

SEALED BY GOD
Lesson 9
Revelation 7 & 14



WELCOME

Think of something or someone really important to you that you want to protect or keep safe. What have you done to ensure that protection or safety?

INTRODUCTION

The judgments, the dragon and the beasts that Revelation has unveiled so far are intense and sobering. Revelation 6 ended with the question “for the great day of [God’s] wrath has come, and who is able to survive?” Chapters 7 and 14 are combined in this lesson because they give the answer: Those sealed by God will survive because they are protected from His wrath.

Believers will ultimately overcome the suffering brought about by the dragon and the beasts by staying faithful to Christ through it all; eternal victory is theirs in Jesus. In contrast, those who follow the dragon and the beasts and refuse to follow Christ will face God’s wrath and judgment.

Tips for meaningful engagement with the Word:

- This lesson covers Revelation 7 before looking at Revelation 14. Chapter 7 is an interlude¹ between the 6th and 7th seal judgments, yet its message is very similar to the message found in chapter 14. Both chapters reveal what will happen to those who remain faithful to Christ.

¹ In a play or a concert, an interlude is a transitional moment for audiences to catch their breath between the acts—an opportunity to recalibrate and refocus on the bigger picture. (Green)

- Chapter 14 follows the vision of the dragon and the beasts described in chapters 12–13.
- Each of these chapters will be looked at separately with questions in between. The verse numbers have been removed from the Scripture passages and footnotes have been inserted. These footnotes are intended to help clarify the passage and provide better understanding.



WORD

As you come to the Word, pause and ask God to make it come alive for you. Ask Him to make it understandable and transformational.

Revelation 7:1–17

Then I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds so they did not blow on the earth or the sea, or even on any tree.² And I saw another angel coming up from the east, carrying the seal of the living God. And he shouted to those four angels, who had been given power to harm land and sea, “Wait! Don’t harm the land or the sea or the trees until we have placed the seal of God on the foreheads of his servants.”³ And I heard how many were marked with the seal of God—144,000⁴

² “In [Revelation] angels are sometimes put in charge of nature (**Revelation 14:18; 16:5**). ... God often uses wind as an instrument of judgment (**Exodus 10:13, 19; Isaiah 40:7, 24; Jeremiah 23:19; Ezekiel 5:12**).” (Duvall, 120) In this passage the winds are being held in check because God’s people must be sealed and protected before [the winds] are allowed to blow. (Duvall, 120)

³ “A seal on a scroll or document identified and protected its contents. God places his own seal on his followers, identifying them as his own and guaranteeing his protection over their souls.” (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2181) “[Those sealed] would not face God’s wrath, even though they would face the wrath of those who hate God.” (Barton, 83) God’s seal on believers is Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 1:13**). The original hearers of Revelation would have recognized the parallels with God’s mark on His people’s foreheads in **Ezekiel 9:4–7**. (Barton, 83) This seal was counterfeited by Satan in **Revelation 13:16–18** (the seal known as “the mark of the beast”). “These two marks would separate the people into two distinct categories—those owned by God and those owned by Satan.” (Barton, 83)

⁴ While some believe this number is an exact number representing Jews who are saved, most likely this is a symbolic number representing all of God’s faithful followers (Barton, 85). “The number 144,000 is 12 x 12 x 1,000 symbolizing completeness—all God’s followers will be brought safely to him; not one will be overlooked or forgotten.” (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2181)

*were sealed from all the tribes of Israel:*⁵

<i>from Judah</i>	<i>12,000</i>
<i>from Reuben</i>	<i>12,000</i>
<i>from Gad</i>	<i>12,000</i>
<i>from Asher</i>	<i>12,000</i>
<i>from Naphtali</i>	<i>12,000</i>
<i>from Manasseh</i>	<i>12,000</i>
<i>from Simeon</i>	<i>12,000</i>
<i>from Levi</i>	<i>12,000</i>
<i>from Issachar</i>	<i>12,000</i>
<i>from Zebulun</i>	<i>12,000</i>
<i>from Joseph</i>	<i>12,000</i>
<i>from Benjamin</i>	<i>12,000</i>

After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb.⁶ They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands.⁷ And they were shouting with a great roar,

“Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!”

