



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Revelation

Chapter 7

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Introduction

This chapter answers the serious and earnest question of the last chapter: “Who is able to stand?”

The Chapter can be divided into

- The Sealed of Israel: The 144,000 On Earth Of All The Tribes Of The Children Of Israel (1- 8)
- A Great Multitude In Heaven From the Great Tribulation (9-17)



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- The first part of the chapter does not deal with a certain period of time, but it reveals God's protection and care for His Church as a whole, and for her members, everyone by his name, during the struggle on earth
- We saw in the sixth seal that the winds had blown, and had shaken violently the fig-tree, causing its untimely figs to drop off; the untimely or winter figs represented those whose religious life was unequal to the strain of trial, and who failed in the crisis to which they were exposed



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- But is all the fruit shaken off?
- No, only those who did not abide in Him "*If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered*" (John 15:6")
- But those who abode in Him, purged by their trials, would bring forth more fruit, and the fruit which these bore was not a fruit easily shaken off, but fruit that should remain, John 15:5, 15:16
- They would not be as winter figs, easily torn from the branches, for their strength was in God



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- Before the stormy winds of manifold trials had blown God's children had been sealed with the seal of the living God
- This is how God cares for His children and the faithful
- John's vision in chapter 7 has been a vision of hope for suffering Christians
- This is what the Apostle John saw
- He saw four angels keeping the earth from east to west, and from north to south and waiting



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- The winds are clearly signs of days of trouble or judgment; as the winds sweep away the chaff, so do judgments try the ungodly
- These winds of judgment are ready to blow from the four corners of the earth, but they are restrained till the servants of God are sealed
- After the opening of the sixth seal and before the opening of the seventh in chapter 8, there would be a state of profound quiet; as when we say that it is so still that not a leaf of the trees moves
- The purpose of the this pause, as we see in this verse, before breaking the 7th Seal is to secure God's people before the destruction unleashed by the 7th Seal



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- *I saw another angel*, Evidently this angel has no connection with the four mentioned in verse 1, and is employed for another purpose
- This powerful messenger either comes, as some scholars suggest, as the representative of Christ or as others suggest, as Christ Himself
- However, *ascending from the east*, indicates that this angel is Christ Himself, the Sun of Righteousness, Luke 1:77-78; Malachi 4:2; Ephesians 5:14
- This messenger carries "*the Seal of the living God*", in other words, He possesses the Spirit



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- *the seal of the living God*, Points to the Holy Spirit and the Sacrament of the Holy Chrism which make us holy temples for God, *“who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”* (2 Corinthians 1:22)
- *“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,”* (Ephesians 1:13)
- *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”* (Ephesians 4:30)
- Lord Jesus shines on us all, and gives us through the holy Chrism, this effective sign which keeps us as heirs of God



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- St. Augustine says, “The name ‘Messiah’ means ‘anointed;’ so every Christian who accepts the anointment (Chrism), becomes not only partner in the kingdom, but also fighter of Satan.”
- St. Ambrose says, “Remember that you accepted the seal of the Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2). God the Father has sealed you. The Lord Jesus empowered you, and gave you the Spirit as a guarantee (2 Corinthians 5:5), according to the teachings, you received from the apostle.”



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- This seal is not only a sign of distinction, *“Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”* (2 Timothy 2:19)
- But it carries love and devotion, till we say to the Lord, *“Set me as a seal upon your heart, As a seal upon your arm”* (Song of Solomon 8:6)
- *he cried with a loud voice*, Christ with His authority ordered the *four angel* to stay as they are *holding the four winds of the earth*
- They are restrained till the servants of God are sealed



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- He keeps the earth, the sea, and the trees, i.e. no harm will affect those whose souls rested (*the earth*), nor those who are still confused (*the sea*), nor the fruitful (*the trees*)
- *he cried with a loud voice* , May also Indicates that the gospel was preached to and reached everywhere and everyone, all are invited to be God's children and His followers and be sealed with *the seal of the living God*
- *"Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world"* (Psalm 19:4)
- The seal is *on their foreheads.*" That this is the most visible place



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- *I heard the number*, The apostle heard the number but did not see the believers getting sealed
- *those who were sealed*, The sealed ones are explained to be the servants of God
- What does he mean by saying, "*children of Israel*"?
- The early Fathers clarified, that "the real Israel" is not the Jewish people as they are called up to this day, but it is the Church
- The word "Israel," points not to a state or a nation, but to the spiritual Israel



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- In other words, it is the Church, regardless of nationality, race, or language
- The Apostle Paul laid down the principle that *“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter;”* (Romans 2:28-29)
- And the principle he applies by affirming that in Christ *“there is neither Jew nor Greek”* (Galatians 3:28)



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- The Christian Church inherits Israel privileges, and adopts, with wider and nobler meaning, her phraseology
- She has her Jerusalem, but it is a heavenly Jerusalem, Hebrews 12:22: a Jerusalem from above, Galatians 4:26: a new Jerusalem, Revelation 21:2, 3:12
- It is Jerusalem of God; the true Israel of God and the chosen generation
- How are we to understand the numbers?



