

Revelation Sixteen

01/18/2026

Hymns: 34 When We All Get to Heaven 40 He Leadeth Me

Scripture: Psalm 91; 23

Big idea: God Keeps His Own

It's been a few months now since we looked into the fascinating book of Revelation. Let's begin by getting our bearings. This final book of the Bible sometimes called *the apocalypse*, unveils or reveals Jesus **not** in His humanity as shown in the gospels, but instead it reveals Him in His glory.

Chapter 1 sets the stage with the apostle John receiving a message from God, through Jesus, and then through an angel. The chapter includes a glimpse of Jesus as He is in glory. The chapter ends with an outline that indicates a basic chronological structure of past, present, and future for the book.

Chapters 2 and 3 contain letters that Jesus sent to seven churches located in the western end of what is now the country of Turkey. We visited the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Those actual churches at that time serve as examples of the kinds of churches with various strengths and weaknesses that have existed throughout the ages and continue to be seen even today. Within each of these letters, Jesus describes tidbits of what our future with Him will involve.

In Revelation chapter 4, we traveled to heaven to the place where God appears before His own. We saw four animals. Each animal had the face of a different creature. We learned that these animals were actually cherubim who represented the creatures of God's creation. In addition, we saw twenty-four elders seated before God's throne giving praise and worship to Him. These elders represented the saints of the church redeemed by Jesus Christ and betrothed to Him.

Revelation chapter 5 remained before God's throne in heaven, but the attention turned to the seven-sealed scroll. No one was found worthy to open it until the Lion of the tribe of Judah who is the Lamb of God stood in the midst of the scene before the throne of God and took the scroll from God the Father. As he did, those around the throne broke out singing praises to Him. The scene then widened to include millions of angels crying out that He is worthy. This crescendo moved ever wider including every creature in heaven and earth praising Jesus Christ the Lamb.

In Revelation chapter 6 we saw that the opening of each seal of the scroll unleashed a new judgment symbolized as:

1. White horse ridden by the Antichrist.
2. Red horse symbolizing war.
3. Black horse symbolizing famine and poverty.
4. Light green horse symbolizing death.

These were all symbols of judgments, and from these, we get the phrase *the four horsemen of the apocalypse*. The fifth seal spoke of souls beneath the Altar of Incense before the throne of God. These souls represented martyrs from this time of tribulation.

Last time, we witnessed the opening of the sixth seal – describing cataclysmic events of judgment of the earth. We learned that although these events sound beyond the point of no return, they actually were just symbolic of heavy turmoil and not final annihilation of heaven and earth that would come later. That brings us to our text for today.

Revelation 7

[1] And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

*[2] And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,
[3] Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.*

[4] And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

[5] Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

[6] Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Nephtalim were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.

[7] Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.

[8] Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

[9] After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

[10] And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

[11] And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

[12] Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

[13] And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

[14] And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

[15] Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple:

and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

[16] They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

[17] For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Okay let's slow down and see what we can learn from this chapter:

[1] And after these things

What things? We just summarized the preceding chapters. The terrible seal judgments directly preceded this.

I

The apostle John.
saw

John shares what he sees from his vantage point in heaven.

four angels

We know angels are spirits (Hebrews 1:14), yet often present themselves in scripture as if they have physical bodies (Genesis 19:5, 16; Hebrews 13:2).

standing *on the four corners of the earth,*

This is metaphorical language and does not indicate the earth is flat. We use this even today when referring to the four basic directions.

holding

These spirit beings are able to stand and to hold as if they were physical, but they are not.

the four winds of the earth,

This also is metaphorical. Our weather apps refer to winds from the north, south, east and west.

that the wind should not blow

You've heard of *a strange stillness*. This will be it. It will wreak havoc on the weather.

on the earth,

*nor on the sea,
nor on any tree.*

That makes it clear in case there is any confusion – no wind – not even a sea breeze.

*[2] And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the **seal** of the living God:*

The significance of this angel was his seal that marked him as belonging to God. Notice the word *seal* as a key, repeated word in this passage of scripture. This chapter has 17 verses and 16 references to the word *seal*.

*and **he cried with a loud voice** to the four angels, to whom it was given to **hurt**
the earth
and the sea,*

*[3] Saying, **Hurt** not
the earth,
neither the sea,
nor the trees,*

till

This time marker instructs the four angels with power over the wind to temporarily withhold their judgment.

we

We're not told who the *we* are. From the context we might conclude the *we* would include the angel speaking and the ones standing on the four corners of the earth. It could refer to something more general like God's messengers.

have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

There's our keyword *sealed* again.

But who are these servants of God?

*[4] And I heard the number of them which were **sealed**: and there were **sealed** an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.*

These seals will be placed on the foreheads of the *servants of God*. We learn later that it affords them protection from the terrible judgments (Revelation 9:4). The mark will be the name of their God (Revelation 14:1). They will stand in

contrast to those who later receive the mark in their forehead or hand (Revelation 13:16) of *the beast* – who we first saw in the previous chapter (Revelation 6:2).

