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Revelation

Chapter 7 - Revealing the Coming Forces

Breaking the 7 Seals

A Power Controlling & Protecting Sealed for Service (vs. 1-8)

Revelation 7:1-8: After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.” And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, from the tribe of Asher twelve

thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.

There's no way other way to read it, is there? You have to read that there are 12 tribes and the 12 tribes are being represented within this particular passage. I know that some have tried to make it more metaphorical or figurative, but it's a very literal text. There are passages in which figurative language is used. Once again, we all remember our English. What words are we looking for? “Like” or “as”. So, when it says, “the moon will turn *like* blood,” it's not saying it turned into blood. It's going to

look like it. So, it's given a reference to and it's in a figurative language. When Scripture says specifically that it is then it is, and that's when you take it literally. So, yes, there are figurative pictures in Revelation, but then there are literal declarations as well. So, we look at a very interesting passage in which a literal number is given with literal tribes that are being represented, and yes, He is talking about the Jews. He's not talking about the church. There's no reference to the church within the text. So, you have to read what is.

As we come to this passage, once again, the reminder is that the book is about unveiling. "*Apokalyptōs*," meaning to unveil or reveal, or the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is a revelation that is given to the churches specifically, and as He starts right off the bat, the source of light, the source of truth comes from Jesus Christ alone, and Christ has so ordained that the Church be the venue in which the light shines to the world. So, at the very onset, Revelation is revealing to us the source that Christ chose to use as weak as it is, in many respects, the Church, to proclaim that light. So, we realize that on top of that, as He begins

to go in the Book of Revelation, that there are many attacks and many things that come upon the church to actually subvert or in some way cover this light that God has ordained. As you go through and you see the seven churches, if I could just kind of list them for you; you have legalism that comes into churches that suppresses the light. Once the church begins to delegate right and wrong, it ceases to be a light, because really the only thing that can cause a person to change is the love of Christ. We believe, as Romans 1:16 says, and we're not ashamed of the Gospel of God. For we believe that that's the power of God to bring men to salvation. You could sit there and point your finger at people, you could shake your finger at people, you could accuse them of many things that they did wrong, and you could probably be right in doing it. However, it's not going to change them. What is going to change them is when they see the love of God and that He has forgiven them. So, the church is to proclaim the gospel of Christ and to always point to the way of salvation. Obviously, we need to recognize that we are sinners, but it's not for the sake of oppressing, it is for the sake of freeing. Until you really admit that you're a sinner,

you can't be freed from it, right? But as soon as you admit it, you can be. So, legalism will creep into the church. Of course, He talks to the Church at Ephesus specifically about that. As He goes through the seven churches, you see things like fear coming into the church. Well, fear will kind of cause the church not to be bright. Look, we understand the world's afraid. They have reason to be afraid. Something happens to them, they die; they're in trouble. But the church, we should not be afraid. Even if we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we're not afraid. God is with us, and we fear no evil. So, the wonderful truth about the light in the church is that we don't flicker when fearful things happen. We just keep shining brighter. But the church is going to be attacked with fear, and oftentimes it will suppress, and you'll see the church being covered over because they are immersed in that fear. The church is going to deal with times of tolerance, and the world is going to tell you, "You need to be tolerant of sin." Once the church becomes tolerant of sin, i.e. ok's sin. See, the world's way of dealing with sin is, "Let's cover it up. Let's pretend like it doesn't exist." God's way is saying, "Admit that you're a

sinner. I'll rescue you." It's not that God wants to keep you in bondage. He just says you just have to admit what is. As I oftentimes reflect there in Romans 6, Paul just asked a very simple question, "Which of your sins did you benefit from?" And the sins are those things that cause you great sorrow. So, don't you want to get rid of the sorrow? So, tolerance of sin obviously is not the answer, but the church will have this, and it will begin to infiltrate the church as well as compromise, which is the next one that He begins to deal with the church as He begins to deal with notoriety. Of course, the Church of Sardis was only concerned with getting a name for itself, and once churches start going down that road, "We just want to get popular. We just want everybody to know our name" then they stopped being a light. John the Baptist says, "I must decrease, He must increase." So, it's not our name that you need to remember. It's His, and it's not about joining our church. It's about receiving Him as your Lord and Savior, and that's what's going to make a difference in a person's life. Once that message becomes in some way pushed aside by virtue of, "Well, I just want to become popular, and we want everybody to know our

names. We want our names in lights,” then people aren't hearing the truth, and unfortunately, the church is not proclaiming it.

