

Revelation – The 144,000 in Revelation 7 & 14

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MAIN VERSES

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Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family. So welcome home.

Long before that intro was ever made, long before the Revelation series was even being put together, I swore I would never use epic music and all this brrrr into the world stuff for the intro. And yet, so over the top, but I love it.

So welcome everybody, Shabbat Shalom, and welcome to Founded in Truth Fellowship. If this is your first time here today or first time watching online, guys, we are a community that loves the Sabbath, we love the Bible, but most importantly, we seek to orbit the person of Jesus that we call Yeshua. So welcome to Founded in Truth.

Today, we're going to be camping out in Revelation chapter 7 as our kind of main hub, but we're going to be referencing a lot of different scriptures that John seems to be riffing off of, kind of goes back to and has hyperlinks back to.

Welcome to Founded in Truth

I know we had a little bit of a break with Hanukkah and then the foster care awareness event, which was awesome. And now we're continuing the series through the book of Revelation. And today, we are going to explore John's apocalyptic vision of the 144,000. Who were the people that were sealed by God? On there. Yeah, we've done our homework and forgot about it, right?

So for those of you who may not have been here watching online, very first day, I told everyone mandatory homework. They have to go home, read through Revelation all in one sitting, preferably out loud. Because that would have been how the very first readers, the congregations of the seven churches, the real churches in Asia Minor that John wrote to, that would have been their first experience. Someone coming into the fellowship and reading it out loud to them. There was no stopping like halfway through. Hey, what's that symbolize? No. Read it all the way through without stopping. And that was the first exposure. That was the intention when John was writing or, I believe, his expectation.

So yeah, we have the 144,000 that are sealed by God in their forehead. So they have a mark in their forehead or on their forehead. And of course, this is like the antithesis of the mark of the beast, which is also on the forehead. And it's amazing because, depending on the tradition that you grew up in, sometimes we're encouraged and sometimes we just want, we spend a lot of time and energy thinking that we're some kind of a watchman on the wall and we're on the lookout for the mark of the beast. We're going to talk about this in the next few weeks.

Growing up in the 90s, you had all this stuff coming out, new technology coming out, all of these teachers saying we're going to have computer chips implanted or barcodes or tracking—all this is the mark of the beast or cell phones, smartphones started coming out—hand, and then you can pay, Apple Pay, you can bleep, everything's the mark of the beast. And sometimes, guys, we spend so much energy trying to be watchmen for the mark of the beast and we miss having the mark of God. We miss it.

The Mark of God vs. the Mark of the Beast

As I said, really can't wait to get on that topic. And this series has been reviewing Revelation as a book of hope, not a book of fear, not of anxiety, not of the end of the world. No, it was a letter written to seven real churches that found themselves in tribulation and persecution in the first century. And it was meant to inspire them. It was meant to motivate them to grab hold of their faith and be bold witnesses, even unto death.

And witness here does not just mean telling people about Jesus. It wasn't the expectation if someone was a witness. No, Rome wasn't killing people because they were telling people about Jesus. Rome was persecuting believers because they were standing in the way of evil, the evil the empire was attempting to implement. They were agitating the darkness. They didn't move out of the way. They stood before it and subverted it.

And empire, the beast, does not like that. The beast thrives on exploiting weaker nations. The beast thrives on invading other nations using violence and war machines in order to enslave them or tax them or take their resources. The beast thrives on: how can we succeed, how can we make the rich richer at the expense of everyone else. And this was Rome. Rome had a saying, Pax Romana. They had it all over the coins. Remember that? The Peace of Rome. That was their military campaign. And they would go about spouting the Peace of Rome.

And what the Peace of Rome meant was we're going to keep peace in the empire. We're going to keep one nation together, this war machine that is ever expanding. And if anyone comes to disrupt the peace and the stability of this empire, we will show them peace. We will make peace by eliminating them from the equation. That's how Rome worked.

And here were these believers that did not worship Caesar. They had a different kurios. They had a different king, and they called him Yeshua.

Understanding Apocalyptic Literature

The word witness, whenever you see it in Revelation, it is the word martyr. At that time, it didn't necessarily mean someone that died. It just meant someone that boldly witnessed, stood as an ambassador of heaven while here on earth, showing forth the grace of God and the mercy of God and the love of God, not just talking about it. This agitates the way of the life of the beast.

And we've discussed Revelation was written in a writing style that is no longer really used and hasn't been used for a long time, but was very popular specifically before and after the first century. It's a writing style called apocalyptic poetry or apocalyptic literature. And the writing style is very symbolic, and it's meant to reinterpret events or stories in a way that reveals a different perspective.

So, in other words, the world outside looks like hell. It looks like it's on fire. And persecution is happening to these believers in the first century. But what is really going on? What is really being revealed? And the book of Revelation says, well, what's really being revealed is that this is all just a facade. And what's really happening is God is in control. God is still on his throne. Yeshua hasn't lost power to the kings of the earth or the beast or the dragon. Yeshua never stopped being on his throne. It's not like he was, okay, okay, my power lasts forever. My throne lasts forever. And then we get to a certain spot in history and it's like, oh, he's powerless. No. No. And this was meant to be an encouragement specifically for the believers in the first century, but also every single generation after that would continue facing the beast. And we

have a playlist on our YouTube channel for this series. So if you want to check out past messages to get caught up, you can do that. Also do your homework and discover the beauty and the depth of this letter that reveals hope. Like I said, let's dive in.

