

Prophecy 7

The 144,000

Revelation 7:1-8:1

Beginning point in time: 1994

(See Appendix A for a discussion on 1994.)

Ending point in time: End of the 1,000 years

Summary: This prophecy introduces the selection and empowerment of 144,000 prophets. Jesus will speak to the world through the lips of His servants during the Great Tribulation. Empowered by the Holy Spirit and validated with Bible truth, the 144,000 will proclaim four profound messages that will separate sheep from goats. A numberless multitude, coming from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, will embrace the gospel proclaimed by the 144,000 and gather around God's throne after the Second Coming. A thousand years later, Jesus will break the seventh seal on the Book of Life and the revelation of Jesus will be complete. At that time, the contents of The Book of Life will also be exposed.

Introduction: This prophecy consists of three chronological events even though there are gaps of time between the three events. The first event occurs just before the Great Tribulation begins.¹ The second event occurs after the Second Coming,² and the third event occurs at the end of the 1,000 years.³ These events may appear to be disconnected, but they are intimately related.

The selection and ministry of the 144,000 (12,000 from each of the tribes) produces the numberless multitude (who come from every nation, tribe, language, and people) that are gathered around God's throne. Notice that the numberless multitude described in Revelation 7 is limited to those who "came out of" the Great Tribulation.⁴ Going forward, the numberless multitude who gather around God's throne contributes to our understanding of the seventh seal in an interesting way. Rule One forces the seventh seal to be broken *after* the sixth seal (the Second Coming). So, the seventh seal must be broken *after* the numberless multitude are taken to Heaven. This fact is affirmed in Revelation 20:12 because according to Scripture, The Book of Life is opened after the one thousand years have ended.

This prophecy begins with four angels standing at the four corners of Earth (east, west, north, and south). These angels had been given power to hurt the Earth. Before the angels can begin their destruction another angel comes from the east. He tells the four angels to wait until the 144,000 are selected and sealed. After the 144,000 are selected and sealed, the four angels then proceed to hurt the Earth. This destruction (the first four trumpets described in the next prophecy) will initiate the Great Tribulation. More than 1.75 billion people will perish. *The breaking of the fourth seal on The Book of Life aligns with the release of these four angels.* Needless to say, apocalyptic upheaval is approaching and God's coming judgments will overwhelm and subdue the whole world.

God's wrath will change life on Earth for everyone in a single day. Shock and awe will subdue the arrogance of mankind and enable the 144,000 to proclaim a gospel that would be declared outrageous today. Jesus has a gospel which the world will hear and currently, religious diversity prevents His gospel from being heard. For example, if God chooses a Muslim to speak for Him, what Christian would listen? Conversely, if God chooses a Christian to speak for Him, what Muslim would listen? Religious paradigms are deeply intertwined with some of the most powerful emotions known to man. (A paradigm is a series of intricate concepts that seem to be right and true to the owner of the paradigm. A religious paradigm is a particular view of God and His will.) Religious paradigms are so powerful that one religious body cannot convince another religious body that it has superior knowledge about God and His will. God understands the gridlock and He has a solution. Jesus will humble the world with shock and awe so the world will listen to His servants and the Bible declares that a numberless multitude will embrace the gospel presented by the 144,000. Honest-hearted people in every religious body will abandon their religious paradigms when the time comes because honest-hearted people love truth, no matter what truth may be.

God has linked certain events in Heaven with identifiable events on Earth. I like to call this linkage the "Heaven-Earth-Linkage-Law." This law is very useful. For example, when the fourth seal is broken in Heaven, great harm will occur on Earth. When twenty-five percent of Earth's population is suddenly destroyed, people can know by events on Earth that the fourth seal has been broken on The Book of Life in Heaven.

To make sense of Revelation 7, a little background information may be helpful. For now, please consider the following explanation which will be presented in much more detail in Prophecy 8. The Bible tells us that seven high ranking angels stand before God. These mighty angels are His servants, sent on errands and missions as He directs. In 1994 (see Appendix A), each of these angels was given a trumpet and four of them were told to wait for the appointed time. Prophecy 8 is an excellent example of the Heaven-Earth-Linkage-Law. When each of the seven trumpets sound, a divine judgment will occur on Earth. The seven trumpets will produce an unbelievable amount of death and destruction. The seven trumpets will begin when the fourth seal is broken. (Please examine this alignment on the chart at pages 4 and 5.)

