

Charts: The Tribulation: Chart #10 (with references to Chart #8)

PREFACE

If one required more proof that the account of the Tribulation in Revelation was not recorded in the fashion of a linear narrative, all one need do is look at the sixth seal and what immediately follows. The events revealed by the breaking of the sixth seal clearly foreshadow—they offer a “coming attractions,” as it were—the very *end* of the seven-year epic.

<See Chart #10>

As we will see momentarily, the events portrayed in the first of what I have termed “parenthetical visions” (what others have called “interludes”) is something entirely different—it is cinematic in its composition. Here the camera lens zooms out to encompass the entirety of the Tribulation, from beginning to end. Then it pans toward the beginning and zooms in to tight focus on an event not mentioned at the beginning of the scroll, but nonetheless occurring around the same time: the sealing of the 144,000, a remnant of Israel.

After that, it zooms out once again, pans to the other end and zooms in to focus on something that will occur nearer the *end* of the entire Tribulation: a glorious scene taking place around the throne of heaven of those martyrs—and others—that we last saw under the altar at the breaking of the fifth seal.

Chapter Seven reads like the script for a C. B. DeMille epic.

THE HALTING OF THE “WINDS”

Read Revelation 7:1-3.

One learned commentator from the first part of the previous century writes, “These words describe the continuation of the action and course of events signified by the breaking of the sixth seal. It is, therefore, still the period of the judgment with which we here have to do. But in the midst of wrath, God remembers mercy” (J. A. Seiss, 1901).

With respect, I beg to differ. If the action described at the breaking of the sixth seal—so cataclysmic and literally earth-shattering—has already begun, it is no doubt *too late* to protect the 144,000 “sons of Israel.” At great risk of being struck by lightning, I suggest that instead of “remember[ing] mercy,”—something I am sure the Lord God never forgets—God might have thought to Himself, *Before we proceed further in this chronicle of judgment, I need to tell everyone what I did before this all started, as well as tell them what will happen at the end.*

What lies before us in Chapter Seven is the first of four “pauses” in Scripture’s narrative of the Tribulation. Others refer to these as “interludes,” but I prefer to call them “parentheses,” for they contain important information critical to understanding the totality of the Tribulation. They are not “time-outs,” but relay vital information bearing upon the whole <see [Chart #8](#)>. These occur,

1. between the sixth and seventh Seals,
2. Between the sixth and seventh Trumpets,
3. between the Trumpets and the Bowls,
4. between the sixth and seventh bowls. <[Back to Chart #10](#)>

My basis for placing what is described in vv1-8 at the beginning of the Tribulation is that even as early as the second seal we have taking place war, which results in famine, and famine, which results in death; this is followed by the voices of martyrs for Christ crying out for justice and vengeance. By then it would be a little late to be sealing from harm a large group from Israel.

Contributing to this placement, too, is the narrative of the first three verses—especially v3: “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.” Well, if this were placed *after* the sixth seal, all three of those would already be greatly harmed.

Finally, except for the act itself of sealing the 144,000, these three prefatory verses are filled with the metaphorical language of prophecy. Even so, as we will see, it is metaphorical language and imagery common throughout God’s word.

John sees four angels (supernatural messengers) “standing at the four corners of the earth.” Well, a globe does not have “corners,” but this language was used in antiquity much as we might say “the four points of the compass.” Since we hear nothing in the rest of the Revelation of these winds actually blowing in a harmful manner, the “winds” would seem to represent in general the earthly and atmospheric violence to be inflicted (or permitted) by God. These four angels possess the authority and power to inflict this damage (they are “granted to harm the earth and the sea”), but are here commanded to “hold back” that force temporarily, until the “bond-servants of our God” have been sealed “on their foreheads.”

This command comes from “another angel ascending from the rising of the sun”—that is, from the east. Some older commentators say this is Christ Jesus Himself, but I do not subscribe to that. It says “another angel”; even in the OT the Son of God when active on earth was called “*the* angel of the Lord,” never just another angel (and after the Son’s incarnation on earth and ascension, there is never again any reference to “*the* angel of the Lord.” This angel may well be, however, one of higher rank than the other four, for he bears “the seal of the living God.” This presumably strong angel commands the four to hold back their respective “winds” until “we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.”