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- As we cannot adopt the literal interpretation of the tribes of Israel, still less can we admit a literal interpretation of the numbers here mentioned
- There is an appropriate symbolism in the numbers of the Apocalypse
- Twelve is used as the number of those who in every age have been called out to witness for the truth which the world needed
- Thus the twelve tribes of Israel were the appointed witnesses of a pure theology and a pure morality in the days of idolatry
- And later, the twelve Apostles became the inheritors of a similar, though higher, spiritual work in the world



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- The number twelve, then, stands for a world-witness of divine truth
- Therefore, the 144,000 represent the growth into full numbers of the chosen ones of God; it is the people of the New Testament (12 disciples) multiplied by the people of the Old Testament (12 Tribes), then by one thousand, multiples of 10 always symbolize abundance in perfection of divine order, as all through Jesus became heavenly
- In this symbolic number we are given the ideal Israel
- It is Israel as it was meant to be in all its perfection and completeness



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- Does the change in the order and names of the tribes symbolize anything?
- The alterations are not without significance
- Reuben no longer stands first
- The unstable Reuben, with all his splendid advantages—the firstborn, the Excellency of dignity and the Excellency of power—failed to hold his own among his brethren
- However, he is not an outcast altogether, but finds place, and high place, among the servants of God



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- He started with the tribe of Judah, although he was not the oldest, but because the Lord Jesus descended from this tribe
- And he who has relationship with, and abides in the Lord, comes first in the kingdom
- The tribe of Dan is omitted because he sold himself to idols, Judges 18:1-31
- Dan, once a tribe, and not an insignificant tribe, which had reared its heroes, gradually lapsed into idolatry and immorality, diminishing in numbers and importance, and at length disappeared, and as a tribe became dead



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- Its omission in this list is a silent but clear comment on the sacred warnings: *“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”* (1 Corinthians 10:12)
- *“and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones”* (Matthew 3:9)
- God has warned any person, clan or tribe of worshipping idols, or else the Lord will erase their names from under heaven, Deuteronomy 29:18-25; and they will be banned from the book of life
- Ephraim also was a tribe that greatly promoted idolatry



The Sealed of Israel 7:1-8

- Ephraim who exalted himself in Israel, is now lost in the greater name of Joseph, Hosea 13:1, 10:11; Luke 18:14
- The number twelve is maintained to show that in all changes God's purposes stand
- Levi's subordinate position is thought to be due to the fact that the Mosaic ritual and Levitical priesthood are at an end



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- From verse 1-8 the apostle John saw the care of God for His Church on earth
- Starting at verse 9 He will tell us about the Church in heaven
- *A great multitude*, We have just had the picture of the sealing of a multitude which could be numbered; now we have the picture of a countless crowd
- Who are these? Are they the same as the one hundred and forty-four thousand, or are they others?



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- Yes, they are the same one hundred and forty-four thousand mentioned before in a glorious heavenly view
- But they are not counted here
- St. Augustine says, that the number was not mentioned, in order to fill the souls with hope that heaven will be populous
- And not to tremble and feel despair, because of the great number of the wicked on earth



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- The sealing assured us that in the midst of the severe times of testing there would be those who, wearing God's armor, would come forth safe
- This vision shows us the completion of their labor and their rest after conflict
- The servants of God are safe, for they are sealed and numbered
- They are among those sheep of Christ whom He calls by name, whose very hairs are numbered
- The numbered are found to be numberless; countless as the sand by the sea and as the stars in heaven



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- It gathers from every nation, and people; it welcomes all; where there is neither Jew, nor Greek, bond, nor free; its gates are open all night and all day to every quarter of the world
- It gather all the elect of God in the new Jerusalem church state, the bride
- These will appear to be a great multitude
- *clothed with white robes*, The robe of holiness and righteousness