During the past six thousand years, God has used His four deadly judgments when necessary. Sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts are judgments which God uses to punish evil doers.⁵ When a majority of people in any nation becomes wicked and violent, God sends warnings and redemptive judgments so that if possible, people might repent and future generations can flourish. If a nation refuses to repent of greed, idolatry, and sexual immorality, God ultimately sends total destruction.⁶ God uses sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts in two different ways – redemptive and destructive.

Soon, Jesus will punish the world with His four deadly judgments. The seven trumpets will produce sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts. These judgments will be redemptive in the sense that the doorway to redemption will remain open. Everyone willing to put their faith in Jesus will be saved. When the seven trumpets are finished, seven bowls will be poured out on the wicked. These judgments will be totally destructive. Jesus will deal with the defiance of the wicked and avenge the suffering which the wicked unjustly imposed on His saints during the Great Tribulation.

When the fourth seal on The Book of Life is broken, the seven trumpets will begin. I believe God's forbearance with Earth (corporately speaking) ended in 1994. (See Appendix A.) At that time, the seven angels who stand before God were given seven trumpets. Four of the seven angels were sent to Earth on a mission to deliver God's devastating judgments. Before God gave the signal for the four angels to proceed with their assigned judgments, He told them to wait until the 144,000 were sealed.

Rev. 7:1

And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

Rev. 7:2,3

And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

Rev. 7:4

And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four

The Sequence

{1} I saw Earth laid out like a giant map and four angels, having four trumpets, took their place at each corner of the world. These angels had been given power to hurt the land, the sea, and the trees, but they were commanded to wait for Jesus to break the fourth seal on The Book of Life.

When the fourth seal is broken, God’s wrath begins. God’s wrath will be horrible, but it will accomplish a wonderful objective. God’s wrath will shatter the religious paradigms of seven billion people. The honest in heart will thoughtfully and intelligently consider the testimony of Jesus which will come through the mouths of the 144,000. Currently, there are billions of honest-hearted people who cannot hear the gospel of Jesus because of their religious paradigms and culture, but God’s judgments will tear down these walls and a numberless multitude will hear and embrace the gospel of Jesus.

{2} I saw a mighty angel approach from the east. He was carrying the seal of the living God. He shouted to the four angels who had been given authority and power to harm the land and the sea saying: {3} “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until I seal the servants of our God.”

Shortly before God’s wrath is released, Jesus will select 12,000 people from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. The “Israel” of God today is not a biological Israel. (See Appendix B.) According to the New Covenant, the Israel of God consists of people who love Him with all their heart, mind, soul, and their neighbor as themselves.⁷ God redefined Abraham’s heirs,⁸ a new Israel of God, at the cross.⁹ The Bible indicates that God will select 12,000 *from* each tribe¹⁰ to be part of the 144,000. This means that each tribe is larger than 12,000 people. In other words, God will only use a portion of each tribe.

{4} I heard the number, 144,000 people were selected, sealed, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.¹¹

There are no symbolic numbers in apocalyptic prophecy. According to Rule Three, a symbol requires a relevant text to define the symbol. The math in Revelation 7 is literal and straightforward – 12,000 people are taken from twelve tribes and the total equals 144,000 people. The 144,000 (a definite number of people) are not to be confused with the numberless

multitude (an indefinite number of people). The 144,000 are called firstfruits¹² because they will be sealed first. The 144,000 will have their carnal natures removed and Christ will seal them against the corruptive power of sin. During the Great Tribulation, everyone who embraces the gospel of Jesus and passes the test of faith will also be sealed. The 144,000 are described as belonging to the twelve tribes of Israel because believers in Christ are counted as the heirs of the promises given to Abraham. Like Abraham, the 144,000 know how to live by faith. The 144,000 will also demonstrate the gift of sanctification that comes through faith (see Appendix B). Jesus wants the world to see living examples of what any sinner can become. So, the gospel of Jesus will come with a demonstration as well as a proclamation of God's truth and love!

{5} Jesus selected and sealed 12,000 from the tribe of Judah, Reuben 12,000, Gad 12,000, {6} Asher 12,000, Naphtali 12,000, Manasseh 12,000, {7} Simeon 12,000, Levi 12,000, Issachar 12,000, {8} Zebulun 12,000, Joseph 12,000, and from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.