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL REMNANT

Read Revelation 7:4.

We take this text at its word; these are not Gentiles, nor do they represent the *church* as the “true Israel”; this passage speaks of Jews drawn from the twelve tribes of Jacob (“sons of Israel”). Likewise, while it is *possible* that John employs the number twelve, times twelve thousand, symbolically to represent *all* Israel, why not just *write* that? Why itemize so precisely an effective end-times “Schindler’s List” of Jews that will be protected and saved through the trials of the Tribulation if what you really mean is *all* Israel—or even worse, the Christian church?

The apostle Paul, in Romans 11, assures Christians that God has not forgotten what He promised Israel. And what we are seeing here, as well as in other portions of the eschatological narrative, is confirmation of that.

Read Romans 11:25-29.

And he goes on to remind the Christians in Rome that, “Just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy” ([Romans 11:30-31](#)).

Many have likened this “seal” to the seal of the Holy Spirit possessed by Christians during the church age—that is, an “earnest” given by God that He will fulfill His promise of salvation and eternity with Him. I see no evidence that this will be a guarantee of an effortless existence; just as with Christians today with the Spirit, they might still suffer trials or even persecution, but the seal will be a promise that they will not be destroyed or killed—that is, they will be kept alive *through* the trials of the Tribulation.

Apparently, however, *this* seal—different from the indwelling Spirit—will include a more obvious, outward component, perhaps that will be recognized and honored by those intending them harm. We get more information on this outward seal in Chapter Fourteen, where we meet these 144,000 again.

Read Revelation 14:1.

Note: The best manuscripts indicate that the expression “having his Father’s name written in their foreheads” [KJVs] should be “having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads” (Walvoord).

On Chart #10, the seal in the upper left corner of this parenthetical scene has the Hebrew for *Yahweh*; the name “Iesous” or “Yeshua” is left out because of space limitations (and because in our text it mentions only the name of “God.” Some say that because the details are slightly different, that the group in Chapter Fourteen is different from the one in Chapter Seven. But no, the details in Chapter Seven are more general (“our God”), while Chapter Fourteen offers more specifics.

So we take from these two passages that the angel arising out of the east in 7:2 carries with him a seal or stamp, of sorts, with which he seals or brands each of the 144,000. This visible sign is sufficient to turn away anyone wishing to do them harm during the Tribulation—and the passage in Chapter Fourteen confirms that God will keep His promise and protect them to the end.

Food for Thought: How would the conduct of your life be different if on your forehead was branded, “Follower of Jesus the Christ”?

These Messianic Jews will be a strong witness for Christ, we can only assume effective evangelists, during the entirety of the Tribulation period.

This passage is strong evidence for new believers during the Tribulation.

- If these from the tribes of Israel had been Christians (Messianic Jews) prior to the Tribulation, they would have been Raptured as part of the church.
- If not confirmed by this passage it is in Chapter Fourteen that these are followers of not just Yahweh, but the Lamb; thus they are indeed Messianic Jews.
- Thus they became so *after* the Rapture.

- It is a pretty safe assumption, then, that their public and obvious allegiance to Christ during the turmoil of the Tribulation will be a factor in even more people converting during this time.

One might rightly ask if the 144,000 represent the *total* number of Jews who come to Christ during the Tribulation. I do not believe it does. This is a *remnant* kept secure throughout the coming trials, so that *at least* this many from Israel will be saved to rule with Christ Jesus.