As we look at the Church of Philadelphia, one of the great concerns with the Church of Philadelphia was the movement of esoteric influence, more specifically, elitism. You see that at the beginning of the Church of Corinth in 1 Corinthians 1, in which each had their own little clique. You know how cliques can be in churches? Ok, you don't want cliques. You don't want denominations. You don't want people segmenting in their little groups. There should be a welcoming of all. One of the statements that Paul makes to the Corinthians is, “We now recognize no man according to the flesh any longer.” So, we're not judging according to the outward appearance. What we're saying is, “You believe in Christ?” “Yeah.” “Come on, brother. You're one of us.” And that's what makes a family a family of God. So, it's easy for cliques to come in, but once that happens, the light starts going out within the church.

Last but not least, as you look at the Church of Laodicea, what was the big problem? Well, they were putting all of their sense of hope and stability and security in money and in power, and God says, “You do that, you're no different than the world. There's no light there.”

Unfortunately, many of the churches feel that if they have a big bank account that they're going to do a great work and they're doing a great work. That's not true.

Oftentimes it really detracts from the declaration and the proclamation of Christ alone.

So, all these things, He begins to say, literally cause the light to go out in the church, but God has called them to be light. So, we understand that there are going to be these powers and forces. The wonderful thing is that He goes from that to this great, marvelous picture in heaven in which all of the great powers of the heavens are now gathered together, and the declaration or the question is, who is worthy to own creation? There are great tears at that juncture of John, and “Who is worthy? Who is worthy? Nobody's worthy.” And surprise upon surprise, it's the Lamb. The Lamb that was slain comes and takes

the title deed of all creation and all of heavens begin to rejoice, "The Lamb is worthy!" The question is, why the Lamb? He doesn't even look strong or powerful. There's nothing about Him that looks like He could do anything, and God says, "The power is in His willingness to sacrifice, and that love I put on the throne in all the heavens." He reigns in the heavens because He loves. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." The power of the heavens is now subject to the Lamb.

So, the great declaration at that point then moves us on to the realm of God beginning to reveal that there are going to be great and horrific forces that come through the world, and they're going to try to destroy and cause the world to be up in upheaval. The Lamb is taking the title deed as He begins to break the seven seals, and every seal broken, He begins to reveal the things that He is inheriting, and you see mayhem and a mess, really, as you go through the list. Obviously, there are things that come in and you have the four apocalyptic horses in which really literally describe forces that are going through the world and influencing the world in ways that are bringing

destruction. I mean, you have a white horse that comes, and you say, "White horse? Good. The white horse." "Yeah," He goes, "It's not good, because the whole purpose and design of the white horse is to conquer, and it's going to be abusive in this." And it's an interesting picture of prestige and glory and honor, and we've had a lot of white horses, including the Great Crusades. But even today, there are a lot of white horses that are going through the world under the guise of, "We're going to save you." But it's really highly exploitive; highly involved in usury. So, it's God's grace to reveal this to us. He's revealing there are forces in the world, powerful forces that are coming through. Unfortunately, they're not bringing good even though they're riding a white horse. The only thing they're bringing is a conquering and destroying of lives and people. So, we've seen that obviously through the years.

He then talks about the dark horse, or more specifically, the bloody horse, in which you see pleasure coming in and separating whole families. You see a possession that comes in, in which people are more concerned with the

possessions that they have, and then the final green horse at the end is a lifeless force, coming in to destroy. So, all the way through, they're the forces that He's revealing that are in the world, that are attacking the world, and that are destroying the world.

We now then come towards the end and as you come towards the end of the seals, you begin to see what these forces are doing. What's obvious is they're trying to destroy God's people. They're trying to destroy those that are wanting to serve God. So, you see these souls, and if you drop on down with me,

(Revelation 6:9) “When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;

(Revelation 6:10) and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?””

And then you begin to see that those who were killed because of their testimony, He comforts.

