

Rev 26-01-14a

Greetings, this is Wednesday night, the 14th of January, 2026. We're in the book of Revelation, continuing our study here at chapter seven with the sealing of the members of the 12 tribes as listed. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study, we'll dive in.

Father, we recognize that the ultimate goal and purpose of our fellowship is to reflect your glory to vindicate the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in ransoming us, saving us, atoning for our sins and delivering us out of both this present evil age, the grip of our fallen nature and the inevitable destination of things that are separated from you. We pray that as believers in the Lord Jesus, as those who are called by your name, who are members of his body, that this time of investigation into the truth of your word will be profitable, that these principles and promises and doctrines will be impressed on our hearts in such a way that we can truly live both in accomplishment now and in preparation for service in the future as we see the unfolding of your plan prophetically revealed in these pages. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.

We have seen the introduction of the book in chapter one, which is a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, victorious, having accomplished the Father's plan and purpose at the cross, having been raised and returning through the throne room of heaven to be seated at God's right hand. The Lord Jesus is revealed to John in this revelatory scene where he will dictate letters to us, to you and me, using the seven churches as almost parables to warn us of the dangers that face us as we continue to exist in this life after salvation. Like David, who was anointed by Samuel, but spent years in the wilderness being pursued by an active enemy seeking to destroy him.

Despite his anointing, he had to struggle. He had to practice faith and obedience and learn things that would serve at the point that he comes to Hebron and later to Jerusalem to rule over God's people. In the same way, we have received the promise of our salvation, but it is prospective.

There is a phase of training and development that we are now in. And these pages in the revelation, these prophetic pictures and unfolding scenes of what will take place in the future as presented in a symbolic, in a metaphoric, as well as in a literal fashion, are designed to aid us in this daily task we have of getting ready for eternity. We don't necessarily need a program to tell us exactly what is going to take place when, because we will see this happen from a heavenly perspective.

We don't need to be warned about what to do on earth. Israel needs that warning. And the Lord Jesus gives that sort of material to Israel in Matthew chapter 24, Luke chapter 21.

It is contained in Old Testament passages throughout the prophets. And they will certainly be able to access this book in the same way that we read and profit from scriptures that were directed to Israel. Israel will read and profit from scriptures that are directed toward us as we

see them now.

They will be here when we are gone. That is why in chapter seven, those who are sealed are members of the 12 tribes of Israel as listed here. The two most disobedient, rebellious, and faithless tribes are not listed.

And that is Ephraim and Dan. But the number 12 is preserved. God shifts the perspective to include both Manasseh and Joseph so that the compliment of 12 tribes, the fullness of God's people is represented by that number.

So reading chapter seven, what do we take from this? Why are you and I looking at chapter seven, seeing these other people getting sealed? Four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that these winds should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. And they're not going to harm the earth until God's people are sealed. This is another affirmation of our solid understanding that the rapture has taken place.

We've seen in preceding chapters, the 24 elders who are representative of the church. It is a priestly number, 24 courses of Levitical priests under David's rule, David's instigation. These are, as it were, 24 courses of priests after the order of Melchizedek with the Lord Jesus as high priest.

That's us. That's no one else in history, past or future. That is us.

The white-robed throng from every nation, kindred, and tongue represents us, not Israel. The church is in heaven at this point, before the throne, singing God's praises. The remnant of Israel, those who are alive in the age of Israel for this final seven-year period, the 70th week of Daniel, are on the earth.

It could not be more abundantly clear that this is the time of Jacob's trouble, Daniel's 70th week, and God's ultimate purpose for the nation of Israel is being fulfilled and completed. And it comes through judgment. Those who are alive on the earth will either repent and avail themselves of God's mercy, or they will be subject to the severest of judgments.

So these individuals are sealed. We've looked at this in the past. I'm not going to dwell on the tribes, on the significance of 12,000 from each, except that this number, and I believe that when biblical numbers are symbolic, that doesn't mean that they are not also literal.

If the Bible says that God is going to send angels to seal 12,000 individuals from 12 tribes, I will take that to the bank. I see no reason to say, well, 12 is such a symbolic number. It's probably not exact.

I will put on my particular test form how many individuals is God going to seal out of the tribe of Reuben and Gad and Manasseh and Judah? 12,000, that is the correct answer. Just because a number has significance, there are 12 tribes and there are 12,000 from each tribe, making up 144,000. If God says that's the number, as far as I'm concerned, that's the number.

