

The Revelation of Jesus Christ – Revelation Chapters 7 vs. 9-17 and Chapter 15: vs. 1-4

Bible Study Notes on The Tribulation Saints

Revelation Chapters 7 and 15

What are the Subjects of these Chapters?

Chapter 7

The Sealed Servants – Chosen on the Earth	verses 1-8
The Tribulation Saints – Standing before the Throne	verses 9-17

Chapter 15

The Seven Angels – With the Seven Last Plagues (Bowls)	verse 1
The Tribulation Saints – Singing the ‘Song of Moses’	verses 2-4
The Seven Angels – In the Temple of the Tabernacle	verses 5-8

What is the Nature of these Chapters?

Chapter 7 is not a Sequential chapter that tells the story of the events of the Tribulation

It is an Overview chapter which takes a step back from the narrative and review specific overall themes or features of the Tribulation

The Tribulation Saints in Chapter 7 are seen in heaven standing before the throne, at the opening of the 5th Seal, in *Chapter 6 vs. 9-11*, they were seen as souls under the altar

‘After these things’ (Ch. 7 v. 9) – Greek: ‘*meta tauta*’

In this case it is referring to what John saw next (after the sealed servants) but not necessarily following the sixth seal

Chapter 7 details certain of the events of the time of Tribulation from its beginning with the opening of the first seal through the seven seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments

It is a parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seal – possibly indicating the linked chronology of the seventh seal, the seventh trumpet and the seventh bowl (each has a parenthetical interlude between the sixth and seventh)

This parenthetical chapter seems to relate to events which happen throughout, and even after the 70th week

Chapter 15 is a Sequential chapter, picking up the narrative after the sounding of the seventh trumpet in *Chapter 11 vs. 15-19*; *Chapters 12 to 14* being Overview chapters

In Chapter 15 we see the Seven Angels with the seven last plagues, given bowls of wrath to pour out on the earth as a completion of God’s wrath (*verse 1*) – we see in this chapter the very last days of the Tribulation period of 7 years and see the Tribulation Saints again praising God, as in Chapter 7

Who Is Able To Stand? (*Revelation 6: 17*) – The passages about the Sealed Servants and Tribulation Saints give the answer to this question

- Two distinct groups will survive the divine fury:
 - Sealed Servants (*Revelation 7: 1-8*)
 - The Tribulation Saints (*Revelation 7: 9-17*)
- It is the Sealed and Saved Servants of God who will be able to withstand the great day of God's wrath

Ch 7 Vs 9-17 The Tribulation Saints – Standing Before the Throne

Ch 7 Vs 9-10 The Great Multitude

What does John see after the Sealed Servants?

- A Great Multitude
 - So great a number that no man could number them
- From every nation, kindred, people and tongue – they are gentiles
 - The fruit of the 144,000 sealed servants – they are gentiles saved through the evangelism of Jews
 - Following the rapture of the church there will have been many earth-dwellers asking 'What has happened?' and seeking answers
 - We have encountered these Tribulation Saints previously at the opening of the Fifth Seal (*Revelation 6: 9-11*) – then they were souls under the altar waiting for their glorified bodies
- Standing before the throne and before the Lamb
 - Clothed with white robes – symbolic of purity and righteousness
 - Some of those in the church in Sardis had 'not defiled their garments' (i.e. they walked in holiness) and were promised that they 'will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy' (*Revelation 3: 4*)
 - These are the white robes of Yeshua's holiness and righteousness
 - Garments of Salvation and Robes of Righteousness (*Isaiah 61: 9-11*)
 - As in Yeshua's Transfiguration (*Matthew 17: 2; Mark 9: 3; Luke 9: 29*)
 - Like the Angels (*Matthew 28: 3; Acts 1: 10*)
 - White Robes of the Bride of the Lamb (*Revelation 19: 8*)
 - With palms in their hands – reminiscent of the triumphal entry when palms were waved to proclaim Yeshua as the Messiah (*John 12: 12-13*)
 - It is a victory celebration
- Crying '*Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb*'
 - Our salvation is a free gift through grace and the Father's mercy
 - The Father and His Son, Yeshua, deserve all the credit for God sent His Son (*John 3: 16-17*) and through Yeshua's shed blood our salvation was accomplished – God's Grace and Our Faith (a gift of God)
- This same multitude will be seen later also in praise to God
 - In Revelation 15 – the Tribulation Saints
 - Singing the 'Song of Moses' (*Revelation 15: 2-4*)
 - In Revelation 19 – the Saints of All Ages
 - Praise for the judgement of Babylon (*Revelation 19: 1-3*)
 - Praise for the marriage supper of the Lamb (*Revelation 19: 6-7*)

Ch 7 Vs 11-12 Worship around the Throne

Who does John see around the Throne?

