

Recap from the Past Two Weeks

The scroll with the seven seals is the contract deed/title of the earth that contains the fullness of God's redemptive plan for this earth (MacArthur, Osborne, Hamilton). "In short, if that scroll is not opened the Bible's promises don't come true. Hope is lost" (Hamilton). The context of opening these seals is the praise of God's people for God's redemptive plan is moving towards its conclusion.

During the opening of the first four seals, the Antichrist will secure his power, paving the way for the Great Tribulation of the second half of week 70, which includes the increased martyrdom described by the opening of the fifth seal and concludes with the Great Day of the Lord begun at the opening of the sixth seal. This day will be a day of great terror, foolishness, and hopelessness for many, leading to their desperate question: *for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?*

The break of the narrative in Chapter 7 functions as an answer to this question.

By his Spirit, God sovereignly seals those who demonstrate saving faith in Jesus Christ. (vv. 7:1-14)

²¹ *And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ²² and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.* (2 Corinthians 1:21-22 ESV)

¹³ *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.* (Ephesians 1:13-14 ESV; see also Ephesians 4:30)

To seal: "to mark with a seal as a means of identification, mark, seal... so that the mark denoting ownership also carries with it the protection of the owner (BDAG entry for *sphragizo*)."

The seal of the Living God stands in direct contrast to the mark of the beast. You will have one or the other.

Who are the 144,000?

¹³ *And behold, the LORD stood above it and said [to Jacob], "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. ¹⁴ Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."* (Genesis 28:13-15 ESV)

² *"Take a census of all the congregation of the people of Israel, by clans, by fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male, head by head. ³ From twenty years old and upward, all in Israel who are able to go to war, you and Aaron shall list them, company by company.* (Numbers 1:2-3 ESV)

There is diversity of opinion regarding the identity of these 144,000. Here are two faithful views:

Literal Understanding of 144,000	Symbolic Understanding of 144,000
These 144,000 are a special army of Jewish men who function as missionaries during the Great Tribulation and are used by God to bring about the full restoration of ethnic Israel as well as the Gentiles. Receiving the seal of the Living God is not limited to the 144,000, see also Rev. 9:4, cf. Eph. 1:13-14, 4:30.	The 144,000 (12 x (10x10x10) x 12) symbolically speak to the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in that they represent the full restoration of ethnic Israel, which includes all the families of the earth, who together in their white robes make up the Lion of Judah's Messianic army and will be the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem (12,000 stadia x 12,000 stadia x 12,000 stadia).

Key Point of Agreement: Both have the full restoration of ethnic Israel and the Gentile nations primarily in view and demonstrate God's faithfulness to his promises and his people.

Implications of Revelation 7:1-14

1. **God is faithful to his promises.** *Where are you struggling to trust God today?*
2. **Your salvation is secure in Christ because of the Spirit.**
3. **Genuine believers persevere in faith because of the Spirit.**
4. **In Christ, everyone is set apart by the Spirit for holy ministry.**
 - a. We are all ministers. *What is your ministry?*
 - b. We are all one in Christ.

²⁶ *for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.* ²⁷ *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* ²⁸ *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* ²⁹ *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*
(Galatians 3:26-29 ESV)

5. **Christ's army overcomes and will all celebrate the victory of their King.**

Who are these?

The elder's answer of those coming out of the great tribulation again points to the fact that the Tribulation—what the church has experienced since Pentecost and will reach its point of intensity in this final period—is necessary for the fullness of God's redemptive plan to be brought to completion. His answer functions in a similar manner to what's written in Revelation 20:4 where the focal group stands as representatives of the larger group.

...through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22b ESV)

Key Doctrine of the Faith: Penal Substitutionary Atonement

Webster Definition of Atonement: the reparation for an offense or injury; the reconciliation of God and humankind through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

"The penal substitutionary view of the atonement holds that the most fundamental event of the atonement is that Jesus Christ took the full punishment that we deserved for our sins as a substitute in our place, and that all other benefits or results of the atonement find their anchor in this truth. All people are in need of a substitute since all are guilty of sinning against the holy God. All sin deserves punishment because all sin is personal rebellion against God himself. While animal sacrifices took on the guilt of God's people in the OT, these sacrifices could never fully atone for the sins of man. For that, Jesus Christ came and died in the place of his people (substitution), taking upon himself the full punishment that they deserved (penal)." – Thomas Schreiner

Jesus is the best part of Heaven. It's not even close. (vv. 7:15-17)

- We will forever be in his presence.
- We will forever be in his shelter.
- We will forever share in his joyful satisfaction.

His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' (Matthew 25:21 ESV)

The opening of the seventh seal concludes God's redemptive plan and this section, picturing the awe-filled anticipation that will precede the bodily return of Christ. (v. 8:1)

Are you anticipating the return of Christ?