As you go to Revelation 6:12-17, things begin to stir exponentially, and you can see a progression of the things of the world. Yes, there have always been forces in the world that have caused a tremendous amount of consternation and problems and sorrow. There's always been. But things are beginning to stir up the closer we get to the end of days, and we know, and we understand that the end of days began when Jesus first came. And Jesus makes that clear in Matthew 24 and the earth basically had been in progression for 4,000 years. So, since throughout the 4,000 years there's been, but the end of days now, you figure, if there are 6000 years through all of creation, and you're coming to the end of 6,000, then 2000 would be the end of those 6,000 years. So, the last 2000 years remaining out of the 4,000 that have already happened and now with Jesus coming about 2,000 years, we're getting pretty close. Not only do we as believers understand this to be true, but even the Jews, for the most part, Orthodox Jews would agree that the world was only established to exist within 6,000 years. Now, I know that people have argued that our planet is billions and billions and billions of years old, and I appreciate that, but

here again, one of my statements is, when He created Adam, how old was Adam? 1 day old. What did he look like? Well, I don't think he looked like a 1 day old. I think he looked like a man, maybe in his 30s or something. When God created a tree, how old was it? 1 day old. How old does the tree look like? Well, it didn't look like a seed. So, the point of the matter is that God has no problem creating things that have an eternal sense upon them. He sets stars in the skies, and you say, "Well, it takes millions and billions of years for the light to get here." Not if God shoots the light to you. So, when God creates these things, it is God in His order. God is the One that gave me the time schedule, not science. Of course, obviously, when you think about creation, God creates something out of nothing. I don't know, what science is that? There are no science involved. It's working outside the realm of science. Did He establish science? Yeah. I'm thankful for gravity, or I'd be floating in outer space. So, all these things that God has done for us, He's done to protect us and to keep us. However, He's not bound by the rules of science. So, God has created all these things, and as He creates them, He begins to reveal through us down

through the centuries. Of course, really, if you go through Genesis and you start walking through Scripture, what you're seeing is the maturing of human race. I don't know if you've ever noticed that none.

One of the classes that I took in psychology was human growth and development, and in human growth and development, you begin to realize that there are different stages to humans growing and developing. So, a little 2-year-old thinks a little bit different, hopefully, than a 20-year-old, because his brain is even developed differently. By the time he gets to be older, then he can start thinking. We understand that a child can begin to reason around the age of 11 and 12. Well, that's when Scripture says you bar mitzvah them, or more specifically, the child is declared a man. As we understand, "bar" means "son," and "Mitzvah" is "law". So, he becomes the son of the law, or more specifically his desire is no longer to be told to do right and wrong. He's now owning it for himself and saying, "I want to do what is right. I want to be the son of the law." So, what Scripture is telling us is that there's human growth development. Well, as you look through

history, you see that. In the very early stages of creation, Cain kills his brother, Abel. "Ok. You need to die, Cain." Cain goes, "Not today. I'm not supposed to die. I didn't do anything wrong." And God surprisingly doesn't take his life. Why is that? Because you're in an early stage of humanity. There are no laws. He has a conscience. He knows he's done something wrong. So, like a child that does something terrible at an early stage, you can't beat them to death for doing something that terrible. They don't have the ability to comprehend these things. So, what's the next thing that God does? He then brings in the law. Well, what's the next thing you do when you train a child? Well, when they're 1, maybe 3, you're not really getting after them or going through a list of things, like, "Did you take out the garbage today?" I mean, the kid barely can talk. So, you're not putting a lot of things on him. But as he grows, then you go, "Ok, I'm expecting you to make your bed." So, now you're adding laws. Well, God adds the laws. But ultimately, as Galatians will say, what happens is when the fullness of time came, Christ came. Now, when Christ came according to the book of Galatians, that was the year of Bar Mitzvah. In other

words, humanity became a man through Christ, so that what happens when you receive Jesus is no longer are you supposed to be told what to do, but in Christ, He changes your heart. So, all the way through creation, the story has been told to us, and we've seen humanity develop. Now, as we come towards the end of man's time, he's now become accountable. Unfortunately, the heart of man has not been changed as a whole, and a mess in the world has begun to perpetrate throughout every venue of the world. So, the Lamb is now taking back for Himself, and things are beginning to shake up or move, and there's resistance.