And people who want to dismiss these as probably not accurate counts, that's between them and the Lord. As far as I'm concerned, what God says is the truth. So you see these.

And after these things, I looked and behold, a great multitude, which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. You've got servants of God. They are not evangelists.

They're not called evangelists. They are not said to evangelize. They are not said to witness.

They are simply servants of God. And you will notice verse three of chapter seven, "'Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.'" That's what they are called, servants. They serve.

What that service is is not detailed, but there are those who refer to these as evangelists. And the cut to the scene here in verse nine, they will say, well, these are the fruits of their evangelism. They've won these people to Christ.

And so they are now in heaven and standing around the throne with the four living creatures saying, "'Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might, sevenfold doxology, be to our God forever and ever.'" Verse 13, "'One of the elders answered, saying to me, "'Who are these arrayed in white robes, "'and where did they come from?' "'John says to him, "'Sir, you know.'" He said to me, "'These are the ones "'who come out of the great tribulation, "'washed their robes and made them white "'in the blood of the lamb. "'Therefore they are before the throne of God "'and serve him day and night in his temple. "'And he who sits on the throne will dwell among them.'" It reminds me of assumptions that we make without really thinking to look at this verse, the answer to the question, which is provided by the questioner, the elder, one of the elders, one of the 24 elders, representatives of the church, asks John, do you know who these people are and where they come from? John says, I don't know.

People say the reason John didn't know that is they are not church age believers because John would have known many of them from the churches and his apostolic function. And he would have said, oh, I see this one and that one and the other one that I knew when I was an apostle. This is an innumerable multitude.

I look at crowd pictures from Herndon Monument at Annapolis or any other thing, and there are probably dozens of people that I know, but looking at the crowd, I can't pick out individuals that I know. I do not think, in other words, that it is significant that John says, I'm not sure who this crowd is. He says, you know who they are.

You tell me. And the elder replies, these are the ones who come out from the great tribulation. This is the same as that day will not come, the revealing of the man of sin and so on until there comes first the standing away, translated apostasy in most Bibles, apostasia, apa, away from, stasis, to stand.

The status, the status, if you will, and those who stand away. That day will not come except there comes first the standing away, the departure. And I believe this is the same event referenced here.

These are the ones who came out from the earth so that they do not go through the great tribulation. Notice their further identification. Everybody concentrates on, well, this coming out from, they were in the middle of it and they came out of the tribulation.

It depends on how you understand great tribulation because what do you know about the great tribulation? How long is it? A little quiz question. How long is the great tribulation? It's three and a half years, right? The great tribulation doesn't begin until halfway through the 70th week. Well, what about those who might have been martyred in the first three and a half years? Are they not in this group? Do they not count? You get into all kinds of weird interpretive pretzels trying to make this an innumerable throng of martyrs, all of whom were won to the Lord by the 144,000 evangelistic witnesses.

That's not stated, implied, or even suggested in this passage. What is suggested? Keep reading, look at this. See if you can figure this out.

These are the ones who come out from, out of and out from, it's the very same basis for translation in Greek. They have come out from the great tribulation. We are not destined for wrath.

We come out from it. We stand away. This is Noah in the ark above the destruction of the flood.

He came out from the flood in that sense. Notice what they have done. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.

They've washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. How did they do that? How did they know to do that? This is a church age truth, right? There's no hint in the Old Testament that you can take a Passover lamb or any other sacrificial lamb, slay it on the altar, catch its blood in a basin and take it home and wash your robes in it. Robes were not washed in the blood of sacrificial animals in the Old Testament day, in the picture worship of Israel, the rituals, the Levitical offerings and so on.

What do we do in the church? First John, our same author. If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship. All of those are present tenses.

Us with him and he with us and the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, the lamb of God cleanses us from all sin. If we confess our sins, first John 1, nine, faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The white robes represent righteousness.

They're unstained because the blood of Jesus Christ has removed any effect of sin from them. We are washed and we are made white. If that weren't enough, what else does it say? Look at the next verse.