The 144,000 Sealed by God

The 144,000 that were sealed on their foreheads, this group of people is mentioned in two separate chapters in Revelation. The first one is [Revelation 7](#) and at the beginning of chapter 14 as well. And chapter 7 introduces us to this group of people as they're preparing to endure tribulations of the times. But they're also being sealed spiritually from God's wrath. And the seal is going to empower them to stand as soldiers and fight in the form of witness against the destructive forces and the way of the beast. They're about to go into battle with the dragon and the two beasts, as we see specifically in chapter 13. When all hell is breaking loose, they stand solid. Not wavering, not fearful, not panicky, not contributing to the chaos and the anxiety, but standing firm. This is the evidence of the seal that God has given them. And they're witnesses of a kingdom that will never be defeated. And they're about to go into battle against Babylon amidst the destructive forces. And in chapter 14, when we see them again, they are depicted as those who have conquered. They have now overcome Babylon.

So you guys ready to get started? Okay, let's jump right into chapter 7. It's so exciting.

Reading Revelation 7

After this, I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow in the earth or sea or against any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun with the seal of the living God. And I heard the number of that sealed. It was 144,000 sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel.

Verse 5. 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed. 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben, 12,000 from the tribe of Gad, 12,000 from the tribe of Asher, 12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali, 12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh, 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon, 12,000 from the tribe of Levi, 12,000 from the tribe of Issachar, 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun, 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph, which is an interesting spin. It's supposed to be Ephraim, right? And 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed. All right, you good? We're good? We're good? That's half the chapter right there.

Four Angels at the Four Corners

So what's going on? We have four angels standing at the four corners of the earth. This represents God's sovereignty, if you will, over the whole earth, the whole world in his hand. These are best identified, if we will, with kind of like the four horsemen, or at least the four winds that they're holding back with the four horsemen that were in [Revelation 6](#). Seems like a few weeks since we visited that chapter, right?

The seals, the breaking of the seals that the Lamb in the throne room can break. And all these destructive forces are coming out. This is the chapter right after that. And so these angels are holding back these four winds, if you will, from coming out and destroying the world. And what's the point? They're restraining them because first we need to seal these people. And so the symbolism here, at least with the four horsemen, we know is taken from [Zechariah 6](#), right? [Zechariah 6](#) is the prophecy of the four chariots and four horses that come out, and they're four different colors, just like the four horsemen. And seemingly they're going to go out through all the world, and they're going to bring forth God's wrath or destructive powers, judgment, if you will. And guess what Zechariah calls the four horsemen and the chariots in [Zechariah 6](#), 5? Well, let's bring them up. I think I have them. We have [Revelation 7](#), 7. And [Zechariah 6](#), 5. The four winds, just like in Revelation. They're holding them back, the angels in [Revelation 7](#). So like I said, we have these angels restraining these destructive forces.

Angels Holding Back the Destructive Forces

Recall chapter 6: the horsemen pour out tribulations on the earth as Yeshua opens the seals, revealing God's plan after the seals are broken and the scroll is opened. And that's already happened, at least in the story, right? I mean, that just happened last chapter. That's already happened. The sealing of the 144,000 in chapter 7 seems to kind of be like the prelude to chapter six. This is what's happening before the events of chapter six even happen. And it's showing us another perspective. It's revealing something else. These destructive forces are temporarily halted, allowing God's servants to be sanctified. And then an angel is being dispatched to go about and put a mark on the foreheads of the servants of God who are loyal to him.

Now guys, we know that John's vision is not filled with anything new. Have we discovered that yet? Nothing new. John is replaying incidents and narratives and stories from the Old Testament, but this time he's replaying them through the lens of Yeshua. And so where else in the Bible do we see an individual dispatched to go over to the righteous and mark their foreheads to represent them as the servants of God to keep them safe from his wrath? Ezekiel chapter 9, right?

In Ezekiel chapter 9, the inhabitants of Judah have fallen into idolatry. They are worshipping other gods, pagan worship inside the temple. But specifically mentioned in this chapter is that the land is filled with violence. Violence is what God hates. That's why he flooded the world, right? Violence. They were following the way of the beast, if you will. And God calls, after he's just sick of looking at this, he calls for six executioners to come from the city. It's weird that they came out. Six executioners just come on the scene. Poof. We don't know if they're angels or if they're people from the city, but six executioners of the city walk forward instantly. It kind of gives you a flashback of the whole golden calf incident when those on the Lord's side came forward and then the Levites stepped forward with swords in their hands.

The Seal of God's Judgment and Protection

All of the executioners, except for one, have a weapon of death. They're holding something to slaughter people. But the one in the middle is dressed in linen and he has ink. And here's what [Ezekiel 9, 4](#) says: "And the Lord said to him, pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all of the abominations that are committed here." And then guess what happens next? Pretty gruesome scene. The executioners slaughter everybody in the city.

Now, this was a vision that was symbolic of God's wrath being poured out through the Babylonians coming in, right? This was the warning. But God put a seal in the vision. God put a seal on the foreheads of all of those who stood against the ways of the beast and how he operated in Judah and Israel. The people of God, to be a light to nations, had become like the nations. That's what the whole book of Amos is about. It's the accusation: giving in to the promises of evil. And the ones who resisted evil, the ones who did not give in to acting like everyone else in the sense of worshipping these politics, they were sealed.

Here's the sign that they put on their foreheads. So Ezekiel says, it's the sign, right? The Hebrew word for sign. Put a sign on their foreheads. It really just says Tav, if you will. Tav. Many of you knew that. Tav is a Hebrew letter at the time. Looked kind of like an X with a long leg. Or some would say it looks like a cross that's kind of slanted a little bit. Angel went around putting crosses on everyone's foreheads. It's kind of neat. That's one of the places where some of the tradition comes from. Which is kind of neat, right? I think it's neat.

He seals and protects them from the wrath, spiritually, but in the vision, likely physically as well. We don't know for certain. So in Revelation, an angel is sent out to put a mark on the

foreheads of a specific group of people. And instantly, the audience is like, oh yeah, back in Ezekiel, same thing. The 144,000.