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- Bishop Victorianus says, “They were purified by baptism in the blood of the Lamb, thus their robes became white, and they kept the grace they had accepted.”
- Its whiteness is the reflection of the shining of the divine glory on them, as in His transfiguration, Matthew 17:2
- The white dress carries the mark of purity and spotlessness
- And that of victory as well. Revelation 3:5
- For this reason, the Church embellishes her children with a white garment, right after their baptism



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- *palm branches in their hands*, The sign of triumph: it is the sacred rejoicing of the Israel of God
- It has been thought that these are the emblems of victory
- It also indicates the joyful life, as they used to carry palm branches in the feast of Tabernacles, which they kept in memory of the entrance into the Holy Land
- Palms were also used when the people's hearts were filled with joy, on the Lord's entry into Jerusalem



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- Their happiness is expressed in their continuous praise, shouting in a holy burning zeal, *“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”*
- Our salvation is from God
- It is because of the love of the Father, and to the grace of the Son, and to the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
- Their cry is the acknowledgment that their salvation—the salvation which they now taste—is due not to themselves, but to their God and to the Lamb



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- This praise also is their joy for the Lord has reigned
- For the Lord who has all authority and power, “*he went out conquering and to conquer.*” (Revelation 6:2)
- For He who overcame Satan, took away his power, and chained him, “*And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”*” (Luke 10:18)
- For Him who trampled death, “*O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?*” (1 Corinthians 15:55)
- For Him who released all those who were in Hades and made them enter the Paradise



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- The angels, elders, and living creatures, all fall down on their faces, in a reverential sense of the infinite distance between them and their Creator
- The angel share with us our happiness
- As there is joy in the presence of God among these holy spirits when one sinner repents, no wonder that they take such an interest in the gathering together of such innumerable multitudes who are fully saved from their sins
- All are in communion of love and work, for "*the praise of God*"



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- What a beautiful scene and we may wonder
- Do the heavenly hosts share with us our happiness for salvation?
- Do they sing with us this hymn, offering with us a thanksgiving sacrifice?
- Or, it is us who share their work and participate with them in their heavenly songs of praise?!
- St. Augustine says: “As His majesty is infinite, His praise is also infinite. If you want to praise God permanently, you should be jealous of the behavior of the angels and their praise.”



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- We say that every worship, whatever big or small, loses its life, its being and its existence, if it is deprived of praise
- The work of the Church is continual praise
- In the Church of the Old Testament, the Psalmist says, "*Seven times a day I praise You*" (Psalm 119)
- Daniel was kneeling three times a day, praying and thanking God (Daniel 6:18)
- In the Church of the New Testament, we see daily praise in all ways of worship, and in all occasions



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- It is because the Church believes that the Gospel is the "Good News," and her work is a heavenly angelic work
- For this reason, she teaches her children to praise
- St. Basil says, "Praising God is a special concern of the angels."
- For this reason, Gregory the Nizanzus thinks that by praising we become equal to angels in honor
- Pope Athanasius the Apostolic says, "The settled soul forgets her pains, and by singing the holy words, she looks happily at Jesus alone."



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- *saying: "Amen!"* Giving their most cordial and grateful assent to the praises attributed to God and the Lamb
- They were concluding man's song of praise, Revelation 7:10
- In order then, in their own way, to carry it farther saying *Blessing, and glory and wisdom...*
- The same ascription of praise occurred in Revelation 5:12
- The seven-fold form of the doxology, which implies a divine completeness, is appropriate to this vision, which shows us the close of the Church's agony



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- The general idea is, that the highest kind of praise is to be ascribed to God; everything excellent in character is to be attributed to Him; every blessing which is received is to be traced to Him
- In the former praise in Revelation 5:12 the ascription of praise is to the Lamb - the Son of God; here it is to God
- In both instances the worship is described as rendered in heaven; and the use of the language shows that God and the Lamb are regarded in heaven as entitled to equal praise



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- God willed that the apostle John not just see the vision and this beautiful scene but also wanted to reveal its mystery to him
- The purpose evidently is to bring the case of these persons more particularly into view
- This is why one of the elders raised this question
- It was not to be answered, but it was thought provoking and to stimulate interest
- Perhaps the apostle John was thinking and wondering who they are



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- As the apostle John knows the rank of those incorporeal presbyters, he answered him, '*Sir,*' and asked him to tell him about them in a very gentle manner, "*Sir, you know.*"
- They are the victorious Church, who endured to the end and were saved, "*And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.*" (Matthew 10:22)
- The reason for their acceptance, as Ibn-el-Assal says, is the shedding of the blood of the Lamb for them, and for others
- Thus, they were given great honor, and became like pure and sinless sacrifices accepted by the Father, as their robes became white and shining by the blood of the Lamb