- Several different groups around the throne
 - All the angels – how many...is not known!
 - The elders (24 of them) – by this we can know the elders are not angels
 - The four living creatures
 - These last two, the elders and four living creatures were seen by John around the throne in *chapter 4* when he first saw the throne, set in heaven
- Worshipping God – falling on their faces before the throne
 - Prostrate – their posture is very humble, and expressive of the greatest reverence: they *‘fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God’*
 - Amen (Greek: *amēn*) – a solemn expression of certainty...sometimes translated ‘verily’ – not so much ‘so be it’, more ‘it is so’
 - They are affirming the truth of what the tribulation saints have sung
 - The holy angels and the living creatures have never sinned... and the elders (the redeemed church) are now sinless and spotless – hence their song is not one of redemption but of praise to God for His attributes
 - Sevenfold praise
 - Blessing (Greek: *eulogia*) – commendation, adoration
 - Glory (Greek: *doxa*) – apparent glory, dignity, worship
 - Wisdom (Greek: *sophia*) – eminently wise
 - Thanksgiving (Greek: *eucharistia*) – expressive gratitude
 - Honour (Greek: *timē*) – value, esteem
 - Power (Greek: *dynamis*) – miraculous force, ability
 - Might (Greek: *ischus*) – forcefulness, strength
 - ‘Be to our God forever and ever’ – literally ‘the ages of the ages’
 - Ages (Greek: *aiōn*)
 - They declare that for these His divine perfections God ought to be blessed, and praised, and glorified, to all eternity
 - This the Crescendo of a series of hymns of praise
 - *Revelation 4: 8* Holy, holy, holy
 - *Revelation 4: 11* You are worthy – glory, honour and power
 - *Revelation 5: 9* You are worthy to take the scroll
 - the Song of the Redeemed (24 elders)
 - *Revelation 5: 12* Worthy is the Lamb – power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory and blessing (7 attributes)
 - *Revelation 5: 13* Blessing, honour, glory and power – to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
 - *Revelation 7: 10* The Song of the Tribulation Saints

Ch 7 Vs 13-14 The Identity of the Great Multitude

Who are this Great Multitude?

- The Elders’ Questions
 - One of the elders ‘answered’ – implies replying to a question, probably from John which is not recorded

- A very Jewish trait... to answer a question with a question – as Yeshua’s response to His mother’s question (see *Luke 2: 48-50*)
 - The questions asked by one of the elders are not for his own information but for John's instruction
 - Notice who gives questions and answers in the Book of Revelation:
 - Whenever there is information or something to note or see about heaven...it is an elder (a redeemed saint) who speaks with John
 - Whenever there is information or something to note or see about earth...it is an angel who speaks with John
 - Questions
 - Who are these arrayed in white robes (the great multitude)?
 - Where did they come from?
 - The inclusion here of these questions, and the answers, indicates that the Lord wants us to understand this
- John’s Answer
 - ‘Sir, you know’ – faced with a deep mystery... this is the only answer John can give
 - Reminiscent of Ezekiel’s answer to God’s question in *Ezekiel 37: 3*
 - F B Meyer comments: *‘When we stand face to face with an inexplicable mystery, how comforting it is to be able to say in perfect faith, Thou knowest!’*
- The Multitude’s Identity is Revealed by the Elder
 - They ‘come out of the great tribulation’ (tribulation saints)
 - The words ‘Great Tribulation’ are a clear reference to that time which Yeshua described (*Matthew 24: 15-22*)
 - The Tribulation period in total lasts 7 years – the 70th week of the 70 weeks revealed to Daniel (*Daniel 9: 27*)
 - In the middle of that week – after 3½ years – there will be an ‘abomination which makes desolate’...the desecration of the holy of holies by the Coming World Leader
 - Yeshua, in his private briefing to His disciples on Olivet, called this last half of the 70th week a time of ‘great tribulation’, commencing when Israel sees the ‘abomination of desolation’
 - Hence in this parenthesis chapter we may be getting a glimpse into heaven at the end of the tribulation, or even a view of the millennial kingdom
 - These saints have been subject to great persecution and death for their loyalty to the Lord and their refusal to worship the image of the beast or to take ‘the mark of the beast’ (*Revelation 13: 15-17*)
 - This verse is one that leads some scholars and teachers, incorrectly, to see a mid-tribulation rapture – but the redeemed church (the 24 elders) are in heaven prior to the opening of the seven sealed scroll at the start of the 70th week
 - They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb
 - Washed in the blood – Seven Blessings!
 - *Revelation 1: 5* from our sins
 - *Revelation 5: 9* redeemed
 - *Isaiah 1: 18* sins cleansed from scarlet (red as crimson) to white as snow
 - *Romans 3:24-25* propitiation by blood (expiation – expunging, atoning – reparation)