The Meaning of Numbers in Revelation

John then records a census of 12,000 people from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. And he is hammering this number 12. Numbers represent things throughout the Bible? No. Numbers represent things in Revelation? Yes, yes. Just like Josh taught, yes, yes, yes, yes. They sure do in Revelation. So what does 12 represent in the Bible? If I said 12, what would you say it represents in the Bible? The 12 tribes, God's covenant people, right? His kingdom, his people. 12, 12, 12. We know that 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes, 12 times 12 is what? 144 times 1,000.

Now, 1,000 is an interesting number throughout Scripture because it tends to represent a vast, nonspecific number in many areas of the Bible when it's used in the Old Testament. It's meant to give the impression of a lot, right? But not just like a lot in quantity, even though that's part of it, but also fullness. So it's not just a lot, but it's full. It's full. You got a lot of arrows in your quiver, but that is full. It's tightly packed. It means a large number. We see in Psalms chapter 50, verse 10: God has the cattle on a thousand hills, right? I think that's a lot of cattle, and I think that's a lot of hills. But it's underwhelming if this is all that God has, right? I mean, the thousand and first hill that has cattle on it, that's not his. No, he has dominion over it all. A thousand there is used as, I guess, a little bit of hyperbole. It's a lot, right?

What about in [Deuteronomy 7](#), when God keeps his covenant to a thousand generations who love him and keep his commandments? It's impressive. A thousand generations is a lot. A thousand and first generation, out of luck, right? That's the usage here. So this group of people could be an unimaginably large group of people of God standing there about to go into battle. It stands for the fullness and completion. The Jewish hopes for the eschatological restoration are fulfilled in the redeemed followers of the Lamb. This is what's coming together.

Israel Reunited Under One King

Spoiler alert, John is about to show what it looks like when the redeemed eschatological Israel that all the prophets spoke about would be reunited together under one king. He's about to share what that looks like. He's about to unveil or reveal that. You also see this number, the 12s and 12,000s in the New Jerusalem, which also represents the people of God, right? This is part

of the vision where John hears about the fullness of Israel being regathered together. All 12 tribes.

And why that was such a big deal is the 12 tribes had not been reunited for the past thousand years. Had a civil war, didn't like each other, put up a border, put up a big wall in between them. And for 850 of those years, the northern kingdom, the 10 out of the 12 tribes, were basically wiped off the face of the earth. The Assyrians came in, took them all out, sent them to all different nations, and they mingled into the nations and were never heard from since. That's the history.

Paul uses that scenario as a type of example in describing and painting the Gentiles coming into the fold of the faith of Israel in Romans chapter 9 when he quotes Hosea. He's quoting that. That's the lens he's looking through. Look, Israel is being reunited. Israel is being restored. But it doesn't look like what we thought it would. The reunification and restoration of Israel is also going to produce and fulfill the blessing of Abraham—all nations coming in, right? And so that's the layer and package that Paul uses for this, and it's not a different package here.

So here, those who are in covenant with Yeshua are counted as the fullness of the covenant people. And all of Israel will be sealed. 12, 12, 12 represents the 12 tribes. They will be sealed during this time of destruction described in [Revelation 6](#). How many disciples did Yeshua have? 12. 12. The 12 tribes were restored and reunited as they orbited him, through him, around him. It's that symbolism there.

One scholar, one Christian scholar, Richard Bauckham, great guy. I think his book—all the resources I use are on the YouTube channel in the description. Great, great author. He points out something interesting about the way that the tribes are listed at the beginning of chapter seven: 12,000 from this tribe, 12,000 from this tribe. It looks like a census, right? It looks just like the census that was taken twice in Numbers, but specifically in Numbers chapter one. You know, that chapter that you skip over? Whenever you start that Torah portion or read Numbers chapter 1, right? I ain't never got time for this. This is whatever. It looks just like that.

A War Census in Torah

It looks just like that. It names all the tribes and lists how many are from each tribe. And why was the census taken in Numbers chapter 1? Anybody remember? We need to count all the males 20 years old and older to form an army of God. Numbers chapter 1. It was a war census for all the males. Do we have a picture? I think we have a slide of it comparing them just to give

you the brief. Yeah, Numbers chapter 1, [Revelation 7](#). It's like a war census in Torah. I thought that was kind of neat.

So here we have it: 144,000 preparing for battle as they receive the seal.

The Seal and the Lamb

Now this seal is not for them to come out of tribulation. It's for them to go through it. They're going to go through the battle. This is the army of holy warriors prepared for battle. They follow the Davidic Messiah, the lion of the tribe of Judah. But plot twist: the lion ends up not being a lion at all. It ends up being a lamb. And the messianic army fights and conquers, not by spilling the blood of their enemies, but they fight by their faithful witness and by the poured out blood of the lamb.

So [Revelation 12:11](#) says, after they triumphed over the devil, they triumphed over him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony. And they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Yeah, 144,000—got somber real quick.

The seal on their heads protects them in a spiritual sense. Definitely not a physical sense, as we see. The seal testifies of who they belong to. They belong to God alone, in contrast to those who follow the beast and display its mark on their foreheads.

So if this is the case, which I wholeheartedly believe, imagine what it meant to the believers in Asia Minor who were reading this letter. They are the restored Israel. They knew that from the days of Yeshua. They knew that from the writings of Paul. They understood this, but here they're depicted as going into battle. They are the restored Israel who receives the promise that God's seal of ownership will protect them through the suffering they must face. God will never leave them. There are some really neat discussions about the census, if we still have it up.

