). This latter lends support to Malcolm's views that ch. 8 and the 7 trumpets begins the 3rd Vision, which, in his view, repeats the same message in a different scene & using different figures to expand the message. He sees the half-hour of silence in 8:1 as a pause between scenes in this cosmic opera!

As to whether ch. 7 is parenthetical, another view is that this ch. may be something which happens within the opening of the 6th seal, for the next verse (which editors put as the first vs. of ch. 8, although this vs. could be the last vs. of ch. 7) says, "And when He opened the seventh seal, silence was birthed (came into existence; came to be) within the heaven as it were (or, "as") half an hour." I wonder if this half-hour of silence is a figure (remember, we're reading a book of symbols) of "rest." Do these 7 seals correspond to the 7 days of creation? There were 6 days filled with activity, then on the 7th nothing happens. Is this the significance of the silence? Is this the entering into His rest, His 7th Day?