

Text: Rev 7.1-17

The three-fold outline of Revelation (1.19):

1. The things you have seen (the vision of Christ) Rev 1
2. The things which are (the letters to the churches) Rev 2-3
3. The things which must come after these things (Rev 4-22)
 - a. The overture: the scene in heaven (Rev 4-5)
 - b. The seal judgements begin (Rev 6)
 - c. (Parenthesis): the believers of the Tribulation (Rev 7)

“God led John to record what he saw between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals to explain how God would be merciful during this period of judgment.”¹

I. Four angels of judgement (1-3)

A. After this... a new vision (possibly beginning of second half of tribulation?
Or a ‘pause’ before that period?)

B. Four angels

1. Not the four living creatures
2. Not the twenty-four elders
3. Activity: holding back the four winds
 - a. This sounds ominous
 - b. A warning for the angels, “do not harm the earth or the sea...” (3)

Implication: if they release the winds, harm will come

c. Thus, they have power over the earth for hurt

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Rev 6.17.

C. Another angel

1. Carries the seal of the living God (2)
 - a. Symbol of ownership (2 Cor 1.22)
 - b. Symbol of authentication (Jn 6.27)
 - c. Symbol of protection leading to salvation (Eph 1.14, 4.30)
2. Calls to the four to withhold judgement until he completes the sealing of God's bond-servants on their foreheads (probably a visible sign)

II. 144,000 sealed servants (4-8)

A. Clearly, the nation Israel has a place in future events

"Nowhere else in the Bible do a dozen references to the 12 tribes mean the church. Obviously Israel will be in the Tribulation, and though men do not know the identification of each tribe today, certainly God knows."²

B. The tribal list

1. Starts with Judah, as is usual and fitting
2. Excludes Dan (most commentators speculate on Dan's great idolatry)
3. Names Joseph instead of Ephraim; but names Manasseh

"References such as the one in this passage argue strongly for the continuance of Israel as a nation in the future and for God's dealing with ethnic Jews again as His chosen people (cf. Rom. 11). This is a major assertion of dispensational theology."³

C. Questions

1. Will they be baptized by the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit? Probably not, these are marks of the church age

² John F. Walvoord, "Revelation," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 949.

³ Constable, *Expository Notes*, Rev 7.5.

2. Will these people literally be Jews? There is no reason to suggest otherwise

“The question has also been raised whether the ‘12,000’ in each tribe means literally 12,000. There seems to be indication that more than 12,000 from each tribe actually will be saved. The point of this Scripture is that in any event 12,000 in each tribe are made secure.”⁴

III. Multitude of tribulation saints (9-17)

A. The worship of the multitude (9-12)

1. “After these things...” Note this is another new vision (or progression in the visions)
2. Contrasts with 144,000 (9)
 - a. Greater number, but indefinite (Gk. “a multitude many”)
 - b. From every nation, as opposed to Judaism alone
 - c. Stand before the throne, not on earth
3. There may be a connection with the feast of Tabernacles (palm branches) and rest (which Tabernacles represents)
4. They cry out in worship to God for saving them (10)
5. The angels, creatures and elders join in the worship (11-12)

B. The identity of the multitude (13-17)

1. One of the elders speaks to John – who are these?
 - a. Note: the elder is not part of the multitude (a distinction)
 - b. We identified the elders as representatives of the believing saints in heaven after the Rapture (Rev 4)
2. The elder identifies them: these have come out of the tribulation
 - a. They are obviously believers
 - b. They are people who believed after beginning of Tribulation
 - c. God delivered them from the Tribulation (through death)

⁴ Walvoord, “Revelation in BKCNT,” 143.

3. Their deliverance is the cause of their service and worship before God (15)
4. They are now in a place of rest, no more trials, the perfect watch-care of the Shepherd (16-17)

“The location of this revelation in the context of John’s visions is significant. It strongly argues for these two groups, the 144,000 living Jewish believers and the multitude of dead believers, existing during the Tribulation after Christians have gone to heaven at the Rapture. Note that God will save multitudes of people during this time. It will be harder for all people to believe the gospel after the Rapture than it is now. However it may not be impossible for people who have rejected it before the Rapture to believe it from then on (cf. 2 Thess. 2:11–12).”⁵

Also note:

Rev 6 ended with the question:

Rev 6.17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

These will stand, those who ally themselves with the Lamb.

“Both these groups ... demonstrate clearly that the tribulation will be a period of much salvation. ... God will not cease to save men who believe in His Son. The activity of the grace of God will not cease as long as time continues.”⁶

⁵ Constable, *Expository Notes*, Rev 7.16.

⁶ Charles C. Ryrie, *Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), 54.

Addendum:**The Literary Structure of Chapters 6–18⁷****The Seals**

FIRST SIX (ch. 6)	Supplementary Revelation (ch. 7)	SEVENTH (chs. 8–16)	
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The Trumpets

FIRST SIX (chs. 8–9)	Supplementary Revelation (10:1–11:14)	SEVENTH (11:15–16:21)	Supplementary Revelation (chs. 12–15)
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The Bowls

FIRST SIX (16:1–16)		SEVENTH (16:17–21)	Supplementary Revelation (chs. 17–18)
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⁷ Constable, *Expository Notes*, Rev 7.16.