

THE FATE OF BELIEVERS IN THE GREAT TRIBULATION (PART I): A REMNANT OF 144,000 FROM ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED REVELATION 07:01–08

Introduction

Jesus Christ is holding the great book of God in His hands, the Book of Destiny, the book that tells what is to happen at the end of the world. The book is so important and so secretive that God has it bound with seven seals until it is time for it to be opened. Remember: the events have not yet happened upon earth. They are things that are to happen in the end time. But God has given us a glimpse into the things. Why? To warn us to turn to His Son. Christ alone can save us from the judgment to come. Therefore, we must follow Him ever so diligently while we walk upon earth. This glimpse into the great book of God, into the destiny of the world, is given to us in this great book of Revelation. We have just seen Jesus Christ break open six of the seals that bind the book. To our horror, when He broke them open, the four horsemen of the Apocalypse were seen storming across the face of the earth with their terror and devastation. We have seen how the four horsemen represent the wars and killing, famine and pestilence, hunger and starvation, death and hell that the antichrist will unleash upon the earth. We have seen how evil will mass together every force of demonic power it can in order to make a final assault upon the earth. And we have seen that the destructive devastation will kill one fourth of the world's population. Shocking! One fourth of the population will be killed by the catastrophic devastation of evil unleashed upon the earth. But to our horror, this is not all. God's great book declares this is just the *beginning of birth pains [sorrows] and woes*. But this terrible devastation, as horrible as it is, is nothing compared to what is yet to come. When all the judgments have fallen, the earth and the world shall be utterly destroyed. How it is to happen will be seen when the seventh seal is broken open. When the seventh seal is broken, the seven seal judgments are over; the period of history that will be known as the *beginning of birth pains [sorrows] and woes* will be finished. But the *great tribulation* itself will be launched by the seventh seal.

- the *great tribulation* that will witness the shattering blast of seven trumpets of judgment.
- the *great tribulation* that will witness the wrath of seven bowls of judgment poured out upon the earth.

Now, for a critical question: Will anyone be saved through such terrible days? Can anyone survive such terrible happenings? As Scripture itself has just asked:

Rev 6:17 “*For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?*”

Can anyone stand? Will anyone turn to the Lord and be delivered through this terrible time? Yes! There is to be a remnant of Israel saved: 144,000 Jews shall be saved.

- I. The winds of judgment are in the hands of God and His angels, not in the hands of evil (vv. 1-2).
- II. God will give the most wonderful command: to delay the judgments until God's people can be sealed (vv. 2-3).
- III. God will give the wonderful counsel to seal 144,000 Jews from all the tribes of Israel (vv. 4-8).

I. Revelation 07:01–02 God Himself Executes the Judgment

The winds of judgment are in the hands of God and His angels, not in the hands of evil. This is a most wonderful truth, and it is exactly what is being declared here. Four angels stand at the four corners of the earth holding the four winds of judgment so that they cannot blow upon the earth. “The four corners of the earth are the four main points of the compass: north, south, east, and west” (Lehman Strauss. *The Book of the Revelation*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1964, p. 170). The picture is that God is in control of the whole earth, of every direction upon earth. And He is merciful. He has not unleashed His avenging angels of wrath upon earth, not yet. In mercy He has chosen to wait a little while longer.

Thought 1. This is a most comforting thought: to know that judgment is in the hands of God; to know that it is God Himself who is to execute judgment. It is comforting because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. Just think! Every person has the privilege of escaping judgment. No person has to stand before the face of God at the throne of judgment. Every person can be saved and delivered from condemnation by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour.

But note: the winds of judgment are to be unleashed upon the earth. Every person will face these awful times unless he has surrendered his life to Christ. And then most tragic of all, he will have to face the eternal judgment and condemnation from the presence of God forever.

Mat 25:31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”

2 Pet 3:7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Rev 20:12-15 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead

were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

II. Revelation 07:02–03 Seal on the Servants of God

God will give the most wonderful command. The command will be to delay the judgments of the great tribulation until all the servants of God can be sealed. The *seal* means the mark of possession, authority, power, protection and preservation.

=> In ancient times a king's ring was his seal. He would stamp the mark of his ring upon all official documents showing their possession, authority and power. This is certainly part of the meaning here. The 144,000 will be sealed — protected and preserved — by God (cp. Gen. 41:42; Esther 3:10; 8:2; Dan. 6:17; Mt. 27:66).

Rev 9:4 *They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.*

Rev 14:1 *Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on the Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty four thousand, who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.*

Rev 22:4 *They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.*

Rev 7:3 *“Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.”*

Ezek 9:4 *And said to him, “Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it.”*

=> In the New Testament the believer is sealed with the Spirit of God; that is, the Holy Spirit seals and guarantees that the believer belongs to God. The presence of the Holy Spirit living within the heart and life of the believer is his seal and his guarantee that he will escape the judgment of God and live eternally with God.