The Missing Tribe and the Included Ones

If you guys read it in your homework, did you see anything that was a little odd? Come on, say it. Who's missing? Dan's missing, right? Right? What does that mean? Why is Dan missing? Well, an early church father wanted to explain it. And so he went to the most obvious conclusion of why Dan is missing. Well, the Antichrist must have come from Dan, so that's why he's not mentioned. Where did you get that from? That was one of the opinions in the early church. I mean, where did you pull that out? But there's lots of discussion about why Dan is missing. And it's also common for censuses for one tribe to be left out.

Joseph had to go and get a double blessing, so his sons replaced him in the 12 tribes of Israel. Ephraim and Asa—now there's 13. So one's usually left out. Usually it's Levi, right? Levi was not counted in the war census in [Numbers 1](#) and at the end of Numbers as well. They weren't counted in the census for the land inheritance. They weren't counted because they were God's inheritance, right? They didn't have land, and they certainly weren't going to war because they fought at the tabernacle spiritually, right? Keeping up the level of holiness there. Yeah, they were God's inheritance.

But Dan is missing, and I don't think there's enough evidence to say that the Antichrist must have come from him. I don't think that's it at all, but who knows.

But there's one more thing that's really particular. Two more, actually. Judah is leading the list. In all of the census and the lists of the tribes of Israel, specifically the war, Judah is not leading. Usually, the list is composed of how the tribes were set up around the tabernacle, right? So Judah is leading the way of this army of God. And I don't know, take it or leave it—could be the flow of the holy war motif where the tribe from which the lion comes is leading. I don't know.

But the most disturbing or head-turning anomaly of this list is the fact that Levi is included in this war census. He is. Numbers chapter 145 says, So all the Israelites, 20 years old or more, everyone who could serve in Israel's army were registered by their ancestral families. All those registered number 600,000. But the Levites were not registered with them by their ancestral tribe. They weren't—no, they're not gonna be included on that list.

But why is Levi included on this list? Why? He's not supposed to be on the list. It says in Torah, he's not supposed to be on the list. Levi needs to go back and carry poles and fabric around, take care of the tabernacle. That was their job. Go back and tend to the tabernacle. You're not in the army. Bring Dan back. Bring Dan back. Levi's not in the army.

But here, the seer John writes Levi on the list. And I find that so cool because here they will fight. Here they will be the holy warriors of God. Here they will be part of the army of Yahweh. They will enter in the furious battle against the beast.

God Calls the Unexpected

And I love that because God... Sometimes God calls people to be on the list that you don't expect to be on the list, right? Or maybe you don't want them on the list. No, they don't belong on the list. They shouldn't be there. They aren't one of us in this regard. They aren't allowed to be on the list with me. They aren't one of us. And guys, I'm here to tell you today that God will call, God will equip, and God will seal anyone he well pleases.

And the moment you look at another person that God is working on or God is working through and you get upset that they would even consider themselves in the army of God, you may want to reevaluate whether or not you're Dan. Like seriously. Because God's army knows who they're fighting and it's certainly not each other. God's army knows how to empower each other. God's army understands this battle is gonna be hard. And we need to welcome and embrace this band of brothers, whoever would join it.

Who in your life would you be upset about if they made the list that you thought they shouldn't? Oh, I know that person. Someone just popped in your head and you were like, nope, stop it, stop it. Someone just popped in your head. Who is that person in your life? Because Levi will be fighting. He will be there.

John Hears and Then Looks

And so John hears this, right? He hears the angel say the 144,000 into the census. John does not see the 144,000. He hears it. Remember chapter five—my favorite chapter. We have the scene of the throne room. And John is there and he hears while he's in the throne room, he begins to mourn because who's gonna open the scroll? They got the scroll of the conclusion of history. Who's gonna open it? No one, can't find anybody. Starts to mourn and then the angel says, hey, hey, listen, behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah.

And you can almost—as the reader, if you're there, you're in the movie—you can almost hear like the footsteps of this giant lion, claws tapping, sneaking up behind John. Like you can feel the goose bumps almost. Like the lion has triumphed. He has conquered. He has Nike'd, right? He has.

So John hears about the lion of Judah and then he turns and he looks. When he looks, he didn't see a lion. He saw a lamb that had its throat cut, standing in the center of the throne room with the mantle of God's conquering power upon it. There was no brutal, giant, vicious lion with blood all over his claws because he ripped his enemies apart. No, there was the symbol of the epitome of utter weakness, a lamb covered in its own blood, slain but standing.

And this is the one who has the power to open the seals and unravel the scroll. He hears and then he looks. That's part of what the word apocalypse means. Apocalypse means to reveal. That's all apocalypse means. No end of the world, none of that—to reveal something. And here John is revealing who the Lion of Judah truly is. And it's a lamb.

The Vision of the Multitude

Here with 144,000, John hears once again. And you guys want to know what he saw when he turned around? [Revelation 7](#), verse 9. And after this, I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

Oh man, did you catch that? Did you catch the weight of what just happened? He has a vision of the fullness of the restored Israel depicted by the symbolic number 144,000. And when he turns to look at the restored Israel in its fullness, it's not 144,000. It's so many people that he can't even count them. And guess what? They're from every nation, every tribe, every people, every language. This is Israel. This is the restored Israel and the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham.

And this part of the vision—not an army being equipped to go into battle. This is the army that emerges triumphantly from the battle, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes symbolizing sanctification and victory. And they hold palm branches and they trumpet the salvation of God and the Lamb. Or the Lamb? And if you're in your Bibles, you'll see a distinction there.

Before and After Visions

So not only is he looking at the same people group, he sees two different things, but it's also in two different timelines. It's like seeing a before and after picture. You ever seen those at a dentist's office where you have a before and after picture of your teeth? It's not quite like that, but you have a before and after picture of the people—the eschatological restored Israel. You have them preparing for battle as the 144,000, and then you have them standing in victory before the Lamb—victorious after the battle in heaven. But that's how they fight. That's potent, that's weighty, it's beautiful. I love that.

