

The Revelation

Lesson 7

The Story of the Revelation

The Continuation – Part 2

Once upon a time and long, long ago ...

After Jesus finished telling John what to write in the letters to the seven special Churches, John saw a door that Jesus put in the sky that opened into heaven. Jesus invited John to come to heaven to see all the rest of the events that would take place before and after His Second Coming to earth to be the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Immediately, John was transformed in his mind to the most majestic and fantastic place he could ever visit – the throne room of God in heaven. The first thing John saw was God on His throne. He was crystal clear like a jasper stone and His colors were different shades of reds, browns and yellows, like a sardis stone. Around and behind Him, John saw a huge circle, like a rainbow, that was bluish-green in color, like an emerald.

As John's eyes drew back from the throne, he noticed twenty-four old men sitting on their own thrones in a circle around God. They were dressed in white robes and each was wearing a golden crown.

But then, John saw lights flashing like lightning coming from behind the throne and the unbelievable sounds of thunder booming in the distance.

He looked and saw seven burning lamps that were right in front of God. They told him they were the seven Spirits of God.

The floor in the throne room looked like a beautiful crystal sea of glass that sparkled and glimmered like frost on the ground.

Between the throne of God and the twenty-four old men were four strange living creatures with the heads of a man, lion, bull and flying eagle. They had six wings and eyes on every part of their bodies. John heard them saying over and over and over again, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD God, the Almighty, Who was and Who is and Who is to come."

When the four creatures spoke their chorus, the old men fell to their knees, placed their crowns on the frosty sea of glass and John heard them say, "Worthy are You, our LORD and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed and were created!"

Then John saw one of the most important things in heaven, a rolled up paper with names on the inside and out and secured with seven seals. A search was made in all of heaven and all of earth to find someone who was worthy to open the seals, but no one could be found. John cried.

One of the old men told John to stop crying and he told him to look at the Lion before the throne. When John looked, he did not see a Lion, he saw a Lamb, the Lamb of God. He was worthy to open the seals because He had given His life on the Cross to become the Savior. He took the book from God and all of heaven erupted in joy! The four creatures and twenty-four elders said, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation ...” And then, all the “thousands of thousands” of angels around the throne joined in the joyous moment and said, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

When the Lamb broke the first seal, one of the four creatures called John to come and look down on earth. He saw a white horse with a rider coming out with a bow in his hand. Then, someone gave him a crown. The crown gave him the authority to try to rule the world. But he did not have any arrows for his bow. He could not make people follow him by war, so he needed to get them to make him their leader by changing the way they thought to the way he thought. And so the white horse went out into the world conquering, which means he was successful in his plan with some people – they accepted him. He also went out in the world to conquer, which means he was not always successful. Not everyone followed his way of thinking – they rejected him. But he was successful enough to lead a lot of people to think that his way was the way to save the world and make it a peaceful place.

When John saw the Lamb break the second seal, he saw another horse coming, a red horse. And he saw someone give its rider a great sword so he could kill many people. His intent is to take everything and everyone that belonged to the white horse. War broke out against those who followed the white horse rider. It was bloody.

As the war continued, John saw the Lamb break the third seal and a rider on a black horse appeared carrying a set of scales. Food that was needed every day for everyone in every family became very expensive, both wheat and barley bread. You could hardly find them, and when you did, they were so expensive that they were almost impossible to buy, but the oils and the wines were always available at the regular price. This black horse brought with him a terrible famine, the consequence of a terrible war.

When the famine was so bad that people were weak and starving, the Lamb broke the fourth seal and a green horse appeared whose name was Death. He had power to rule over twenty-five percent of the world and kill them with weapons, starvation, diseases and wild animals. Everyone killed went to Hades when he died. How bad could it get?

The Lord drew John’s attention back to heaven. John saw him break the fifth seal. All of a sudden John saw many, many souls wearing white robes and standing under the altar of God’s throne. They were finally safe. John asked about them and he was told they were the

soul of all those who had died because they would not give up their faith in Jesus. He heard the souls say, “How long will such deaths continue on earth?” Then he heard, “The deaths will continue until everyone who is going to be killed for their faith in Jesus while living on earth has died.