And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living beings. And they fell before the throne with their faces to the ground and worshiped God. They sang, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom

⁵The way the list is presented in this passage, as compared to other lists of the 12 tribes of Israel, shows its significance as a symbolic list representing all of God’s people. The differences are:

- “1) Judah is mentioned first [instead of Rueben] because Judah is both the tribe of David and of Jesus the Messiah (**Genesis 49:8–12; Matthew 1:1**).
- 2) Levi had no tribal [land] allotment [**Numbers 1–2; 34**] because of the Levites work for God in the Temple (**Deuteronomy 18:1**), but here the tribe is given a place as a reward for faithfulness.
- 3) [The tribe of] Dan is not mentioned [in this list] because it was known for rebellion and idolatry, traits unacceptable for God’s followers (**Genesis 49:17**).
- 4) The two tribes representing Joseph (usually called Ephraim and Manasseh, after Joseph’s sons) are here called Joseph and Manasseh because of Ephraim’s rebellion.” (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2181)

⁶ Many scholars believe that this vast crowd, too great to count, is the same as the 144,000—the entire Church, triumphant in heaven. This is further evidence that the number 144,000 symbolically represents all people sealed by God. (Duvall, 126) See also **Romans 10:9–13; 11:13–18**.

⁷ These white robes represent purity and make a connection to the martyrs in **Revelation 6:11**. (Barton, 86-87) The palm branches are reminiscent of Jesus’ triumphal entry and show the worshippers’ joy and celebration (**John 12:12–13**). (Barton, 87)

*and thanksgiving and honor
and power and strength belong to our God
forever and ever! Amen.”*

*Then one of the twenty-four elders asked me, “Who are these
who are clothed in white? Where did they come from?”
And I said to him, “Sir, you are the one who knows.”*

*Then he said to me, “These are the ones who died in the great
tribulation.⁸ They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb
and made them white.*

*“That is why they stand in front of God’s throne
and serve him day and night in his Temple.*

*And he who sits on the throne
will give them shelter.*

*They will never again be hungry or thirsty;
they will never be scorched by the heat of the sun.*

*For the Lamb on the throne
will be their Shepherd.*

*He will lead them to springs of life-giving water.⁹
And God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”¹⁰*

⁸ “The ‘great tribulation’ has been explained in several ways. Some believe it refers to the suffering of believers through the ages; others believe that there is a specific time of intense tribulation yet to come.” (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2182) The Greek word for tribulation is *thlipsis*, meaning pressure. It references oppression, anguish, affliction, distress and persecution. The exact form of this Greek word used in **7:14** (*thlipseōs*) is used eight other times in the New Testament. None of those eight references refer to end times. (**Matthew 13:21; Mark 4:17; John 16:21; Acts 11:19; 2 Corinthians 1:8, 2:4, 4:17, 8:2**) (<https://biblehub.com/greek/2347.htm>) While it is possible that there will be an especially intense time of tribulation at the end, “**Revelation 7:9–17** reiterates the theme that all believers should expect to suffer as a normal part of following Jesus ... [It is notable, however, that] this passage emphasizes victory more than suffering.” (Duvall, 128)

⁹ These glorious future realities are the fulfillment of prophecies all throughout Scripture. Jesus is the Shepherd, guiding and caring for His flock. He is eternally present with His people and will satisfy every need. (**Psalms 23:1; 36:8–9; Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 37:27; Zechariah 2:10; Matthew 5:6; John 4:14**). (Barton, 89)

¹⁰ “In **verses 1–8** we see the believers receiving a seal to protect them ... In **verses 9–17** we see the believers finally with God in heaven. ... Their tribulations and sorrows are over: no more tears for sin, for all sins are forgiven; no more tears for suffering, for all suffering is over; no more tears for death, for all believers have been resurrected to die no more.” (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2182)

3. There are several different explanations for the “great tribulation.” What typically comes to mind when you think of the word “tribulation”? Has footnote 8 affected your perspective on tribulation? If so, how?

4. **Revelation 7:15–17** gives a glimpse of eternity with Jesus for those who overcome by remaining faithful to Him until the end. What excites you about this picture?

a. What questions do you have about eternity?

b. How does this glimpse of eternity give you courage to persevere through any kind of suffering, whether today or in the future?

Revelation 14:1–20¹¹

Then I saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion,¹² and with him were 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.¹³ And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of mighty ocean waves or the rolling of loud thunder. It was like the sound of many harpists playing together.