Both represent what God's people must embody then and must embody now. For John, the community, the church live as the foretaste of what is to come. The overlap, right? Remember we spoke about that? They simultaneously are the restored Israel, mustered for battle against the evil powers that oppose them. And they are the multinational community of the redeemed, engaging in perpetual worship of God and the Lamb.

In verse 13, an elder asks John, "Do you know who this multitude wearing white is?" This is a test. Do you know who they are? And verse 14 says this: "I answered, Sir, you know?" Oh, I

think I know. You know. I mean, you're the guy. You're the elder. And he said, "Right." So they went through it. This is before and after.

Written to the First Readers

Again, who was this written to? Okay, Matt's holding strong on his soapbox of his opinion. If you don't like it, that's fine. You can have another. There are so many opinions on Revelation. You're allowed to have them, most of them. Some of them are heresy, but regardless, it is what it is, right? It is what it is.

Who is it written to? It was written to seven real churches filled with real people. That's who the letter was written to. And John articulated the vision, this apocalyptic writing for something that would be impactful for them. Doesn't mean it wasn't written for you. It was written to them. I believe it was absolutely written for every generation to come because it's the same battle that we're fighting until Yeshua comes back.

I don't believe that some type of vision that only applies to the last generation and only a few years of the last generation was written to the seven churches when they were going through persecution because it's not relevant to them. It's not relevant to them. What are they going to do with that? What are they going to do with that where they're being persecuted? This is great. I guess we'll just store it and pass it on generation to generation. And the last generation, hopefully they'll figure out that's them. No, this was speaking about this generation, right? And I love that so much because they're in the battle and they know it and they're seeing and they're being reassured of what God has prepared them for and how it's going to end. I love that.

Priests in White Robes

So they're wearing white robes purified with blood. That flashes back to Torah, right? [Leviticus 8:30](#), when the priest's garments are sprinkled with blood to consecrate them for serving God in his temple. It's awesome. Everything. John just totally plagiarizes everything from the Old Testament. It's a joke, but through the lens of Yeshua and through the saints moving forward.

So they're depicted as priests, just like John says all believers are in [Revelation 1:5-6](#)—a kingdom and priests to serve God and Father. That's what [Revelation 1:5](#) says, and that's also what [Exodus 19:6](#) says. That's what the mandate given to Israel was in [Exodus 19](#). "You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." And here in [Revelation 1:5](#), John says: "From Jesus Christ, who is a faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth, to those who love him and freed us

from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve God and Father." All believers in Christ fulfill the promise to ancient Israel. That's the setup for this chapter.

But look at this. Here they are standing before the throne of God wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. Palm branches. Isn't there an event somewhere in the Old Testament where people are holding palm branches and waving around like lightsabers? It's a Feast of Tabernacles, right? We did this before. I love that. They're tabernacling with God in his shelter in this vision. And they are all crying, "Salvation belongs to our God," while he sits on the throne of the Lamb.

What other prophecy or vision is there where all the nations from the world go before God and celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles? [Zechariah 14](#). Now, speaking about God's wrath, right? God's wrath is going to be poured out, and all the nations that survive the destruction—that's what it says—will come up to Jerusalem every year and celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles where God is declared king. Okay?

Now, it says that if they don't come up, it'll be a plague on them because they won't get any rain. So in [Zechariah 14](#), all these nations coming up are kind of forced as a result of them being against Israel. But I just can't help but see some type of a connection here with John. Through the lens of Yeshua, how is that going to be fulfilled? Here it is.

The Mission of the 144,000

The 144,000 have a mission to endure the tribulations and the destructions coming. And I love, oh man, I almost jumped into the topic of the Great Tribulation, but we'll have to save that for another week because it gets exhaustive. But this innumerable multitude from all over were standing in the throne room.

And this is what it says in verse 13. As we've already read, the elder asked me, "Who are these in white robes?" And in verse 15, it says: "Who serves in the temple? God." John is about to hammer the fact that these people are the fulfillment of the eschatological. When I say eschatology, it's like the trajectory of what's going to happen, right? The blueprint, what is going to happen. It's not just end times, but what is happening now, trajectory, going into the end times. This is it.

Using Old Testament prophecies, this is what John is describing. You guys good? We awake? We're good? "Spread his tabernacle over them." That's [Ezekiel 37](#) language. That's [Ezekiel 37](#) language, right? [Ezekiel 37](#), verse 26. So if John truly is taking us back to [Ezekiel 37](#), why?

Well, it speaks about a time when a messianic king, the Davidic king, would come and he would have his nation and he would rule over them. And that's described at the end of the chapter here in these verses. But what else does [Ezekiel 37](#) talk about? Like our favorite chapter—the dry bones, valley of the dry bones. That's like the whole chapter.

Ezekiel's Dry Bones Fulfilled

Ezekiel is told to speak over this valley of dry bones. And when he does, the sinews start growing over them. You can almost hear it. No, just me. Vessels begin to form. Muscles grow on top of the bone. Flesh overtakes them and they stand up.

And it goes on to say that these bones are the two kingdoms of Israel—Israel divided, right? So these are the split Israel. The Israel that has failed in the mandate to be one people under one God and be the light of the world. They're here in bone, shattered, divided, not fulfilling that mandate. Joseph, or Ephraim, and Judah. And he says that there will be one king over them now. And they won't be divided anymore. And there will be one nation, one people of God again. The kingdom of Israel is going to be restored.

And John seems to be painting a picture of all of these people and nations and tongues and tribes and cultures. And this is them. This is the fulfillment of that promise to Abraham. But why were the dry bones in the valley? Doesn't that seem kind of weird? Why would a bunch of bones be piled up together, not buried? Like, what scenario would even cause something like that?