The 144,000 will be people who have shown exemplary love, loyalty, and determination to serve God, regardless of personal circumstances or distress. Jesus will appear to each of the 144,000 as He did to the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus. When Jesus appears to them, they will be astonished. Jesus will inform each person that he or she has been selected to serve as His mouthpiece. Jesus, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, will give each person the words that Jesus will speak through them.¹³ The 144,000 will not speak on their own. To keep His servants from failure, Jesus will remove their carnal nature in a single day.¹⁴ They will be the first people (firstfruits) set free from sin's power and temptation since the fall of Adam and Eve. They will be examples to everyone that any sinner can be set free of sin's power through faith in Christ. A seal will be placed *in* their foreheads. This seal will not be a visible mark like the mark of the beast (which will be a tattoo), but a seal of ownership which God alone can see.¹⁵

For 1,260 days the 144,000 will prophesy in sackcloth (fierce persecution and anguish). Their words will oppose the religious paradigms of the world. Their words will inflame the religious and political leaders of Earth. The 144,000 will experience the same suffering that Jesus had to endure when He was upon Earth – threats, hate, rejection, ridicule, bodily injury, and

thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

Rev. 7:5-8

Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

Rev. 7:9-10

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Rev. 7:11-12

And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

death. Eventually, most, if not all, of the 144,000 will be killed in the line of duty for the sake of God’s truth.

Note: Most likely, the tribe of Dan is not mentioned as one of the twelve tribes because this tribe was destroyed during the rebellion of the ten tribes.¹⁶ If this conclusion is true, it explains how the tribe of Levi, which was not originally counted as one of the twelve tribes, takes the place of Dan. It is also interesting to note that the tribe of Levi is not identified as “the priests of Israel” or elevated above the other tribes in this list. Remember, after Jesus died on the cross, God redefined Israel. The priesthood of the Levites was eliminated and transferred to all believers.¹⁷ There is no spiritual distinction between Levites or Benjamites under the New Covenant. Also notice that the tribe of Joseph is used as another name for the tribe of Ephraim. For further discussion on the “Israel of God,” please see Appendix B.

{9} I looked again toward Heaven and saw a numberless multitude standing around God’s throne. This multitude included people from every nation, tribe, and language. They stood in front of the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. {10} They cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

This multitude consists of people who have embraced the gospel of Jesus during the Great Tribulation. Consequently, they have received God’s gift of righteousness during the last hours of Earth’s history. Christ’s righteousness and eternal life are theirs because they surrendered to Christ’s authority and His gospel. No wonder they sing, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!” Their experience mirrors that of the thief on the cross. They are absolutely astonished at God’s incredible mercy and His gift of salvation because they chose to place their faith in Him!

{11} Millions of angels gathered around the numberless multitude and around the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures. Altogether, the vast throng fell down on their faces and worshiped God {12} saying: “Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen!”

This scene is emotionally overwhelming because the angels, the twenty-four elders, and the four living creatures know and understand the incredible value of eternal life. The song of the

redeemed will be one of the most touching songs ever sung in the universe. A numberless multitude will stand before the Father and the Lamb. They will wear white robes and hold palm branches in their hands. They had been sinners in a degenerate world, without hope or purpose, but they heard the gospel and put their faith in Christ during those last, horrible, dark days of the Great Tribulation. As a result, their fortunes changed! When the redeemed grasp the magnitude of God's love and generosity, when they see the golden streets of the Holy City for themselves, and when they grasp the value of eternal life with Jesus, certainly they will fall on their faces and say, "God is love – God is love! Having hearts filled with gratitude, they will sing, "Redeemed! How I love to proclaim it. Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb!"

{13} As I watched, one of the twenty-four elders approached me and asked, "These people in the white robes; who are they, and where did they come from?" {14} I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "Yes, I know who they are and I want you to tell everyone that the numberless multitude will be made up of people who come out of the Great Tribulation. They are the harvest which were gathered by the 144,000. These are the people who abandoned their families and religious heritage. They placed their faith in Jesus by obeying His Word. They washed their robes in His blood by patiently enduring persecution and their faith in Christ has been purified and refined through intense suffering for the sake of truth.