There's is an interesting text in which in the Gospels Jesus sees this young boy, that's possessed by a demonic spirit, and as He begins to address the child, the demon begins to throw the child in the fire and out of the fire and drag him in the fire and out of the fire. So, you begin to see that there's a resistance towards being set free because there's an evil force that is holding this back. Well, that's what you're going to start seeing now in Revelation as Christ comes and He begins to take back. The thought is,

“Well, God is coming and He's just going to try to wipe us all out.” You misunderstand this. What is happening towards the end of days is that the world is not only feeling their oats as being wholly mature, but in their maturity they've chosen to resist God and now they're reaping the hurt and the pain of it, and that's these forces that He's been talking about, the white horse, the dark horse, the bloody horse, the green horse. All of these forces that are coming into the world are the consequences that are beginning to happen. On top of that, He's beginning to reveal that there are, as Ephesians 2 and Ephesians 6 say, there's the prince of the power of the air that begins to stir up. Now, the fact of the matter is that man is self-destructive by himself. He can cause a mess all by himself. Thank you. But there is also an evil force that stirs him, and Scripture will begin to refer to that force as the winds that begins to move and push and cause all these things to begin to happen. Well, in many respects, we're starting to see the winds blow and begin to blow even now, and what's interesting about the passage we're going to be looking at today is we're going to see that there are four winds that are blowing. Of

course, the inference is the four corners of the world are affected. Never before has the world ever seen what we're seeing today and that is that the whole world is almost acting in unison with their response to something. We've never seen this happen before. This is one of the things that Revelation is telling us in Chapter 7, that the whole world is going to be involved in a movement and winds are going to be pushing and driving this movement. So, we pick up in Revelation 7. Now, as we pick up in Revelation 7, understand that He's just broken the sixth seal; that sixth seal has revealed that there's going to be a lot of stirring that is going on. Jesus will talk about that. Take a moment and look with me in Matthew 24. If you look at Matthew 24, Christ is on the Mount of Olives and on this mount, He begins to give a dissertation or a proclamation. Of course, His disciples are going, "Ok. This must be the time that you're going to be taking over the world." And He goes, "No, there are some things are going to happen before that happens."

If you look with me in verse 3, the disciples are going, “Is this the end of the age? How about telling us what's going to happen?”

So, Jesus says this,

(Matthew 24:4) And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you.

(Matthew 24:5) “For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many.”

Now, let me just say this: At the time Jesus was saying this, nobody was saying anything close to this. I mean, there had been a few, maybe rogue, but the Christ had not come yet. But since Christ has come, many have proclaimed coming in Christ's name and many have killed many people in Jesus’ name.

So, He says this,

(Matthew 24:6) “You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.

(Matthew 24:7) “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.”

(Matthew 24:8) “But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.”

(Matthew 24:9) “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations...”

At one time, Christianity was a fairly popular thing. We're not as popular as we used to be. I don't know if you notice that or not. People aren't as happy with us as they used to be. In fact, people don't necessarily want to be called “Christians” anymore, and I can tell you they definitely don't want you to talk about Jesus. This I know for sure. Well, that's not been true till just recently.

“... and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.”

(Matthew 24:10) “At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.”

A strange thing, isn't it?

(Matthew 24:11) “Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.”

(Matthew 24:12) “Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.”

In other words, because men are not abiding by the law of God, which is lawlessness. Once you take the 10 Commandments out of the school, guess what? The love or the care for one another begins to leave. You have no set of standards. You’re to actually love your neighbor as yourself. You take out these standards and before long people begin to show no regard for humanity at all.

So, as we as we come to Chapter 7, it comes on the heels of Chapter 6, and there's kind of really an amalgamation because we're actually still in the sixth seal as it begins to talk about these things. But it's as if there's kind of a “wait a minute” before the sixth seal really begins to happen, because if you look at verse 12,

(Revelation 6:12) “I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood;

(Revelation 6:13) and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.”

I mean, some pretty amazing stuff is happening within the passage. These are both pictures of spiritual things that are happening as well as physical things that are literally happening.

So, at the end of Revelation 6:17, the question is, “Who is able to stand in the midst of all this?” The wrath of the Lamb. What does the wrath of Lamb mean? It means the Lamb who controls all things because you rejected Him is stepping back, and once the Lamb, who is One who died for you, cares for you, loves you, steps back, guess what happens? Evil comes in and begins to resist. So, the question is posed, “Who is able to stand?” Chapter 7 is the answer to that question. So, that's why Chapter 7 is so important, because Chapter 7 has given us the clarity, these will stand.