Therefore, because they, we, this is us by the way, when John looks out on this crowd, you can turn your face around and look at him and he can look at you. He doesn't know us yet, but over the course of the eternal future, he might. But this is us, this is we, not on the earth, not being enumerated and sealed as a part of Israel, already in heaven, already standing before the throne, already singing the sevenfold doxology to the father, because we have made our robes clean and white in the blood of the lamb.

Therefore, verse 15, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple. What kind of people serve in the temple? Does any old Israelite from any tribe go in and serve in the temple? What tribe serves in the temple? What tribe were Eli and Hophni and Phinehas? What tribe was Samuel from? Tribe of Levi, sons of Aaron. Levites serve in the temple on earth, the temple in Israel, the tabernacle and temple that accompanied them in their wilderness wanderings and was finally constructed in the days of Solomon.

What temple is this? What did Jesus promise to overcomers in chapter two and chapter three? You'll be a pillar in the temple of my God. You'll remain there day and night and so on. This is the Melchizedekian priesthood.

This is the Lord Jesus Christ as high priest. And only we are uniquely qualified to serve in the heavenly temple because we belong to Christ and he is our great and faithful high priest. This is the message of the book of Hebrews.

So because we have washed and been made white before the throne of God, serve him day and night in his temple. And he who sits on the throne will dwell among them. Remember the promise of the Lord Jesus in John 14 and John 15, talking about the ones who love him and keep his words and express love in that way.

I and my father will come and make our home with him. And in the ages to come, we will make our home with him. These are all church age truths, church age realities.

And this is the church represented formally by the 24 elders who also have robes and crowns because they are the heads of the Melchizedekian courses, if you will. And they lead and organize and monitor the function of worship. These are those who serve and that's us.

Once again, if we qualify, every single church age believer is not qualified because not all of us wash our robes. Not all of us make them white in the blood of the lamb. This is contingent upon, it is conditioned upon faithfulness and obedience.

If we want the privilege of standing before the throne and having God's dwelling be with us, this is a picture. This is why it is so important to acknowledge our sins and to walk in the light so that we are cleansed and we remain clean and able to stand in the presence of God to have fellowship with Him and He to have fellowship with us. Those truths are detailed and elaborated elsewhere, but this is the result.

So how important is it for us to keep account, to wash ourselves and be made clean in the light

of the work that the Lord Jesus has done on our behalf? It makes all the difference both now and in the age to come. This is us. Notice the distinction.

Servants of God on earth in tribes and sealed in the same way that you have the Incarn Angel back in Ezekiel chapter nine, verses two through four. Turn back quickly. Keep your finger here in Revelation and turn back to Ezekiel chapter nine.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel. He called out in my hearing with a loud voice saying, let those who have charge over the city draw near each with a deadly weapon in his hand, similar to these angels that are about to let deadly winds blow and harm the earth and the sea and the trees. Suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate which faces north, each with his battle ax in his hand.

One man among them was clothed with a linen and had a writer's ink horn at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar. Now the glory of God of Israel had gone up from the cherub where it had been to the threshold of the temple.

And he called to the man clothed with linen who had the writer's ink horn at his side. And the Lord said to him, go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it. This is the acknowledgement of sin, the confession of sin.

Daniel does this. Before chapter nine, he spends a chapter confessing the sins, acknowledging what is wrong in Israel and that the time of God's judgment is detailed in the book of Jeremiah. And Daniel recognizes those sins.

He eschews them and avoids them himself, but he recognizes that they happen at the corporate level. This is corporate sin in Jerusalem. And those who see what is going on beyond their control are sighing and weeping over that.

So go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem and mark the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it. To the others, he said in my hearing, go after him through the city and kill. Do not let your eyes spare nor have any pity.

Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women, but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark and begin at my sanctuary. So they began with the elders who were before the temple. Defile the temple, fill the courts with the slain, go out, and they went out and killed in the city.

And you can continue there in Ezekiel, but notice the juxtaposition of those who are marked and sealed prior to judgment. And then the notation that the temple has been defiled and those who are responsible for it are to be judged first and slain. There are many parallels to that.

Pastors and under shepherds in this age are worthy of double judgment, double discipline. If they go astray and lead others astray, it's a very sobering truth of the word of God. But here, these individuals are sealed before the winds of judgment blow on the earth.

And then you have a scene in heaven where God's eternal temple is manned and served by those who are undefiled. Judgment is already passed. These have been found worthy.

They have their white robes and they are qualified to dwell in and serve in the temple. Serve him day and night. He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.