This was an army, an army that was defeated. It's the result of God's holy army being defeated due to them embracing the promises of evil. [Ezekiel 37:10](#). This is the setup. This is it. So this chapter, John seems to be using to paint who this great multitude is and that they were sealed as Israel and they fought, but this time they overcame.

Verse 16 of [Revelation 7](#) says this. This is like the final nail in the coffin in John's chapter here. John appeals to [Isaiah 49:10](#), a prophecy about Israel being regathered together, and that is their restored state to go out to be a light to all nations. And here's what it says. As we discussed a few weeks back, guys, this is not speaking of some future event where a few people are considered God's army and redeemed. Just a few people are redeemed. Just a few people are considered the servants. That's what they're called. They're called the servants. Even in chapters 1, 2, and 3, the churches now were called the servants, and they were called redeemed.

God's Army Today

These were purchased for a price, and they're going to face the world as ambassadors of Christ, just like Paul says we all will. I don't believe this is some future generation event. I think this is the setup for the first readers of this. I think this is the setup for the disciples. I think this is the setup to describe you. This is you. This is you standing in this world on behalf of the kingdom of God, fighting, redeemed, purchased for a price, as John says.

But you have a responsibility because there is darkness in the world. The beast does operate in the world. Evil still needs to be agitated by those who would not compromise, by those who would stand in the way and not allow it to manifest in a way that would be against the kingdom of God. The suffering, tribulation, the birth pangs—those took place in every generation because we are stuck in this place between the old world and the coming new creation.

We are stuck in the overlap of what has been and what is coming. What's Paul say? Paul says we're supposed to wear the lenses of what took place through Yeshua every time we look out in the world. When we go out in the world, we put on the lenses of new creation. When we see people, we see people that are struggling. We see people that are annoying. We see people that are bad. We're supposed to look at them through the lenses of new creation, through the lenses of the cross, through the lenses of what took place on Calvary. We don't look at them like the rest of the world. Oh, you are just a piece of junk, bad person, jerk, evil. What good does that do? No. Paul says, you know what? I look at people differently now. I look at Christ differently now. Why? Because we are ambassadors of the kingdom of heaven. We are supposed to be representatives of everything the kingdom of heaven is, will be in the new Jerusalem, but we're supposed to give a foretaste of that now by living it out.

Ambassadors of the Kingdom

That's exactly what [Hebrews 11.1](#) is. That's how the author of Hebrews describes and defines your faith as being the evidence of what is not yet seen. In [Romans 8](#), Paul tells us that we are more than conquerors through him who loves us. Conquerors, conquerors, those who overcome. That no matter how great a tribulation comes, no matter what destructive forces come, whether it be famine or danger of sword, nothing can separate us from the love of God. Why? Revelation, we're sealed. We're sealed, we are his.

Sealed by God's Promise

See, what was written to the churches that were already going through their tribulation? In [Revelation 2](#), he knows Smyrna was going through tribulation. Smyrna and Philadelphia were

the two lampstands, right? Those were the two lampstands that didn't compromise, the two churches that didn't compromise. He says, I know, Smyrna. I know you're going through tribulation right now. That's the Greek word he uses. He knows they are suffering right now. He knows they have been made to look poor in the world's standards, but they are truly rich right now, and they will receive the crown of victory. When they read this letter about the people of God being prepared to go into battle and face tribulation for God's kingdom, they were already doing it. They were already there. They would have seen this chapter as speaking about the battle that they already found themselves in, fighting every day, standing boldly in the face of all persecution, having their friends tell them to just give in, stop going against the empire. Join the beast. Just give in. And when they read this, it was a reminder that they had been sealed. They had been sealed. God is with them through the tribulation that they face as his witnesses. They are the two witnesses, right? They are the building of the new tabernacle, the new Jerusalem. And from the moment they start fighting to the moment of overcoming, what is produced is a magnificent fulfillment of everything Israel was meant to become and in gathering the whole world before the presence of God. I love that. You go in as 144,000, and when you come out, you're multiplied. Not only did you overcome and conquer—we read it—you blossomed, you multiplied.

The 144,000 Revealed

The next time we see this army, the 144,000, is at the beginning of chapter 14. So let's go ahead and read this section. Let me back up first. All hell's broken loose in the next few chapters. I think I mentioned it again in [Revelation 13](#). That is when the beast and the dragon and the two beasts just whip. They conquer the saints. They kill the saints, right? Right?

And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they remained virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among mankind and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths. They were blameless. Purchased. Who was purchased from the earth, from all mankind? Who was purchased? Who was paid for? Who did God pay for to redeem? God. And who are the firstfruits of God, as Paul says? No lie was found in their mouths. Here the holy army is standing before the Lamb on Mount Zion.

Understanding the Vision

And it's rather a stunning contrast from what took place in the chapter before this, [Revelation 13](#), where the unholy trinity conquers and unleashes their fury against God's people. And they demand worship of all the world. And here, verse 14 reassures the readers of the letter, showing them an advanced screening of the outcome of the battle against the forces of evil. Kind of reminds you of the high priest that had the signet on his head with the divine name on it. The high priest that was the only one allowed to enter into the most intimate place and experience God's glory, the holiest of holies. The Holiest of Holies—it was a perfect cube, wasn't it? Yeah, it was a perfect cube. The new Jerusalem is also a perfect cube. As believers, we will be a part of this city, if you will, where God's ultimate glory is felt and experienced. I love that. And remember, Daniel chapter 7 says that the beast or beasts are kingdoms of the earth. They are the empires of the earth. They are the kingdoms that naturally are opposed to the kingdom of heaven and how they operate, how they do things. It's what Israel became. It's why they were punished. And currently, when this was written, it was Rome. Rome, taking over the world in the name of peace and freedom and liberty. We will free you. We will give you all the resources you want. Just hand over your city and let us tax you and fight for us in our army of expansion.