Now, as you pick up with me in verse 1, we read this, (Revelation 7:1) “After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth...”

Not an unusual term. It's used in Ezekiel, used in Isaiah; of course, we say it making reference to the four corners, North, South, East and West.

"After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth..."

Influences. Powers. Winds. Of course, within this particular context, He uses the word that talks about violent agitation. Of course, that's what wind is. I mean, Jesus would oftentimes teach His disciples while they were in the boats, and a violent wind would come up. What does that do? Well, it scares you, but it begins to move the waves, too, and all those that are unstable, i.e. the waves, begin to move and then, of course, that causes a lot of problems. So, it's an interesting picture, but it is also a declaration that there are forces in the heavens, the prince of the power of the air is going to start moving in these last days. Now, what's interesting is that there are things that are going to be happening that you have no logical explanation for. How could the whole world be afraid? I don't know. I mean, something has to stir them up because I'm telling you this is not normal. I

mean, I've known people that have gone through war. I've known people that have seen far worse than any of this and were fearless in it, and I'm standing back and I'm watching people afraid of a flu bug. It's baffling to me, but there's a wind that is blowing, and there are forces that are starting to move, and it reveals that you think you have control over your reactions, you don't. There are forces that can move you and the force is so powerful that once it begins to move, you can't stop it. Has anybody ever gone to the beach and been on a wave? You get on 10/15/20 foot waves; try to stop it. It's not going to happen, and the wind is blowing those waves. Something's moving. He's going to move you, because you'll just become a part of that wave, and this is why Scripture says, "every wind and wave that begins to move you," false doctrine takes you off, because it brings in so many people, and just by virtue of so many people believing something, it moves you; it affects you. So, now there are four winds of the earth, and it says within the passage,

“... so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree.”

It almost seems out of place that He would throw in “tree” within the passage, but He's making reference to three different things. One is the earth which has a facsimile of stability; earth meaning terra firma, dry, steady ground, not moving. Then you have the sea, which moves quite fluidly with the things that come along, and then you have the tree. Now, the reason He brings the tree in, if you back up to chapter 6, it says this,

(Revelation 6:13) “and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.”

He gives an interesting analogy of great forces begin to fall when they were bearing their fruit at the wrong time. Winter figs that are born during the wintertime never make it because they were never meant to bear fruit in the winter. But every now and then you have a rogue tree that does this. So, it's an interesting picture of powers and forces that got their powers and forces not because God gave it to them, but because they claimed it. Now, the

point is that when things begin to shake, everything begins to go, and you begin to recognize the powers that are anchored in God as not moving and those that were not anchored in God, though they might look like a strong tree, or they might be “terra firma”, they begin to move and everything that moves is not anchored in God, and it's an interesting picture.

So, you have these forces that are going to be coming and blowing on the earth, and it says this in verse 2,

(Revelation 7:2) “And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun...”

Ezekiel was pretty clear on that one. Ezekiel makes reference specifically to that the son of man is going to come from the east. Of course, we know according to Psalm 19 that the sun rising from the east every day is God's way of saying, “I'm coming. I'm coming. I'm coming. I'm coming.” Because that's where He's coming from, and Ezekiel makes reference to the fact that the gate in Jerusalem, the east gate, is the gate that the Messiah will come through. So, all these things are making reference.

Of course God is showing you signs in the heavens as well, but it's a great picture.

So, the picture here is,

(Revelation 7:2) “And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God...”

In other words, there's a control that is coming from Christ, a source, more specifically, a power that is controlling and protecting in the midst of all these things. One of the scary things, of course, when the world is starting to shake and the things that you at one point thought, “Well, I thought that was pretty powerful. I thought that was a stable place.” God goes, “Well, does it shake?” And you go, “Yeah.” He says, “I wouldn't hold on to that one.” So, once things start to move, it literally unveils what is true, and that's the wonderful thing about it. When people see the world shaking, they go, “Oh, it's such a terrible thing.” I go, “It's a wonderful thing.” Why is it wonderful? Because if you see it moving, they're not real. It's just the grace of God that does this. So, as He begins to move, you see the power of God and He says, “Now, I can sustain, but it's Me who does it.” Here again,

this is an interesting point. I can't save myself. You can't save yourself. I can't make myself steady or secure. Peter tried. Peter told Jesus, "I can save You." Jesus goes, "I don't think so." Peter goes, "No, I've got this." Of course, we understand that he couldn't. But Peter finally comes to the point of realizing, "If I am stable at all, it has to be You." And Jesus goes, "Ok, go preach." So, in Acts he preaches, and he preaches probably more boldly than he ever has before, and in front of the same people that crucified His Savior. Why isn't he afraid? Because he has a source that doesn't move. He has an anchor for his soul, both sure and steadfast, the real thing. So, he's not moving. It's not that Peter is immovable. It's that Peter is immovable in the power of God.