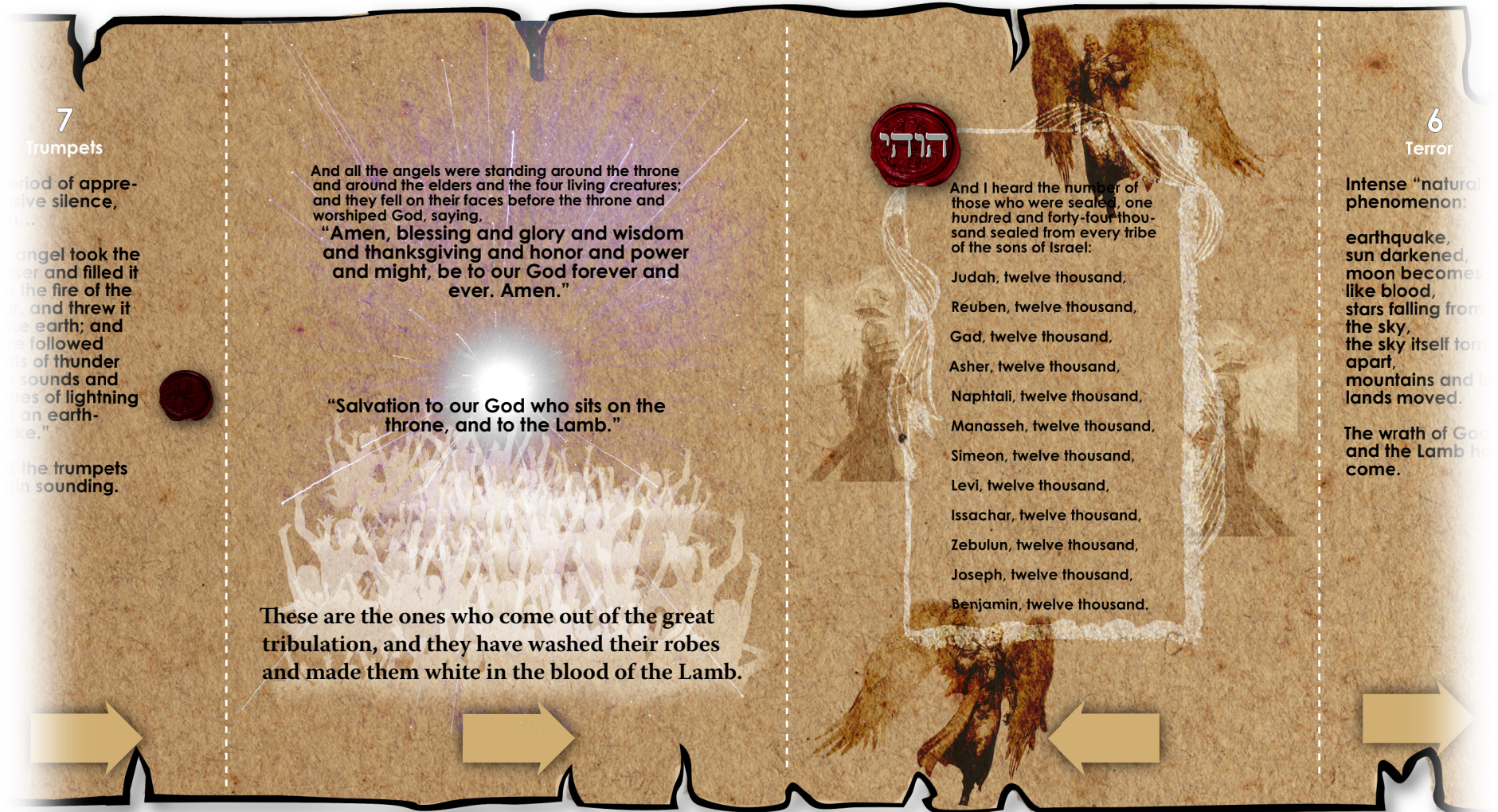
Throughout the chronicles of His word, recording His relationship with fallen man, God has repeatedly set aside a remnant kept under His protective wings. We see this in

- Noah and his family, kept secure through the Flood;
- Rahab and her household, kept safe as Israel destroys Jericho;
- a remnant of Israel was kept in their homeland as the rest went into exile in Babylon and elsewhere.

In these and others we see the grace, the mercy, the longsuffering of God even when dealing with those who have been in rebellion against Him and His statutes.

THE TRIBULATION

The Seals: The First Parenthetical Vision



Footnotes

Revelation 7:9-17

Revelation 4:5-11
 Revelation 6:9-11
 Matthew 24:21

Revelation 7:1-8

Revelation 9:4
 Revelation 14:1-5
 Ezekiel 9:4-7
 Romans 11:25-29

← Refers backward to an earlier event
 → Refers forward to a future prophecy