Then, the Lamb broke the sixth seal, ... *And there is more to come!*

Revelation - Chapters 4 – 6:11

6. Seal Six (6:12-7:2a)

a) The Darkness Covers the Earth (6:12)

Rev 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;

When the Lamb broke the sixth seal, a whole host of trouble occurred. John said he saw a “**great earthquake ... the sun become black ... the whole moon became like blood.**” Earthquakes, especially big ones, stir up so much dust that the sun seems to cease to shine and the moon seems to have a reddish color. Let us not make any more out of this than the plain face value of the words in this verse – a great earthquake will occur on earth when this sixth seal is broken. If that earthquake occurred today, in man’s records it would have to be greater than the May 22, 1960 earthquake in Valdivia, Chile that was measured with a 9.6 magnitude.

b) The Stars Fall to the Earth (6:13)

Rev 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.

With the earthquake, John also saw stars falling to earth. Through a simile he compared their fall to fruit dropping to the ground when a strong wind blew over the tree. Thud! The word for *fell* is *nekus* in the Greek language. It means the *stars fell* like a *dead body* – motionless. Thud!

The falling of stars from the sky has absolutely nothing to do with the earthquake. The violent shaking of the earth does not shake the stars in the sky. What do these stars represent? Not to get too far ahead, there is a necessity here to discover who these fallen stars are. In chapter 9, we will discover that one of these fallen stars is a heavenly creature who has the key to the pit of the abyss (9:1). Therefore, these stars are a form of heavenly beings which we can rightly call angels and they have business to do on earth.

c) The Sky and Land Moves on the Earth (6:14)

Rev 6:14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

As with every earthquake, even today, the earth and the topography surrounding the quake will change. But this quake was the largest ever felt on earth. The gust of its force caused the clouds to part and roll away in opposite directions. The fracture of the quake moved islands out of their place and caused mountains to sink low.

d) The Fear on the Earth (6:15)

Rev 6:15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains;

Then John tells us he saw a great human reaction to the breaking of this sixth seal. The godless became afraid, great and small, commander and slave, rich and poor. It caused even the kings of the earth to run and hide in their bomb shelters and hewn security caves. The quake was so great, coupled with the movement of the mountains and islands that it caused the powerful and the lowly to consider death rather than life at that moment.

e) The Cry on the Earth (6:16)

Rev 6:16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;

Make no mistake; evil people know Who the LORD is! Especially these evil men; they knew Who the LORD is because they had made it their mission in life to hide Him from their people. They knew the truth but they rejected the truth and they refused to share the truth with the uninformed. Even Satan believes in God, but that does not mean he wants Him to be God! All these people who hid did so because they knew God, but did not like God. They hid because they knew their own deeds. They hid because they knew their deeds were in opposition to the desires of God.

f) The Wrath on the Earth (6:17)

Rev 6:17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Then John heard that "**the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?**" Surely not! Too much of the story still remains before the "**great day**" can occur! What is happening in the story? Why is this being said? There is still more to occur before the breaking of the seventh seal! What is going on? Let us call it this. *It is prophecy within the prophecy!* "**The great day ... of wrath has come**" because the LORD has spoken it into being as a fact. It will occur at the exact time it has been designed to occur. Nothing can stop it. Make nothing more out of this than that. The march to that "**great day**" has begun.

g) The Winds on the Earth (7:1)

Rev 7:1 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.

But all the preparation for the culmination of the "**great day**" and the judgment of the LORD on the evil ones has not been completed yet. The REVELATION is about the Second Coming of the LORD but it is also about changing the minds of all the people of the Nation of Israel to admit they had missed Him as their long awaited Messiah and they still must finally put their trust in Him. For the key to that door, the winds of the earth need to stop blowing. The LORD wanted John to see His power over nature and even over the lives of the

Israelites. The four angels who had controlled the four winds in the four corners of the earth since creation were commanded to stop the natural cycle of the blowing of the winds – to stop them completely. By the command of the LORD, these four angels who still had a great tempest in their arsenal were commanded to stand down. They were restrained by the Almighty. The winds of the earth became deathly still.

h) The Angel and the Seal on the Earth (7:2a)

Rev 7:2a And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God;

John saw an angel coming from the east with a seal. It was the seal of God; therefore, most likely, it was the same symbol seen on the seven seals of the Book of Life that the Lamb was breaking open.

i) The Restriction on the Earth (7:2b-3)

(1) The Cry to the Four Angels (7:2b)

Rev 7:2b and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,

This angel coming from the east had the seal, but he also had a message directed at the **“four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea.”** What was that message?

(2) The Warning to the Four Angels (7:3)

Rev 7:3 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."