This great choir sang a wonderful new song in front of the throne of God and before the four living beings and the twenty-four elders. No one could learn this song except the 144,000¹⁴ who had been redeemed from the earth. They have kept themselves as pure as virgins,¹⁵ following the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been purchased from among the people on the earth as a special offering to God and to the Lamb. They have told no lies; they are without blame.¹⁶

And I saw another angel¹⁷ flying through the sky, carrying

¹¹ Revelation 14 takes place right after the description of the dragon (Revelation 12) and the two beasts (Revelation 13). After reading about the widespread evil, devastation and suffering they will bring on the earth, chapter 14 reminds all believers marked with the seal (Revelation 7) about what awaits them if they remain faithful and endure—they will be celebrating because of their victory in Christ. (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2190)

¹² “The Lamb is Jesus the Messiah, and Mount Zion is probably the heavenly Jerusalem.” (Barton, 163) This scene is reminiscent of the Lord’s declaration in **Psalm 2:6**: “*I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.*” (NIV) It also contrasts with the dragon standing on the edge of the sea (**Revelation 12:18**). (Barton, 163)

¹³ This is the same group of people from Revelation 7. It is all those who are saved and have the seal of God, Holy Spirit, which secures their eternal inheritance. (Barton, 163-164)

¹⁴ “...The new song mentioned here could only be sung by the people who had been redeemed from the earth—purchased by the blood of the Lamb (see also **7:14; 12:11; 19:13**). The angels, creatures, and elders could not sing it, for they had not experienced redemption from sin so they could not learn the song. The redeemed sang a glorious song of praise to the Lamb, who was standing with them, and the hosts of heaven were the audience.” (Barton, 165)

¹⁵ “Throughout the Old Testament, sexual intimacy is used as an analogy of our relationship with God.” (Johnson, 272) (**Jeremiah 2:2; Ezekiel 23; Hosea 2:14–21**) “The point is that the Lamb’s people have not succumbed to the deceitful enchantment of the world but have stayed in intimacy with Jesus the Bridegroom. ... The redeemed know that they belong to one husband ... They do not want to be caught in bed with the world. They want to be faithful lovers of the lover of our souls.” (Johnson, 273)

¹⁶ “The blameless person is the person who has confessed his or her sin, putting it under the blood of the Lamb, so that no one can blame him or her anymore.” (Johnson, 274)

¹⁷ This is the first of three angels proclaiming the coming judgment of God. (Duvall, 207) The three angels declare the contrast between the eternal destiny of those who follow the Lamb and those who do not. (Barton, 166)

the eternal Good News to proclaim to the people who belong to this world—to every nation, tribe, language, and people. “Fear God,” he shouted. “Give glory to him. For the time has come when he will sit as judge. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all the springs of water.”¹⁸

Then another angel followed him through the sky, shouting, “Babylon is fallen—that great city is fallen—because she made all the nations of the world drink the wine of her passionate immorality.”¹⁹

Then a third angel followed them, shouting, “Anyone who worships the beast and his statue or who accepts his mark on the forehead or on the hand must drink the wine of God’s anger.²⁰ It has been poured full strength into God’s cup of wrath. And they will be tormented with fire and burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb. The smoke of their torment will rise forever and ever, and they will have no relief day or night, for they have worshiped the beast and his statue and have accepted the mark of his name.”²¹

This means that God’s holy people must endure persecution patiently, obeying his commands and maintaining their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this down: Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, they are blessed indeed, for they will rest from their hard work; for their good

¹⁸ “Some commentators see this as an announcement of judgment rather than an appeal. The people of the world have had their chance to proclaim their allegiance to God, and now God’s great judgment is about to begin. However, this may be a final worldwide appeal to all people to recognize the one true God. No one would have the excuse of never hearing God’s truth.” (Barton, 167)

¹⁹ Babylon was the empire that destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC and since that time was considered to be a symbol of the enemies of God and His people or “any great center of pagan power.” (Duvall, 208) Babylon is representative of those who would seduce humanity away from their true lover, Jesus Christ, leading them into immorality and idolatry. (**Revelation 17:1–5; 18:2–9; Jeremiah 51:7**). (Duvall, 208)

²⁰ This angel reveals the ultimate eternal consequence for those who choose to follow the beast. “The Old Testament often pictures God’s anger as being in a cup, ready to be poured out (see **Job 21:20; Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 25:15–38**). ... God’s wrath will be in its strongest form. The full extent of his anger ... would soon be poured out on those who had adamantly refused to turn from sin and receive his salvation.” (Barton, 170)