So, this the power is declaring, if you look in the passage, "... the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out..."

Which, by the way, just want to emphasize this whole thing of "seal". I mean, you see it in number of passages, Daniel, Esther, or Ezekiel. Ephesians will talk about it at least two or three times. But as you understand this

picture of a seal, it is God literally granting favor and protection, and more specifically, giving a mark of distinction and authentication. So, when you think of, He's going to place a seal like a king would have a signet ring and he placed his signet ring, it was his seal and his seal that was an authentication of who he was and that you were under the king's order. Well, God has given an authentication of His people. Paul will write to Timothy. He says, "Look, God's people have this seal upon them." And here's the phrase, "The Lord knows those who are His." And that's such a such a great thing.

Of course, Ephesians 1 will say that we have the seal of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:30 says that we've been sealed until the day of redemption by the Holy Spirit.

So, what is that seal? The seal is the mark of genuineness, which is the mark of the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. So, how do I know I'm true? Well, we'll see. The winds will blow. What happens? True doesn't move, and this is going to be the point. But first, they have to be sealed. Otherwise, they'll blow away with

everybody else. There is nobody that could protect themselves from this. As strongly as you might want to have a resolve, “I've always been a good guy. I've always been a wonderful person. I think I can make it through this.” And God goes, “I don't think you can.” So, you're going to have to have His seal.

If you look at the end of verse 2,

“... and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea.”

They were held back at this point.

(Revelation 7:3) “saying, “Do not harm...”

Underline the word “harm” because you see that in the end of verse 2 and you see at the beginning of verse 3.

“Do not harm” is actually “without law”. It's a compound word, “without law,” and more specifically, if you were to define it, what He's talking about is there's going to be a violating of the laws. Things are going to begin to happen. These winds are going to come in and you're going to go, “Ok, that's not normal. That's a violation of a law.” So, that's one of the ways that you know that it's the end

times because things are going to be happening that shouldn't be happening at all. It's just so strangely freaky.

So, the passage is saying,

“... “Do not harm the earth...””

That which is perceived to be stable.

“... the sea or the trees...”

Those who perceive to be strong and look like they're productive in the things that they're doing.

“... until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.”

Actually, you come to the end of Book of Revelation, it says, “and they had His name on their foreheads.” What does that mean? Well, it means that they're boldly proclaiming Christ unapologetically. “Forehead” is that you're not ashamed. To show a bold face is to put your forehead out front, according to the Hebrew understanding, and that means “I'm not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” Now, the word that is used here to describe them is “bond-servants,” and the word specifically that He's using, “*doulos*,” is making reference

to someone that is totally devoted to another with great disregard to his own safety. A servant that He's talking about is somebody that's willing to disregard his own safety for the sake of someone else. You have that picture in 2 Timothy 2 that says no soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life. He doesn't concern himself with himself. He concerns himself with the mission that was given to him. So, the picture of the bond servant is that he's not looking out for his interest, the same picture that is given for Timothy in Philippians 2. Paul says, "I send Timothy to you, for everybody else was looking out for their own personal interest, but not Timothy, and that's why I'm sending him to you." So, the point is that these are proclaiming with great boldness. Someone's going to say to them, "You do know you're going to die if you proclaim Jesus?" and they go, "So be it." It's sort of the picture of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Now, what's amazing within the passage is that there's an actual number that's given, and the passage reads,

(Revelation 7:4) “And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel.”