Eph 1:14 *Who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.*

2 Cor 1:22 *Set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*

2 Cor 5:5 *Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*

In contrast to the seal of God upon His servants, the lawless and rebellious followers of the beast (the antichrist) will bear his mark or seal (Rev. 16:2). God will seal His servants to identify them and to assure their protection from the wrath and destruction coming upon the earth. Remember: God does not condemn His followers. His followers escape the judgment of God. The judgment and destruction from God's hands fall only on "those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads." This is clearly stated in Revelation.

=> The demonic forces that are to be unleashed upon earth will not touch God's people.

Rev 9:4 They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

=> The bowl judgment of sores will not touch God's people. Judgment is poured out only upon those who have the mark of the beast.

Rev 16:2 The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshipped his image.

This should not seem strange to us, that God will judge the unbelievers who follow the antichrist and not judge believers. As stated, God does not condemn His people; He condemns and judges unbelievers. And the judgments of the great tribulation are to be upon an evil and apostate world. A good example is Moses and the plagues of Israel. Remember the event: the ten plagues, as terrible and devastating as they were, fell upon all the Egyptians; but they did not afflict the believers among Israel. The true believers were *sealed* from the plagues.

However, it should be remembered that believers will be persecuted and slaughtered by the antichrist during the last three and a half years of his reign, that is, during the great tribulation (cp. Rev. 7:14). The believers of the end time will not suffer the judgments of God upon the apostate world, but they will suffer the persecution of the antichrist.

2 Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Jude 1:14-15 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Psa 62:12 And that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done.

Jer 17:10 "I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."

Thought 1. God gives the most wonderful promises to genuine believers. No believer will ever be judged and condemned to death and hell. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, that can separate a genuine believer from the love of God.

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

John 5:24-29 *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

Rom 5:8-10 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

Rom 8:35-39 *Who shall separate us from the love [compassion] of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

1 John 3:1 *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.*

III. Revelation 07:04–08 The Salvation of Israel

God will give the wonderful counsel to seal 144,000 Jewish believers. And note: there will be 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes. This is exactly what this passage says. This is clear indication that Israel will be saved in the end time. This is exactly what Christ revealed to Paul. (See notes, Romans chapters 9-11 where the problem of Israel is dealt with. Especially see outline and notes, *Restoration of Israel and Its Surety*, Rom 11:25-36.)

This passage should be taken at its face value, that is, that 144,000 Jews will be converted during the great distress or the great tribulation. There are several strong reasons for this.

1. This passage says that 144,000 Jews will be converted. This is the very subject of chapter seven: to show who is to be saved during the tribulation. The answer is that both Jews and Gentiles will be saved, some 144,000 Jews and an innumerable number of Gentiles (v. 9-17 of the next outline). This is described in the simplest and plainest of terms.

2. The 144,000 are apparently a special body of Jewish believers who are dedicated to serve the Lord Jesus Christ totally and wholly during the tribulation of the last days. Note three things that Revelation says about them. (See notes, Rev. 14:4-5.)
 - a. They are pure, that is, they kept themselves pure, undefiled by women. The days of the end time will be filled with horror after horror. The worst holocaust the world has ever witnessed will be launched by the antichrist and millions will be killed. A special commitment will be needed to stand up for Christ. Apparently, these 144,000 form a *special body of believers* who vow and commit their lives to the end to never deny Christ. They apparently take a special vow to be the encouragers and ministers to the believers and to the others who will be so severely attacked and persecuted by the antichrist. (The vow and commitment the 144,000 will take will be somewhat like the vow the Pharisees took when they first formed to stand against Antiochus Epiphanes. See *Pharisees*, Acts 23:8.)

1 Cor 7:26-27 Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for you to remain as you are. Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife.

Rev 14:4-6 These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as first fruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

- b. They are called the servants of our God, followers of the Lamb wherever he goes. They are a body of believers who give themselves to serve God while ungodliness and evil are raging in the end time. They will be ministering, witnessing and encouraging the believers and the Jews who are having to flee into the wilderness and hiding places of the world to escape the holocaust. The 144,000 will have a great part to play in the turning of Israel to Christ, their true Messiah, in the end time.

Rev 7:3 “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.”

- c. They are said to be purchased, redeemed from among men (Jewish men), and offered as first-fruits to God and Christ. This simply means that they will be the first Jews to be saved in the tribulation.

Rev 14:3-4 These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as first fruits to God and the Lamb.

3. This is undoubtedly part of the restoration of Israel. Christ clearly revealed that Israel was to be saved in the end time. (See notes, Romans chapters 9-11; especially chapter eleven.)

Rom 11:2 *God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah — how he appealed to God against Israel.*

Rom 11:15 *For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*

Rom 11:23-24 *And if they [Israel] do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you [Gentile believers] were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree [Israel], how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!*

Rom 11:25-26 *I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. ■"*