- *Romans 5: 9* justified and saved from wrath
- *Ephesians 5: 26* washed with water (Spirit) by the word
- *Titus 3: 5* regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit
- Saving Grace is in view here (*Titus 2: 11-14*)
- The ‘blood of the Lamb’ – Yeshua’s atoning sacrifice
- They are a distinct group – similar to, but different from, the raptured church (represented by the 24 elders)
 - The Raptured Church has been ‘caught up’ before the tribulation
 - The Tribulation Saints have had to endure the hardship of the tribulation

Ch 7 Vs 15-17 The Reward of the Tribulation Saints

What are the Rewards given to these Tribulation Saints?

- Therefore...because they have endured, persevered and been faithful – Seven Blessings!
 - Perfect Nearness Before the throne of God
 - Perfect Service Day and night in His temple
 - Perfect Fellowship He dwells among them
 - Perfect Satisfaction They neither hunger nor thirst (physically, emotionally, spiritually)
 - Perfect Protection The sun does not strike them nor any heat
(c.f. *2 Peter 3: 10; Revelation 16: 9*)
 - Perfect Guidance The Lamb will be their shepherd and lead them to fountains of the water of life – see *Psalms 23*
 - Perfect Joy God will wipe away every tear
 - Trials of the tribulation and a difficult life of service will be forgotten
 - Chuck Missler says tears (in heaven) may indicate regret for lost opportunities – although the tears wiped away probably here refers to the tears these saints had on earth

Ch 15 Vs 1-4 The Tribulation Saints – Singing the ‘Song of Moses’

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We see the Seven Angels with the seven last plagues, given bowls of wrath to pour out on the earth as a completion of God’s wrath (*verse 1*)

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Ch 15 V 1 The Seven Angels with Seven Bowls

What sign does John see in Heaven and What does it Signify?

- A sign (see *Revelation 1: 1*)
 - Great (Greek: *megas*) – in quantity (big) and intensity (loud and mighty)
 - Marvellous (Greek: *thaumastos*) – remarkable and to be wondered at

- Seven Angels – God’s messengers and executors of His will
 - Having the Seven ‘Last’ Plagues – plagues contained in bowls (verse 7), hence known commonly as the ‘Bowl Judgements’
 - Following on from the trumpet judgements (in *Revelation Chapters 8, 9 & 11*)
 - The first four Plagues (Bowls) – the Judgements of the ‘Thirds’ (Vegetation, Seas, Rivers and Springs, Celestial Heavens)
 - The fifth Plague (Bowl) – the Locusts from the Bottomless Pit
 - The sixth Plague (Bowl) – the Unclean Spirits from the Euphrates
 - At seventh Plague (Bowl) – the Earth is Utterly Shaken
 - ‘Last’ – the final and uttermost judgements and wrath of God – *Daniel 9: 24*
 - To finish the transgression
 - To make an end of sins
- In them the Wrath of God (judgement of rebellion and sin) is filled up (complete)
 - When these ‘last’ plagues are released - the wrath of God against sin and rebellion will be completed (see *Romans 1: 18-21*)
 - We are in the last days of the great tribulation here

Ch 15 V 2 The Sea of Glass and the Company of Saints

What does John see next?

- Sea of Glass – ‘something like’ – John is using a simile here to describe what he sees
 - This Sea of Glass is one we have encountered before (*Revelation 4: 6*) – it is before the throne of God – like a pavement
 - In *Revelation 4: 6* it is described as ‘like crystal’ – shining and reflective
 - In *Revelation 15: 2* it is mingled with fire
 - ‘Fire’ – a symbol of judgement and refining, and also a symbol of the Holy Spirit
 - The Sea is modelled in the Old Testament by the Laver
 - In the Tabernacle – by the Bronze Laver in which the priests washed (*Exodus 30: 17-22, 38: 8, 40: 7*)
 - In Solomon’s Temple – there were 10 Bronze Lavers, each 40 baths (approx. 230 gallons) and one Enormous Laver, described as ‘the Sea’ of 2,000 baths (approx. 11,500 gallons) – see *1 Kings 7: 23-26, 38-39*
 - Washing is symbolic of cleansing from sin (*Ephesians 5: 26-27*)
 - A necessary preparation for sacrifice, worship and entering the Holy of Holies
- A Company of Saints are Standing on this Sea
 - Standing on the Washing and Cleansing of the Word and Spirit
 - This washing and cleansing is solid enough to stand on before the throne
 - The same is true for us – raptured redeemed saints
 - This company of saints are overcomers – those who have victory
 - Over the beast (over the Coming World Leader [the anti-Christ])
 - Over his image (over false worship)
 - Over his mark (no compromise)
 - Over number of his name (loyalty to Christ)

- These attributes indicate that they are Tribulation Saints – they were no doubt martyred for their faith (*Revelation 13: 15-17*)
- They have ‘harps of God’ (note not harps of gold) – symbolic of hearts tuned and ready for worship – like Miriam and the women of the children of Israel after their escape from Egypt (*Exodus 15: 20-21*)

Ch 15 Vs 3-4 The Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb

What are these Tribulation Saints Doing?