They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore. The sun shall not strike them nor any heat. For the lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters.

And God will wipe every tear from their eyes. Here's another thing to pay attention to. People say, oh, I can't wait till we all get to heaven.

There will be no more tears. For whom is it said that there will be no more tears? It is these individuals that have washed their robes and made them white, that have honored the word of God and been faithful and obedient in this life and have been delivered out from the great tribulation and stand before the throne, praising God, qualified to serve in his temple, qualified to be among those 24 courses of heavenly priests and for them, there is no further suffering. And you get the idea that there has been suffering.

There has been heat. There has been hunger. There has been thirst, but the lamb will shepherd them.

Remember when the Lord Jesus was speaking to Israel in his first coming and he said, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. And he's speaking first and foremost about Israel, but he also says, I have other sheep who are not of this fold.

Then I must bring also so that there will be one flock and one shepherd. And Israel is yet to join this flock and to have the opportunity to be shepherded because their age is still underway. We have not seen or heard or been informed about the content of the trumpets or the thunders or the bowls.

The seals have not even been completed here. And these who are already in the flock and being shepherded and serving as priests in heaven and glorifying God in heaven are not Israel. This is and can only be the church.

So those who have other ideas about when the rapture takes place, I'm sorry, but you can't make any sense out of revelation or who is doing what, when. If you don't understand that the church has already been raptured, it has been judged. And those who are found worthy are here in this group under the tutelage and the leadership and the oversight of the 24 elders and are constantly worshipping God.

What a privilege, just like the four living creatures about whom we have more to say here because we have the angels who stand around the throne in verse 11 and the elders and the four living creatures falling on their faces and praising God. And that will be us if we pay attention and if we qualify ourselves. But there is a bracketing here of the four living creatures that I wanna point out.

You remember in the last chapter, in Revelation chapter six, the first four seals are in a group and then the second three are different. The first four seals are accomplished by the voice of one living creature for each seal. So the first four seals are opened by the lamb and each horseman is summoned by one of the four living creatures and the command is come.

This is going to bring hardship and judgment on the earth. And in all of the presentations of the living creatures throughout Revelation, this is the only place where they are a part of and initiate judgment and address directly the agents of that judgment, the horsemen, and they do it in a fourfold coordinated fashion. These judgments are initiated at the throne.

They are brought to accomplishment chronologically speaking, time-wise by the lamb opening the seals and then they are mediated through these cherubim. So they authorize these judgments. They command these judgments.

We're going to see after the sealing here in chapter seven that the trumpet judgments are going to come. These trumpets are sounded exclusively by angels. We don't have horsemen who seem to be perhaps earthly agents, those who wield swords and kill one another and starve each other and mediate how much can be bought for how much money and so on.

This is in the earthly realm and there are, this is sort of man on man hardship, crime, bloodshed. The trumpets are blown by angels and we're going to have a lot of interpretive explanation given to John during the blowing of these trumpets. And during the trumpet judgments, the living creatures are never mentioned, not once.

Then we have the seven thunders often overlooked in chapter 10. Mighty angel is going to speak. Seven thunders are going to respond.

John hears and understands, but he is not allowed to write it down. Again, no living creatures are mentioned. There is a mighty angel distinct and separate from the living creatures.

And this is not revealed. And this is above John's security clearance and by extension ours. Then in Revelation chapter 15, verse seven, Revelation 15 is where the bowl judgments are going to begin.

There are seven plague angels who appear with the seven plagues, the seven final judgments of God. These bowls originate from the temple, God's temple. And the throne, these angels are already prepared.

They have the plagues, but they are not ready to dispense them. They need the bowls. Where

do they get the bowls? Revelation 15, verse seven, one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels, seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God.

So the judgments of the seals, trumpets, thunders, and bowls are bracketed by the activity of these living creatures who are the immediate spokespersons, the mediators, if you will, of God's judgments. And there is a chain of command. There is chain of responsibility.

There's chain of communication here. So the only time we encounter these living creatures as we do here is in Revelation chapter four and five, they are intimately involved in the worship. We see them again in the sevenfold doxology here in chapter seven and in chapter 14.

There will be praise scenes, doxology scenes, once again, where they are mentioned. But the four living creatures never blow a trumpet. They never pour a bowl.