The message was a warning. The earth, the sea, the trees cannot be harmed until the voluntary followers of God have been sealed on their foreheads. (For a full definition of **“bond-servant,”** please see notes on Revelation 1:1b in this series of lessons.) No storms, no gales, no squalls, no tempests, no cyclones, no tornados, no whirlwinds, no twisters! No disasters!

j) The Sealing of Israelites on the Earth (7:4-8)

Rev 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: ⁵ from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand *were* sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, ⁶ from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, ⁷ from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, ⁸ from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand *were* sealed.

Here we see the second purpose of the REVELATION in crystal clear language. These twelve tribes were Jews. They were not Gentiles. No Gentiles were sealed for the LORD’s purpose - ever! These twelve tribes were comprised of men of the Nation of Israel. One

hundred and forty-four thousand Jews in all, twelve thousand from each of these 12 tribes sealed and protected through the time of Tribulation and the Great Tribulation. Here, the LORD lays His claim on His own family to bring it to a belief in Him as the Messiah.

With that said, we must investigate the list of the twelve. All of the names listed here were sons of Jacob except “**Manasseh**” who was a grandson, the son of Joseph.

“**Manasseh**” had taken the place of the *tribe of Dan*. Why was *Dan* not included? In the history of the Old Testament, the sin of the tribe of Dan in idolatry was exceedingly grievous as it built temples that contained golden calves modified to represent *Yahweh/Jehovah* (the LORD) as noted in 1st Kings 12:29. To those golden calves, the tribe of Dan worshipped in one ceremony both Baal and Yahweh. This newly developed Baal cult influenced the entire Northern Kingdom of Israel during the reign of King Jehu. Despite the destruction of the Baal priests in the Northern Kingdom, Jehu refused to remove these golden idols and altars (2 Kings 10:32). The tribal area of Dan was taken into exile by Pul-Tiglath-pileser III, the king of Assyria in 743 BC, twenty-two years before the full exile of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC (2 Kings 15:29). The whole nation of the Danites was deported to Assyria, Babylon and Media by in Sargon II (king of Assyria) in 722 BC and he exported people from Babylon and Aram and placed them in Dan’s tribal area. The reason for Dan’s ejection is found in 2 Kings 17:7-20; it was because of the worship of gods other than *Yahweh* which made their land the center of ungodly worship in the Nation of Israel. Jacob had prophesied this tragedy at the end of his life when he said to his son Dan, “**Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a horned snake in the path, that bites the horse's heels, so that his rider falls backward,**” (Genesis 49:17). To further carry out Dan’s legacy, after the return of Israel from exile, the tribe of Dan did not return to its land. Rather, the land continued to be a hotbed of idolatrous worship especially during the Greek, Roman and Byzantine Empires as the people worshipped the Greco-Roman and Egyptian gods of Osiris, Bes, and Aphrodite.

We might note that the tribe of Ephraim is not listed; however, originally, it took the place of Joseph; therefore, the descendants are included because Joseph is listed.

D. The Souls in Heaven (7:9-12)

1. Great Multitude Arrive Before the Lamb (7:9)

Rev 7:9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches *were* in their hands;

As John looked back to heaven, a great multitude had suddenly appeared. Who was this great multitude? Where did it come from? Why had John not seen them before? Because they were “**before the throne and before the Lamb,**” they belonged to the LORD. They were most definitely the redeemed from the earth “**clothed in white robes,**” with “**palm branches *were* in their hands.**” More than that, they were not from one location on earth, they were from every nation of the world and spoke every language imaginable. To top that, the multitude was so vast that John could not comprehend the fact that anyone could ever count them. They were holding “**palm branches.**” Such were used at the triumphal entry of the LORD into Jerusalem on Sunday before His crucifixion. Their chant was *Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the LORD*. We need not be reminded that those who praised the LORD on Sunday, cursed Him on Friday and believed in Him the next Sunday only to

become part of the Church on the Day of Pentecost. Why? Because of the grace of salvation gifted to man by God and delivered by the Lamb.

2. Great Multitude Cry Unto the Lamb (7:10)

Rev 7:10 and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

This throng of people had a chant too! "**Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.**" If you are looking for the arrival of the Church as a whole in heaven, this is it. This multitude has made it to the throne of God at the invitation of the Lamb. John does not tell us where they came from yet, but he soon will. It is obvious here that they were members of the Church. How else did they get into God's heaven? Because the saints of the Old Testament were led from the *place of peaceful rest in Abraham's bosom* at the time of the resurrection of the LORD from the grave, this multitude can contain only the saved of the Church age – no one else is welcome in heaven in the LORD's plan. Paul actually describes the transition of this multitude when He is expressing God's will for the Church members. He says the following.