{15} "Because their faith in God was thoroughly tested, they will be given high positions in His government. They will serve God as priests and kings, day and night in His temple; and God will provide everything they need. {16} Never again will they hunger as they did during the Great Tribulation; they will never thirst as they did during the days of God's wrath. The Sun's scorching heat will not beat down on them again. {17} For the Lamb will be their Shepherd; He will lead them to springs of living water. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. He will grant them joy and happiness beyond understanding – forever and ever and ever."

Rev. 7:13-14

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Rev. 7:15-17

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains

Rev. 7:15-17

of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

One Thousand Years Later

One thousand years after the Second Coming, the holy city, New Jerusalem, will descend from Heaven to Earth. The wicked (who are resurrected at the end of the 1,000 years) will meet Jesus face to face. Everyone who has ever lived on Earth will be alive and present for this occasion. The saints will be safe within the Holy City and the wicked of all ages will stand outside the city. Everyone will see each other and Jesus as well. The physical contrast between the wicked and the saints will be stunning. The saints, possessing glorious bodies and radiant countenances, will stand along the walls of the New Jerusalem. The wicked will stand before God in the *same* degenerate bodies that they had during their life on Earth. The physical, mental, and spiritual toll that sin imposed on mankind will be shocking and obvious.

Perhaps the scenario continues like this: Jesus will raise His arms and silence will settle over the vast crowd. He will point upward and everyone will look into the sky and watch a compelling scene. The clouds will be pulled back like a giant curtain to form a huge screen. Each person will then watch a flawless replay of his own life. The details will be clear and truthful. Faithful angels recorded every word and action in real time and now, each person will be permitted to see his life as God saw it.¹⁸ In addition to his own life, each person will be shown scenes of Christ's life. Everyone will watch His birth, suffering, and death at Calvary. In fact, everyone will see the Plan of Redemption and the enormity of God's grace and love as the movie unfolds. At the end, Jesus will speak *to each wicked person, explaining why* He could not save them. On that day, every person will see that his choices during this life determined his eternal fate. When this phase of the Great White Throne Judgment ends, every knee will bow.¹⁹ The wicked will admit that Jesus is a righteous judge, He has carefully taken everything into consideration, and His decision is just and fair. Meanwhile, the saints inside the city will say that the Lord's forgiveness, mercy, and grace are undeserved. After the wicked and saints acknowledge the righteousness of Christ as the judge of mankind, Jesus will draw everyone's attention to The Book of Life. There is one remaining seal left to be broken. Jesus will break open the seventh seal and the contents of The Book of Life will be exposed!

The Sequence Continues

{8:1} When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, He opened The Book of Life and everyone saw a second “movie” in the sky. The wicked and the saints stood in silence for about a half-hour as they watched a phenomenal story.

When Jesus breaks the final seal on The Book of Life, everyone will see what the Father foreknew before any life was created. Everyone will see that the Father knew who would *choose* salvation and who would not; even before any life was created. Everyone will realize that the contents of The Book of Life are identical to the Books of Record which the angels recorded in real time.²⁰ The Father’s foreknowledge concerning the life and details of each person will be stunning!

The contents of The Book of Life will prove to the universe that the Father did not use His foreknowledge to manipulate the behavior or destiny of anyone. God did not prevent anyone from choosing to sin. He did not prevent Lucifer, the angels, or Adam and Eve from rebelling against His authority. The Books of Record (recorded in real time) and The Book of Life (written before any life was created) are identical in every way, which proves that every being had been given *the privilege* of choice, and that every creature had been given *the power* that comes with choice. The difference between privilege and power is important. The “privilege” of choice means that we are free to choose. The “power” of choice means that we are free to act on our choices and direct ourselves. Consequently, each person is responsible and accountable to God for his or her actions.

The discovery of the power and privilege of choice reveals a new aspect of God’s love for everyone. God permits His children to love Him or hate Him. God permits His children to surrender to His authority or rebel against it. God allows this because He has given us the privilege and power of choice! Suddenly, the controversy over God’s sudden death law will make sense. Even though He created that law before life began, God does not implement this law until everyone has a complete knowledge of good and evil. God has wisely permitted a few thousand years of sorrow, suffering, and death to transpire so that sin would not have to be tolerated again; not even for one single day. I cannot think of anything more wonderful than this!