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- *the great tribulation*, Foretold by the Lord, St. Matthew 24:21
- Persecutions of every kind
- It might be any struggle or fight a Christian may face in his spiritual warfare and overcomes it
- Or it might be persecution that the Church as a whole face and many get martyred because of their faith
- Or it might be the Great Tribulation during the era of antichrist and all the wars and troubles accompanying this time
- The spiritual meaning is as Christ affirmed many times, *“In the world you will have tribulation”* (John 16:33)



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- *“they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.”* (Matthew 24:9)
- The washing and the whitening remind us of two of the Church Sacraments
- The first is to be washed from sin in the Sacrament of Confession
- The whitening take place in the blood of the Son and in the Sacrament of Communion where one departs the church pure after being united in the Body of Christ



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- Therefore - Because they are washed in the blood of the Lamb, *they are before* the throne – allowed in to the immediate presence of God
- Because of their redemption and union with Christ, through His sacrifice, they stand before God's throne in worship in God's Temple
- “*Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*” (Ephesians 5:25-27)



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- *serve Him day and night*, Without ceasing; being filled with the spirit of prayer, faith, love, and obedience
- The life is not simply one of joy or safety, it is one also of service
- What is their service, but the continuous praise, saying with the psalmist, "*Before the gods I will sing praises to You*" (Psalm 138)
- It is enough to be in front of the divine throne, serving His altar
- The altar is the Lord Himself, "*But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.*" (Revelation 21:22)
- *dwell among them*, He lives in His own Church, and in the heart of every true believer



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- Verse 16 is taken out of Isaiah 49:10
- They are all metaphorical expressions, signifying the perfect state of glorified saints; they shall have no wants, nor be exposed to any afflictive providences
- None of the hardships which they have endured for Christ's sake shall trouble them
- None of the dissatisfactions and weariness of life shall afflict them; for hunger, thirst, and fatigue will be no more, for the former things are passed away, Revelation 21:3-4



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- The time of trial is past, the pains and temptations of life are over, the sun in that land will not scorch, for there is no longer need of these burning beams
- The city has no need of the sun, for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof, Revelation 21:23
- There are 7 promises of this blessing:
- Never hunger; or thirst; shielded from sun; and wind; the Lamb will be their shepherd; springs of living water; and God will wipe away all tears



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- The Lamb will tend His people as a shepherd tends his flock and will lead them to the springs of the water of life
- The Lord who was David's shepherd, Psalm 23:2
- Who was the Good Shepherd who sought and brought home the lost for whom He died Luke 15:4; John 10:11
- Does not forget the shepherd's work in heaven

A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17



- He who made His people to drink of the brook in the way, Psalm 110:7
- He who gave to those who came to Him the water which alone would quench their thirst John 4:13-14, 7:37-39
- Leads them now to the springs of the living water, and makes them drink of the river of His pleasures Psalm 36:8
- In Isaiah 25:8 it is said “*And the Lord GOD will wipe away **tears** from all faces*”
- Here it is ***every tear***
- Thus shall all sorrow be removed from all



A Great Multitude In Heaven

7:9-17

- No tears shall gather in any eye, for the sources of sorrow will be cut off in the land where there is no more sin
- None can weep again when it is God who wiped away their tears
- *“Blessed are those who mourn”*, said Christ, Matthew 5:4
- Blessed indeed in this, that God becomes their comforter
- Only those who have wept can enjoy this consolation
- Who would not shed life’s tears to have God’s hand to wipe them away!



Discussion

- What purposes do angels fulfill?
- In Scripture, a seal indicates ownership and protection. How and why are God's people sealed today from Ephesians 1:13-14? ?
- It has been noted that John's list of the 12 tribes varies somewhat from the usual listing in the Old Testament. Why might this be?
- Who are these people dressed in *white robes* and waving *palm branches*? What is the significance of "*white*"? What about "*palm branches*"?



Discussion

- Verse 14 says the ones who have the white robes came out of the tribulation and were washed in the blood of lamb. Why is being “washed in the blood of the lamb” necessary? Why won’t righteous acts cleanse us spiritually according to Isaiah 64:6?
- What will the Lamb of God do for all of the ones that went through the Great Tribulation and had their robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb?
- How do you think Chapter 7 is an encouragement midst the seven seals of judgment?