1Th 4:13-18 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Paul's words were built on what Daniel had said in his book about the people of God.

Da 12:1-3 "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

a) The Worship (7:11)

Rev 7:11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and *around* the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

With John's discovery of this "**great multitude**" heaven erupted. The angels, elders and creatures began to do what they were created to do – worship.

b) The Words (7:12)

Rev 7:12 saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *be* to our God forever and ever. Amen."

John and the “**great multitude**” heard the chorus in unison. They began with an “**Amen**” and they ended with an “**Amen.**” What joy filled heaven when this multitude arrived in the rehearsal of this REVELATION. What a glorious day it will be when it actually occurs!

3. The Elders’ Conversation with John (7:13-17)

a) The Question about the Souls (7:13)

Rev 7:13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?"

An elder stopped John and asked him if he knew the origin of the “**great multitude**.” What an interesting question! Who were they and where did they come from? We want to know the same answer.

b) The Answer about the Souls (7:14)

Rev 7:14 I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

John did not know how to answer the elder. He did not know who the people were. And so the elder told him, “**These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**” We are still in the extended summary of the sixth seal that sketches out and sheds light on the major events that lead to the day of wrath previously mentioned at the Second Coming of the LORD. In this sixth seal we have seen the darkness come with the great earthquake that affected the normal view of the sun and moon. We have seen stars fall from heaven, but we do not know who they are yet. During the earthquake the islands and the mountains moved greatly and as that was happening, all the high and lowly people of the earth took shelter and prayed for death. Then, in order, the 144,000 Jews were sealed to keep them from being harmed by the time of tribulation. Therefore, the tribulation has not occurred in the story as yet. And then John turned to see the appearance of this “**great multitude**” of souls that had just arrived in heaven that no one can number. And then, an elder told John that this **great multitude**” had “**come out of the great tribulation**” which had not occurred yet. There seems to be a problem here!

In English, it would seem that this “**great multitude**” was, in fact, participants in the “**great tribulation.**” In reality, the intent of the passage is that they were spared *from* the *Tribulation*.

Once again, if you are looking for the arrival of the Church as a whole in heaven snatched away from this earth by the LORD, here it is. This multitude had made it to the throne of God at the invitation of the Lamb thus being saved *from those tribulation those great* or as our English translation says, “**come out of the great tribulation**” or away from it, not to be harmed by it.

How did this “**great multitude**” make it into heaven? The same way all Christians do, by being washed in the blood, in the soul-cleansing blood of the Lamb. As the song writer says,

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing pow'r? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

When the Bridegroom cometh will your robes be white? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Will your soul be ready for the mansions bright, and be washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Are you washed in the blood, In the soul-cleansing blood of the Lamb?
Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

c) The Reason for the Souls (7:15a)

Rev 7:15a "For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple;

The “**great multitude**” is with the LORD. It is complete. It consists of the people who have belonged to the LORD from the opening of the Church on the day of Pentecost until the LORD snatched them away from this war-torn earth filled with *wars and rumors of wars*. Once we are there, we will do what we feebly attempted to do each week in our worship of the LORD. But, then, in heaven, it will not be feeble, it will be glorious as we join all of heaven’s creatures in service to God and our Savior, the Lamb of God.

d) The Protection for the Souls (7:15b – 17)

Rev 7:15b and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them.¹⁶ "They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat;¹⁷ for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

Like the mother hen who protects her chicks from the elements by spreading her wings over them as they gather next to her, so, too, will be our relationship to the LORD. There, we will be in the dwelling place of the LORD, His Tabernacle, His chamber, never to hunger, thirst or cry again and the Lamb will be our shepherd and we will be His sheep.

4. Seal Seven – Silence (8:1)

Rev 8:1 When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

Then, the Lamb broke the seventh seal and John heard nothing for about 30 minutes. It was just enough time for him to write into the pages of this last book of the Bible all that he had seen up to this point. He does not know what will come next. He does not know that it is time for the *tribulation of Israel*, also called in Scripture *the time of Jacob's trouble* to begin. The LORD's Church is protected and now it is time to engage Israel and bring her into the relationship she had long since missed. At this point, there are no human Christian witnesses left on earth for them to deny. The Word of God is still in print, but, the LORD has a much better plan to get Israel's attention. He has two special witnesses who will soon be on their way. But more than that, the Tribulation on the earth will begin with a blast of the first trumpet. The Church, the “**great multitude**” is in heaven; it is time to bring Israel back to the LORD.