Purity and Symbolism

Yeah. Now, here's the thing. The 144,000 were all men who did not have sex and were virgins. Sorry, ladies, you got to wait outside. I don't know. This verse has caused so much tension throughout church history. It is incredible. It is incredible. Lots of people get mad. It's only men. There's especially more progressive readings of it. This is not fair. Guys... It's kind of symbolic, hyperbole. It's exaggerated. It's hyperbole. It's all explosive, symbolic imagery. It's about purity, but it's also kind of riffing off—if you did your homework, you know about the harlot that rides the beast, right? And what's it say? The kings of the earth fornicate with her. The people who worship the beast are involved with fornication with this harlot, right? And here, these were the ones that remained pure and did not fornicate with Babylon. They did not give in to the way of empire, the beast or the harlot. And you may also get a glimpse of the rules of holy war in Torah, where the soldiers that fought in God's army had to abstain from sexual relations while fighting. So then they came home, they got to stay outside for a little bit, but it was kind of a holy status. Uriah refused to sleep with his wife, so on and so forth. So yeah, those are some of the themes that kind of go along with that. But then it just calls them virgins at the end—purity. They did not defile themselves at all with the ways of the beast.

Bearing the Lamb's Name

This is the image that John's audience sees about their future. Both men and women are part of the army of God, okay? Yeah, yeah. We're not getting into the whole verse now. These visions, guys, offer this deep, rich portrait of our mission as believers. These chapters bear witness to God's sweeping mission to redeem all people and bring the whole of creation to its intended goal. On top of that, the church's active role in mission, in fighting and enduring the battle and facing tribulation, knowing we have the seal of God—we do this in response to God's gracious life-giving purpose for this world. And the multi-ethnic multitude that will be thundering with praise, singing salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb—is and will be the reality and the trajectory of God's plan. Twice in chapter 14, we saw John call God's faithful the redeemed. It's the same language that's used in chapter 5, in which the slain lamb redeemed for God. It's all of those people, past, present, and future. People from every tribe and nation by his blood redeemed, making them a kingdom and priests. And in chapter 14, these redeemed stand in an intimate relationship with the lamb. They bear the lamb's name on their foreheads and they follow him wherever he goes. Isn't that cool? Follow the Lamb wherever they go. It kind of gives you this motivated sense—like yes, that's a good thing, right? Follow the Lamb. It is a good thing. It is a good thing.

Your Kingdom Come on Earth

Gosh, that is the prayer that we're actually commanded to pray from Yeshua, the Lord's Prayer. Our Father who is in heaven, your name be hallowed. May your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. This is our creed as believers. It's our mission. That's what we pray for every single day. And that prayer is not just for God to do something with someone else. When you pray that prayer, it's praying that you would be used to do these things. Sustain us, give us our daily bread. Okay, how am I gonna be equipped to show forth and be an ambassador of heaven and to bring forth God's will on earth? How am I gonna do this? How am I gonna represent God's name as his ambassador, bring holiness to set apart a name? How am I gonna do that? God, forgive me of my trespasses. Or debt, if you wanna bring in some Jubilee language, forgive me of my debt as I forgive others.

The Prayer of Warriors

Lead me not into temptation. Why are you saying that? Because you're going into battle. Why are you going into battle? Deliver me from evil. That's the prayer we pray every day as the soldiers in Christ, as Paul calls us. That is our mission. And we forget that sometimes. We say the prayer every single day. We teach it to our kids and it just kind of becomes a thing that we

learned in Sunday school, right? You're praying for God to put you in front of the beast to agitate it and to declare that the beast is not in charge. There's another king. There's another kingdom. That's the prayer. We are heralds for God's kingdom manifest on earth. But the world pushes back. The world will always push back.

Later in chapter 14, it speaks of the announcement of the fall of Babylon. But after this, it says this, [Revelation 14](#), 12: "This calls for patience, patient endurance on part of the people of God who keep his commandments and remain faithful to Jesus." A very similar phrase is used in chapter 13, during the battle, when the beast is conquering and killing the people of God. "This calls for patient endurance." Endurance here is defined as keeping the commandments and remaining faithful to Yeshua. That is how we endure. That is how you endure. How many of you guys need this today? This is how you endure. You keep the commandments and you remain faithful to Yeshua. So Yeshua said to his disciples about the coming destruction of Jerusalem: All this stuff's going to happen, but you endure to the end. Endure. Endure. Keep fighting. Keep focusing on the kingdom you are a citizen of from above, not of the kingdom below. You are a warrior of God. That's what Paul says in [2 Timothy 2](#). "Join with me in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus." We fight as God's army. We fight in God's army.

The Way of Nonviolence

It's one thing we get really uncomfortable with when we talk about fighting imagery, especially in Revelation. Because depending on your tradition that you grew up in, and specifically if you went to a church that seems to be Protestant in the South, right? You tend to foster a lot of violent imagery with fighting for God. It's kind of natural. Maybe not. This was my experience growing up. We're going to fight with Jesus in the end days. And in my mind, that actually meant with swords. We're going to come down and kill everybody. That's a follower of the beast. That was just kind of what was fostered. And that's the thing that is so comforting, at least for the very early church, that was committed to finding an alternative way to fight. They're not going to run away. We're not going to flight. Fight or flight? We're not going to flight. But Yeshua says this thing about loving our enemies. Why? Because we're wearing lenses today of what took place on the cross while we look at our enemies. They are in the same chains that we were and we were freed from. They were in the same chains. So we got to love them.