The Books of Record will be identical with The Book of Life with one exception – the names of those individuals who rejected the

Rev. 8:1

And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

Rev. 8:1

Holy Spirit were blotted out when the Father originally wrote The Book of Life and sealed it. In other words, the Father foreknew, before each person was created, who would commit the unpardonable sin, but His foreknowledge did not stop Him from giving that person the privilege and power of choice! Remember, The Book of Life is not used when Christ judges mankind. The Book of Life is opened only at the end of the 1,000 years. Only the Books of Record, recorded in real time by the angels, are used when Jesus judges the dead. The wicked must die because they were defiant – they blasphemed the Holy Spirit. The remaining names in The Book of Life will go on living; they will never cease to enjoy eternal life because they chose submission!

The Rules of Interpretation

Consider how the Rules of Interpretation are observed in this prophecy:

Rule One says an apocalyptic prophecy has a beginning point and ending point in time and the events within the prophecy occur in the order given. This prophecy conforms to Rule One because chronological order is self evident in this prophecy. The sealing of the 144,000 is followed by the numberless multitude gathered around God's throne which is followed by the breaking of the seventh seal.

Rule Two says a fulfillment only occurs when all of the specifications are met, and this includes the order stated in the prophecy. Currently, I do not see any evidence that the 144,000 have been selected and sealed. However, I do believe this could happen at any time.

We noticed earlier that the four angels were told to wait until 144,000 people were selected and sealed. Why does God tell us about this delay? Why do we need to know that four angels were sent to harm the Earth in 1994? (See Appendix A.) What role does this delay play in Revelation's story?

1. This delay indicates that God is waiting for an appointed time to arrive.²¹ In other words, the selection and empowerment of the 144,000 is based on the arrival of an appointed time that the Father has predetermined. I believe that since 1994, God has been waiting to synchronize the end of sin with the arrival of the 6,000th year. If so, this in part, explains the delay.

2. This delay is included in Revelation's story because God wants us to understand that His wrath is overdue. When His wrath does begin, He wants us to understand that His wrath is not arbitrary or an emotional outburst.

3. This delay reveals that God is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish,²² but, as in the days of Noah, divine patience has a limit.²³

Rule Three says that apocalyptic language can be literal, analogous, or symbolic. To reach the intended meaning of a prophecy, the reader must consider (a) the context, (b) the use of parallel language in the Bible, and (c) if an element is thought to be symbolic, the Bible must interpret the symbol with a *relevant* text.

The language used in this prophecy is not symbolic because there are no relevant texts defining a symbol. On the other hand, we do find an extensive use of analogous, parallel, and literal language. For example, the four angels are four angels. The four winds describe God's four deadly judgments: Sword, famine, plague, and wild beast.

Rule Four is not used in this prophecy.

References:

1. Revelation 8:2
2. Revelation 7:9
3. Revelation 20:3,12
4. Revelation 7:14
5. Ezekiel 14:12-23
6. Colossians 3:5,6; Revelation 6:7,8
7. Matthew 22:37-40
8. James 1:1; 2:1
9. Romans 2:28,29; Ephesians 2:18-21;
Galatians 3:28,29; 5:6 (See also Appendix B.)
10. Revelation 7:5-8
11. Compare Ezekiel's appointment as a prophet in Ezekiel 2:8-3:4 with John's appointment in Revelation 10:8-11. I see John's experience as representing the selection and sealing of the 144,000. See Joel 2:28-31.
12. Revelation 14:4; compare with 1 Corinthians 15:20.
13. Compare Ezekiel 2:8-3:4; Luke 12:11,12
14. Hebrews 8:8-13
15. 2 Corinthians 1:21,22 See also Ezekiel 9 for parallel language. Keep in mind that the vision given to Ezekiel was figurative. No one at any time actually went through the city of Jerusalem with a marker to indicate who would be killed or saved. Ezekiel was in Babylon and the Lord gave this vision to the prophet so that he could inform the elders of Israel that God clearly saw Israel's evil ways, even the behavior of each individual.
16. Deuteronomy 4:26,27; 2 Kings 17.
17. Hebrews 7:12
18. Ecclesiastes 12:13,14; 2 Corinthians 5:10
19. Isaiah 45:23,24
20. Daniel 7:9,10; Revelation 20:12; Malachi 3:16
21. Daniel 8:19; Daniel 11:35
22. 2 Peter 3:9
23. Genesis 6:3; Ezekiel 23