[5] *Of the tribe of Juda were **sealed** twelve thousand.*
 ... of Reuben
 ... of Gad
 [6]... of Aser
 ... of Nephthalim
 ... of Manasses
 [7] ... of Simeon ...
 ... of Levi
 ... of Issachar
 [8] ... of Zabulon ...
 ... of Joseph
*Of the tribe of Benjamin were **sealed** twelve thousand.*

Did you notice anything strange here? We all know Jacob had twelve sons (Genesis 35:23-26). From those sons came the twelve tribes of *Israel*: Jacob's new name (Genesis 32:28). We also know that Joseph had two sons: Manasseh and Ephraim (Genesis 48:5). The first question is what happened to Dan? Dan is not in the list. That should reduce the list to eleven. But both Joseph and one of his sons Manasseh are listed. That gets the count back up to twelve.

But if Manasseh was listed why was Ephraim left out? We do not know exactly. We do know that the tribe of Dan did **not** possess their allotted section of the Promised Land, but instead fell into idolatry and fled to a weak area rather than exercise faith in the LORD (Judges 18:1-31). We also know that Ephraim led the rebellious northern kingdom and also worshiped idols (Hosea 4:17). Joseph's name must be used here as a substitute rather than naming a dishonorable son.

So we know these servants of God came from the twelve tribes of Israel, that is Jews, but what else do we know about them?

1. They are sealed (Revelation 7:4):
 1. Marked with God's name in their foreheads (Revelation 14:1)
 2. Protected
2. Sang a new song before the throne (Revelation 14:3)
3. Male (Revelation 14:4)
4. Virgins (Revelation 14:4)
5. Follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Revelation 14:4)
6. Speak no guile (Revelation 14:5)
7. Pure (Revelation 14:5)

What else does the Bible say about them? Nothing! We usually hear that they are *witnesses* or *evangelists*, but the Bible does not say that.

[9] *After this*

Here's another time marker to introduce the next scene.

I beheld,

John in his special body continues to witness events in heaven.

and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number,

That phrase hearkens back to God's promise to Abram (Genesis 15:5).

of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,

Clearly, these cannot be just Jews (Romans 4:16).

stood before the throne,

We remain at the same setting.

and before the Lamb,

Jesus Christ the Lamb of God is still there.

clothed with white robes,

Why are they wearing white robes? We're told in just a few verses.

and palms in their hands;

The Jews used palm branches in their celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:40) and they used them to honor Jesus on His triumphal entry (John 12:13). Of course, this multitude from *all nations* is not just Jews.

*[10] And cried with a loud voice, saying,
Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*

This is another of many expressions of praise to God in Revelation. Another from all of the angels gathered around the throne comes next.

*[11] And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts,
and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,*

[12] Saying,

Amen:

You may recall that the universal word *Amen* means *truly*.

*Blessing,
and glory,
and wisdom,
and thanksgiving,
and honour,
and power,
and might,*

Notice this **seven**-fold expression of praise.

be unto our God for ever and ever.

Amen.

We had an *amen* to start this verse and now have one to finish. At the end, *amen* means *so it is* or *so be it*. It serves to express wholehearted agreement.

[13] And one of the elders

Remember, the elders represent the church.

answered,

A better word here would be *responded*. He responded to the worship scene by asking a rhetorical question.

saying unto me,

that is, John.

What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

[14] And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest.

Remember we saw these souls beneath the Altar of Incense before the throne in Revelation 6:9-11. As the elders are representatives of the church, these souls represent **Tribulation martyrs**.

And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

That sounds like a bit of a paradox to wash something in blood to make it white. It too is a metaphor of the sacrifice of Jesus (His blood) conferring righteousness and cleansing from all sin to all who believe.

[15] *Therefore*

He responds with the answer.

*are they before the throne of God,
and serve him day and night in his temple:
and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.*

[16] *They shall hunger no more,
neither thirst any more;
neither shall the sun light on them,
nor any heat.*

Why?

[17] *For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them,
and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters:
and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

As we shall see, being martyred in the Tribulation is not a fun experience. We will see that phrase about tears later in our study. It's important to note the context and owners of those tears.

Notice that these martyrs have a different role in glory from the elders. The church will become the bride of Christ and rule and reign with Him at His side in glory.

Application

Today we saw three distinct groups of believers in heaven. Can you name them?

1. 144,000 sealed Jews – 12,000 from each tribe.
2. Innumerable martyrs from the Tribulation.
3. 24 elders – representing the church – Bride betrothed to Christ.

As Christians, we know that we will be caught up and taken away to be with the LORD **before** all of this happens. That's why it makes sense to first see the elders in heaven before the Tribulation began. We learned today there will be an uncountable number of martyrs that die in the Tribulation. While it's good that they finally do find the grace of God, they do it the hard way. Instead, we who have accepted His free gift of grace can look forward to the rapture of the church:

1 Thessalonians 4

[16] *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

[17] *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

[18] *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

And for that promise, after considering all of this calamity, we can be very thankful indeed!

Benediction

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen (Revelation 22:21).

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