And the early church understood this as not taking a dagger and slamming it through their eye socket. Early believers were very intent on nonviolence. That's why we hear about Christians jumping into the gladiator arenas to stop the fighting because not only were they not gonna fight, but they wanted to stop seeing the beast win in the lives of these enslaved individuals,

willing to jump in there and die only to bring forth the ceasing of all gladiator games in Rome. We have stories of Roman soldiers fighting who came to faith in Christ and abandoned their outposts. Rome's going to come after you. Yeah, but I can't be a part of that beast anymore. It's incredible, incredible. And here we see in Revelation where the army of God fights not by spilling the blood of their enemies, but by standing as witness of the blood that has already been poured out of the lamb. "Even unto death" is what John says.

Revelation 6, the fifth seal is opened and it's the souls under the altar, in the comfort of God's house, sealed, protected. But they did. And they're saying, how much longer, God? How much longer? How much longer? We fought. How much longer? Notice the 144,000 are prepped for battle and they're gonna go in and it's gonna be, yes, we got the seal, here we go.

From Every Nation and Tongue

And at the end of chapter seven, you have the before and after. You have the after, so you look and you see what he sees. And it's all of these people, all of these tribes, all of these nations, these tongues, languages you don't even know. Culturally, they had their identities. That's what's so beautiful about that is the kingdom of God is not from the bloodlines of the 12 tribes of Israel. They're from everywhere. And they dress differently. And they have different accents, right? And they speak different languages. And they do different dances depending on where they're from. And they like different music. And they celebrate their heritage differently. But they all orbit the king. And they celebrate their diversity while surrounding the king who has brought them together, purchased them, and redeemed them. That's awesome.

But where are they? When they've conquered, when they celebrate and overcome. We've overcome. They overcame. They overcame. Following the lamb, following whatever, following the lamb includes participating in the lamb's story, taking on a cruciform life. This means participating in his faithful witness, mimicking his ministry. Yeshua didn't sit in the synagogues meditating on how to be more spiritual. No, he went out and showed people what a relationship with God looks like. And how he showed what a relationship with God looks like is by having a relationship with these people. Hey, you, I want you to have a relationship with God over there. No. Hey, I want a relationship with you so that you can see what the love of God looks like and feels like and grace feels like.

Following the Lamb

Communities represent the temple, the place where God dwells. Communities and relationships is how God's presence is unleashed onto the earth. Following the lamb means also participating in his death. Following the lamb means participating in his resurrection. And in Revelation, we see that it means participating in his exaltation as well.

Just before chapter 14, the beast wages war against God's people and he conquers them and he kills them. Now, however, they stand with the lamb on Mount Zion, raised and vindicated by God. It's the same scene that's in chapter 7 that starts with this army of holy warriors prepared for the witness, the martyrdom. And in the second scene, they're victorious. They've been raised from the tribulation through washing their robes in the lamb's blood. We share both in Yeshua's suffering and his victory over evil. We are called to be holy warriors of God, agitating the manifestation of evil wherever it is. And we're called to suffer. We're to follow the lamb wherever he will go. Where is the lamb going? Where does the lamb go? It's a slaughtered lamb, right? He goes to the cross. He goes to the cross for the sake of his enemy.

When we choose to resist idolatry and deceptive narratives of the empire, it will always come at a cost. In Asia Minor, suffering meant a loss of social status, their livelihood, their security, their freedom, and even their lives. But somehow this group that loves and is willing to take on this lifestyle following the Lamb somehow magnetically will draw the world's nations to worship God. As we're called to be holy. Those who come through tribulation wear white robes, a priestly people. The foreheads of the redeemed publicly bear the name of God and the Lamb. They publicly bear it, just like the priests were also called to avoid ritual defilement of the world. Holy warriors and priests.

Your Battlefield

So guys, I don't know where you're at today, but these visions, I don't think they were just meant for the churches they were written to. I think they were written to Christians, all believers in every generation that would be experiencing the same pattern. You are redeemed. You are the servants of God. You are the people of God, the eschatological Israel of what all of the seed of Abraham was supposed to do and bring in. I believe this is speaking about you. And not only that, I think this is speaking about the mission that you're supposed to be embracing as the followers of Yeshua. It's about the mission right now.

So how's the battle coming? How's the battle coming? Is the beast winning in your life? Are you remaining pure, undefiled by the ways of the world, the beast system that seeks to exploit, steal, kill, and destroy? Do you act like the name of the lamb is publicly stamped on your

forehead for all people to see? Are you actually standing in the way of evil or are you participating with it? Worship team, you guys can come up to conclude worship. I'd ask everybody to stand. These chapters were meant to have the same impact on us as they did the early churches they were written to.

Have you embraced the seal? Have you embraced the charge? Are you willing to remain pure? Are you willing to be the priests of God and his holy warriors? Are you willing to exalt his name that is on your forehead as you live out this calling as witnesses of the lamb? Or do you take his name in vain? Guys, if you need prayer today for any situation that you might find yourself in, whether based on the message or not, we have prayer teams on either side of the room that would love to pray with you. Maybe there's something in your life that you would just rather leave here today. You can do that. You have that freedom here.

So as we worship together to conclude services, meditate on the word. Where are you at today? Where has God called you? What's your battlefield look like? And how are you fighting?

Alvina Marquino, our Father, our King, Father, we thank you for this time together, that you would even allow us to dive into the words of your servant, John, that these words would be meditations on our hearts and that we would allow the Holy Spirit, which you say is within us and has brought us to life, resurrection, to do its job in us, to guide us.

To show us the things that we need to put down and to show us the things we need to pick up and carry in your name. Father, I ask that everyone here would have the spirit of peace and joy that is only found in you, but that we would also be inspired just like the early church was, motivated to hold on to our faith just like the witnesses were, that we would embrace our calling to be witnesses that follow the Lamb. We thank you, Father, in the name of Yeshua. We pray. Amen.

Continuing the Reach

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