They never crack a seal. They never call for repentance on the earth. They have a theological role.

They are visible expressions of the invisible holiness of God and the execution of His will and plan and purpose is expressed in large measure through them. So this is quite fascinating to me. And this grouping of the four seals, before we move forward, now that we see that this is Israel-focused and Israel-centered with these 12,000 sealed out of 12 tribes, it is such a strong connection back to Israel and the sealing back to Ezekiel.

And it harks back so elegantly to the Old Testament. We want to think about this sevenfold pattern. What is one of the strongest sevenfold patterns in the Old Testament as it relates to Israel? And I'll give you a clue.

This sevenfold pattern in Old Testament Israel is similar to the seals in that it is grouped by four and then three. What do you think? Think of the spring and think of the fall. What happens in the spring in Israel? You have four spring feasts beginning with Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of First Fruits, culminating at the Feast of Pentecost, right? Depending on how you want to order those.

Passover, Unleavened Bread and First Fruits, then Pentecost. Then there is a hiatus. There's a separation.

And then you have the three fall feasts, beginning with the Feast of Trumpets, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, and then the Dwelling of God with Man in the Booths, Sukkot, four and three. Because these judgments are happening in the age of Israel, future, there seems to be a correspondence. In the first four seals, we saw being called by the four living creatures.

I think that's also designed to kind of draw our attention to the fact that there are four that are in a group. But you have earthly judgments that affect people, culture, society, civilization, economy, and ultimately human mortality, death. That's the first four seals.

When we get to seals five, six, and seven, there is martyrdom. What is the consequence of this unleashing of unrestrained death and the sword? You have martyrdom. God allows some of his people to be slain, to be martyred.

This has happened historically. God does not always intervene and prevent the death of one of his own by violent means. If it happens, he has a purpose.

If it happens by wild beast, by random violence, if it happens through crime, if it happens and it is unjust and unfair, and yet it happens. Many, many believers among the Jews who died during the Holocaust in World War II, many believers who have died since, that tens of thousands of our Christian brothers and sisters have been slain as martyrs in Africa. You don't hear much about that unless you look.

But those who are dying for their faith around the world are unnumbered, innumerable, and God allows it. Why? For the same reason that we're going to see, he's gonna raise up his two witnesses and they are gonna be prevailing and dominating and untouchable for a period of time. And then God is gonna remove that wall of fire and they will be slain and there will be great celebration.

The Lord Jesus Christ was untouchable until in God's plan and purpose, it was time for him to be delivered into the hands of men and mishandled, brutalized, and ultimately slain at the hands of men. We have to, by faith, trust that God knows what he's doing when there is hardship, when there is disease, when there is suffering, when there is death, and it seems unfair and unjust. This was the cry and the plaintive plea of those whose souls are under the altar.

How long, O Lord, will this injustice be allowed to stand? God says, wait, you have been judged righteous. You have earned your white robe. There are others.

You are not alone. They will suffer as you have, but they will be vindicated. They will be rewarded.

They will be eternally recognized. And their momentary light affliction is working an eternal weight of glory. There is a plan and a purpose.

It is carefully orchestrated. It is symmetrical. God knows exactly what he is doing, when he is doing it, why he is doing it, and it is a test of our faith to see these patterns unfolded in scripture and to trust our heavenly father to know what is best for us, weaving together his plan for his glory and for our blessing.

It does take faith, but if it were not for this kind of thing in God's plan, we wouldn't have salvation. The Lord Jesus would never have been taken and crucified. The apostles would never have been hounded and imprisoned, and some of that imprisonment resulted in letters that are infinitely valuable to us, the prison epistles.

John, writing this revelation from exile in Patmos, we might not have it, certainly not in this form, if he were not in Patmos for the witness and the testimony of the Lord Jesus. God works all things together for good to those who love him and who recognize that calling according to his purpose. We submit ourselves under the mighty hand of God and he will exalt us in due time.

But it is a test of faith, and this spreads the field. There are those who fall back to perdition. It is only those who by faith and patience persevere who will inherit the fullness of these promises.

This is the pattern that we are seeing. We've seen it in the past. We see it in the present.

We're going to see it unfold as we see the future through John's eyes. We'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to look at this sevenfold pattern and see how the Old Testament usage informs our understanding of what we are seeing in the revelation.

Let's pause here and take our break.