Once again, there's no way you could interject figurative language here. Who's he talking about? The sons of Israel. Who are they? The Jews. So, if we can just be as clear as we can so we know who this is. What's interesting is, first of all, there's silence of the church. From this point on, the church is not in the mix, why is that true? Well, 1 Thessalonians 5 says that He hasn't destined the church for wrath, and we understand that there's this thing called rapture. (1 Thessalonians 4, 1 Corinthians 15) So, we understand that. Was there a picture of this many years before? Yeah, there was a picture of this. You go all the way back to Genesis and you have a guy by the name of Enoch, and it says he walked with God and then he was not, for he was taken up. That's a rapture. Then, right after him was a guy by the name of Noah, and Noah wasn't raptured. He went through the flood as a testimony. So, Noah is an interesting picture of God taking a people through tribulation, and Enoch is a picture of

God taking people from a tribulation. So, both are proclaiming the power of God. God has and will declare, "I am preserving the Jews because they are a legalistic people; or more specifically, a pragmatic people that want to do things for themselves." God goes, "Ok, we're going to do it for yourself. We're going to go through the tribulation and I'm going to keep you. As I walked you through the waters, as I took you through the floods, I'm going to take you through the tribulation and these 144,000 are going to be the ones that are proclaiming with great boldness, "We believe the Messiah is Jesus." That's an amazing statement, but that's what's going to happen, and as they proclaim it, you're going to watch them, and you're going to say, "Ok, they're dead." And God's going to go, "Nope. I'm going to take them through the whole tribulation." So, the picture is, "I'm going to put My seal on them. They're not going to be touched, and the whole 7 years of tribulation, they're going to be proclaiming Me unapologetically."

If you turn with me to Revelation 14,

(Revelation 14:1) “Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.”

Well, that's the seal.

(Revelation 14:2) “And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.”

(Revelation 14:3) And they sang a new song before the throne...”

Obviously, they're untouched because it comes at the heels of Chapter 13, where the beast is in control of the earth, and here they are, singing on top of a mountain. I mean, it's like, “Shoot the missiles here.” And they're fine. Why are they fine? Because they're with the Lamb. So, it's a very interesting thing that's happening in the passage.

Before we leave the text, what I want you to see is He begins to number the tribes. So, 144,000 turns out to be 12,000 from every tribe. So, you have 12 tribes, 12,000,

144,000. That's where they get the number. Now, just to define this for you, “12” in the Hebrew mindset, and obviously we're talking in the Hebrew mindset as we not only have the 12 tribes, but later on we'll have the 12 Jewish apostles who would then bring in the gospel to even the Gentiles, but the 12 make reference to establishing a perfect government.

It was interesting a number of years back, I remember reading one of my psych books and actually once again this particular book and this particular class was not necessarily Christian, but I was reading and they were talking about proxemics and they were talking about group gatherings and they said the perfect group for fellowship is 12. Now, they came up with it. I can't in my wildest imagination actually think they were reading the Bible, but God has ordained.

We have this preamble in our Constitution. It goes something like this, as it begins, “We the people, in order to form a more perfect...” That's what 12 means; the forming of a more perfect union. It's an interesting point. So, 12, God is forming a more perfect union. More

specifically, He's forming a perfect government. Now, we know when the world tries to form a perfect government, it doesn't seem to work out. We've declared throughout the years we're going to make a utopia. Ok, but it never works out. I mean, you can build really fancy buildings with all kinds of technology and stuff, but people still don't like each other. So, it doesn't seem to work out well, but God is forming a perfect union, and when you're looking at “thousand” that is attached to that, “1,000” in Scripture always makes reference to immensity and fullness of quantity. So, He's bringing, if I could put it this way, to the world a more perfect union. It's a great picture. So, 12,000 from every tribe is what's given. Now, when you look at this, there's a particular order that He's given, and I'm going to say this really quick and you can write it down or not, but there are several things that are happening in this list.

First of all, it's a literal list; it's not figurative. How do we know that? Because He gives each tribe. The tribe of Judah, the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad. He given each tribe. He's letting us know these are real tribes.

These are real people. So, we know it's a literal, not a figurative list. We know that the list is sovereignly orchestrated. How do we know this? Because exactly 12,000. What are the odds of that happening? Exactly 12,000 of Judah, exactly 12,000 in Gad. How could that happen? That has to be sovereignly orchestrated. God says, "I lose not one." So, He's fully complete. He's not going to lose one. I could just imagine 11,999, and you go, "OK. We can't go in. It's not finished." So, you got to have that total 12,000. So, we can see the orchestration of God. We can see that it's perfectly ordered; we can see that it's perfectly complete.