²¹ Sin ultimately results in punishment, torment and the horror of separation from God. “Because human beings are created in God’s image with an inborn thirst for fellowship with him, separation from God will be the ultimate torment and misery.” (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2191) (**Luke 13:24–28; 2 Thessalonians 1:8–9; Luke 12:8–9**).

deeds follow them!”²²

Then I saw a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was someone like the Son of Man. He had a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.²³

Then another angel came from the Temple and shouted to the one sitting on the cloud, “Swing the sickle, for the time of harvest has come; the crop on earth is ripe.” So the one sitting on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the whole earth was harvested.²⁴

After that, another angel came from the Temple in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. Then another angel, who had power to destroy with fire, came from the altar. He shouted to the angel with the sharp sickle, “Swing your sickle now to gather the clusters of grapes from the vines of the earth, for they are ripe for judgment.” So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and loaded the grapes into the great winepress of God’s wrath. The grapes were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress in a stream about 180 miles long and as high as a horse’s bridle.²⁵

²² This is the second of seven beatitudes (blessings) in Revelation. “To ‘die in the Lord’ doesn’t necessitate martyrdom, but depicts dying as a faithful follower of Christ (**1 Thessalonians 4:13–16**) and applies to any Christ follower, from the first century on ... In contrast to the wicked who are consigned to an eternity of restless torment (**Revelation 14:11**), God’s people will experience eternal ‘rest’ from their labor of staying faithful in the midst of hardship. (**2 Thessalonians 1:7; Hebrews 4:1–11; Revelation 7:14–17; 21:5–7**)” (Duvall, 210)

²³ The Son of Man is Jesus. Here He is sitting on a cloud, which is a demonstration of His power and glory. His golden crown represents His kingship. The sickle He holds symbolizes an instrument of judgment. (Duvall, 214)

²⁴ “This is an image of judgment: Christ is separating the faithful from the unfaithful like a farmer harvesting his crops.” (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2191)

²⁵ “A winepress was a large vat or trough where grapes were collected and then crushed. The juice flowed out of a duct that led into a large vat. The winepress is often used in the Bible as a symbol of God’s wrath and judgment against sin (**Isaiah 63:3–6; Lamentations 1:15; Joel 3:12–13**).” (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2192) The 180 miles of blood symbolizes the total and complete destruction that will come for the wicked. (Barton, 177)

5. Everyone follows someone. The question is not, “Will I follow someone?” it’s, “Who will I follow?”²⁶ The two options are clearly laid out in Revelation: the Dragon (Satan) or the Lamb (Jesus). From what you have learned in these chapters (7 & 14), what are some characteristics of those who follow the Lamb?
6. The 144,000 sang a wonderful song to God. No one else could sing it, including the heavenly creatures. Why would this be?
7. **Revelation 14:9–20** reveals God’s fury and wrath. God’s wrath is not the same anger and rage that humans feel. “God’s wrath is a mindful, objective, rational response [to sin and evil] ... Wrath is a necessary reaction to evil by a loving and holy God ... God is fiercely and forcefully opposed to the things that destroy his precious people.”²⁷
How does this quote help shape your view of sin and evil? Of God?

Does this quote help you process the wrath described in Revelation? If so, how?

²⁶ Johnson, 267

²⁷ Smith, 120-121



WORSHIP

Take a moment to enter into a time of worship—both on your own and with your community—to show praise, adoration and love for God.

God protects and keeps safe those who are His—those He has sealed.

Here are the eternal promises given to the sealed in **Revelation 7:15–17**:

- You will have shelter.
- You will never be hungry or thirsty again.
- You will not be scorched by the heat of the sun.
- Jesus is your Shepherd.
- He will lead you to springs of life-giving water.
- God will wipe every tear from your eyes.

How could you creatively express your response to these promises? Take time to do it.

(Examples: write a prayer of praise, draw a picture, journal, take a walk in God’s creation, share a story of God’s protection with a friend, listen to a worship song, make something with your hands, etc.)



WITNESS

Believers are called to reflect Christ in the world. This section will help you engage with how to be a witness—reflecting Christ—this week.

Those who are not sealed by God will experience His ultimate judgment. Spend some time interceding for those who don't yet know Christ. Write your own prayer of intercession or use the one below:

Jesus, in **2 Peter 3:9** it says you are patient in bringing your judgment because you don't want anyone to be destroyed but want everyone to repent and be in relationship with you. Lord, please continue to have patience and use me as an instrument for showing your grace and mercy to those who don't yet know you, especially:

May your seal on my life shine through me and draw others to you.
Amen.