- They are Singing – after Trial and Tribulation, and after Victory...now before the throne of God they are Singing
- The Song of Moses – sung also in the Old Testament
 - The song sung by Moses and the children of Israel after the crossing of the Red Sea (*Exodus 15*), celebrating deliverance from slavery in Egypt
 - The song words spoken by Moses to all the assembly of Israel after the appointment of Joshua as Moses successor (*Deuteronomy 31: 30 – 32: 43*)
 - An Allusion to Israel’s Exodus from Egypt
 - The Red Sea, that stood back, as it were congealed, while the Israelites went through and the pillar of fire reflecting light upon the waters – they would seem to have fire mingled with them; and this to show that the fire of God’s wrath against Pharaoh and his horses should dissolve the waters, and destroy their enemies
 - There seems to be an allusion to the Israelites escape from Egypt, by their singing the song of Moses, in which:
 - Firstly, they extol the greatness of God’s works, and the justice and truth of his ways, both in delivering his people and destroying their enemies- and they rejoiced in hope, and the near prospect they had of this, though it was not yet accomplished
 - Secondly they call upon all nations to render unto God the fear, glory, and worship, due to such a discovery of his truth and justice
 - Mirrored in the song of the Tribulation Saints singing “Who shall not fear thee?” (*Revelation 15: 4*)
- The Song of the Lamb – sung also elsewhere in Revelation
 - The song sung by the 24 elders (the redeemed saints) in *Revelation 5: 9-10*, celebrating their redemption through the blood of the Lamb
 - The song sung around the throne by the angels, the elders and the four living creatures in *Revelation 5: 11-12*, celebrating the worthiness of the Lamb
 - The song sung by every creature in heaven and earth in *Revelation 5: 13*, praising both the Father and the Lamb
- Songs of Redemption
 - The Song of the Moses celebrates the deliverance of Israel from slavery and release to worship and serve God
 - The Song of the Lamb celebrates the final deliverance from Satan and all foes of spiritual life
 - The Songs mark the two bounds of Redemption history, and between them lies the whole history of God’s ransomed people
- The song of the Tribulation Saints praises the Lord God Almighty and the King of the saints (Yeshua) – Eight Praises (new beginnings of heavenly praise):

- For His Works – great and marvellous
- For His Ways – just and true
- For His Kingship – king of the saints
- For His Awesome Nature – ‘who shall not fear Him’
- For His Name – to be glorified
- For His Holiness – none other is holy
- For His Authority – all nations shall come and worship
- For his Judgements – now manifest in the earth
- The song does not praise the martyrs, though they are victorious; the real victory and achievement are Yeshua’s
 - Like the Songs of Moses – the tribulation saints praise the Lord for His deeds and His wrath consuming His enemies - for His righteous judgements
 - Like the Songs of the Lamb – the tribulation saints praise Yeshua as King and exalt His name
- God’s Judgements and Deeds show Him to be a God of Holiness – causing all nations to fear, glorify and praise Him
 - The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (*Proverbs 9: 10*) – today there is little fear (reverence, holy awe) of the Lord, even in the Church
 - All nations shall come and worship Him (*Zechariah 14: 16-19*)
 - God’s holy and perfect character inevitably demands that He judge sin and unrighteousness (see *Psalms 19: 9; Nahum 1: 3 and 6*)
 - After God’s righteous judgment is complete, He will set up Christ’s millennial kingdom on earth, and every nation will come and worship Him (see *Psalms 66: 4; Isaiah 66: 23; Philippians 2: 9-11*)
- Timing - this is happening at the end of the tribulation period
 - These tribulation saints are from all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues (*Revelation 7: 9*)
 - In their origins they are just like the raptured redeemed saints (*Revelation 5: 9*)
 - The Marriage of the Lamb to His bride is, at this point, yet to happen – it will be after the fall of Babylon (*Revelation 19: 1-8*) and thus the raptured redeemed saints and the tribulation saints will both be part of the bride of Yeshua
 - Babylon is the ungodly world system of false worship and all abominations (*Revelation 17: 5*) which God will bring to an end at the completion of His tribulation judgements