So, as He goes down the list, I want you to take note of this, in verse 5,

(Revelation 7:5) "from the tribe of Judah..."

Judah is not first born. Judah should not be first on the list. But he's first on the list for a reason. First of all, he's the tribe in which the Messiah was promised, in spite of the fact that he wasn't first born. The second thing that you need to understand is that God is declaring a message through this. Now, the question is, why was Judah

chosen, and it wasn't Ruben, or it wasn't somebody else? None of the boys were stellar guys. All of them were pretty much a mess. So, talk about family problems. We won't get into that, but they were murderers, there was incest. There were all kinds of terrible, horrific things in in the household. None of these guys were good guys, but Judah came into, the fact, and then God had placed him in this situation in which he would either have to stand up for his little brother Benjamin or not, and when the time came, he said to Joseph, not knowing that it was Joseph, his brother, he says, "Look, if you're going to kill anybody, take me." And it's at that point that you begin to see God moving towards, "Ok. From you will come the lineage of Christ, because that's My heart. If anybody's going to die, it's going to be Me." So, it's going to start with Judah. Now, what's interesting is the names always mean something, right? So, the order of the names is telling a story. And just bear with me. We'll just go through the names and then we'll end that, but you need to see the orchestration of God in this. So, let's start off with Judah. Judah literally means to "praise Yahweh". So, the phrase is making reference to giving praise to God. If in fact you

come to God with any other agenda that He is not exalted, in other words, you say, "I'm going to come to You and what I'd like for You to do is make me happy." God goes, "Ok we need to start off at the beginning. Do you want to praise Me? Is this for Me? This is for My glory, or is this for your glory?" Remember the prayer, "Our father, which art in heaven"? How does the prayer start? "Our Father, who art in heaven, holy is Your name." That's where it always starts. If it doesn't start there, it's not going to end well. Man exalts himself; it's not going to end well. So, it starts off with Judah.

Now, I'm going to go through the list of the names, and once again, maybe you can get the CD, or maybe I can stream it to you. Judah starts off with "praise to Yahweh". Reuben is a great name, "Behold a son".

"Praise Yahweh; behold a son"

Gad- "bringing good fortune"

Asher- and "happiness"

Naphtali- "fighting for"

Manasseh- "you to forget your pain and your sorrow,"

Simeon- “understanding and regarding”

Levi- “your desire to want to join and become a part of the crown,”

Zebulun- “to give you an exalted habitation,”

11 would be Joseph- “added only to the family by Jehovah”

12, Benjamin- “through the son of the right hand”.

God has preserved a household to proclaim the message throughout the tribulation, and they will be unscathed during the time of the tribulation. Now, there's a fundamental principle here, and here's the principle. If you go with me to Hebrews 12, just two passages, it says the day is coming when the earth is going to shake.

(Hebrews 12:25) “See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven.”

(Hebrews 12:26) And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, “YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN.”

(Hebrews 12:27) This expression, “Yet once more,” denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

(Hebrews 12:28) Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken...

See, that’s the point, right?

And the same statement is made in Jude, as you come to the end of the chapter, “And who is able to make you stand? He is not only able to make you stand, but He will also keep you from stumbling and will make you stand.”

If you look at the end of 1 Corinthians 15. Mark well, verse 58.

(1 Corinthians 15:58) “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”

What is he asking Christians to do? Don't move. It's the one thing that the world needs to see in the church. God, for this time has placed us here. Our mission is the same as the 144,000 during the tribulation. No matter what happens, we don't move, and that displays to the world there is a ground that is true.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your lovingkindness and that You've called us into this wonderful work. We've chosen to be bondslaves of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we've chosen to represent You on this earth. Lord, we know that there's a lot of stirring and a lot of shaking, but we don't move. We don't change our doctrine. We don't change who we are. We don't think differently. As You have been, so You forever will be, and we are Your children. Father, create in us that work of stability and security. May we be a fortress, as our God is.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. If in fact you feel your world shaking and you're shaking with it, you need to come to the reality that maybe you're not anchored in

that which is true. This is the goodness of God. He's shaking the tree a little bit now, so that when the evil really comes, you will be left standing instead of in dismay. It's the grace of God. So, you talk to Him during this time, as we prepare not only for these days ahead, but we prepare for that wonderful day in which we will see Him face to face.