

### Overview of the Chapter:

Revelation 7 is an interlude between the sixth seal (ch. 6) and the seventh (ch. 8), providing reassurance amid judgments. It describes four angels holding back winds of destruction, the sealing of 144,000 from Israel's tribes, and a great multitude from all nations standing before the throne in worship, robed in white and holding palms.

### Review the Four Views:

- **Preterist:** Chapter 7 symbolizes God's protection of 1st-century believers during AD 70 judgments.
- **Idealist:** Timeless symbols of God's people sealed and victorious through trials.
- **Progressive Dispensationalist:** "Already/not yet"—sealed servants in the present age, with future fulfillment.
- **Classical Dispensationalist:** Literal 144,000 Jewish evangelists and Tribulation saints post-rapture.

**The Sealing of the 144,000 (Rev. 7:1–8)** Key elements: Four angels at earth's corners hold back winds; seal on servants' foreheads; 144,000 from 12 tribes of Israel (12,000 each).

- **Preterist:** The 144,000 symbolizes the complete number of 1st-century Jewish Christians protected spiritually during the AD 70 tribulation (Roman siege); "winds" as destructive forces (Rome); tribes represent the true remnant of Israel; clarifies symbolic completeness (12x12x1000), not literal count, integrating as God's preservation amid covenant judgment on apostate Judaism; further details emphasize the seal as divine ownership (like Ezekiel's mark), critiquing futurist views for ignoring 1st-century context and tying to Revelation's theme of vindication for the early church.

**Supporting Scriptures:** Ezekiel 9:4–6 (mark on foreheads for protection); Daniel 7:2–3 (winds stirring beasts/empires); Exodus 19:4 (God bears on eagles' wings, symbolic safety).

- **Idealist:** Timeless assurance; 144,000 as the complete church (militant on earth) sealed against spiritual harm amid trials; tribes symbolize covenant people (Jews/Gentiles united); "seal" as Holy Spirit's mark; clarifies multivalent symbolism for enduring persecution in any age; further details portray the four angels/winds as restrained chaos (natural/spiritual disasters), emphasizing God's sovereignty in recurring cycles, critiquing literal interpretations for missing ethical calls to faithfulness.

**Supporting Scriptures:** Ephesians 1:13 (sealed with Holy Spirit); 2 Timothy 2:19 (God's seal on His people); Numbers 1:45–46 (census of tribes, symbolic completeness).

- **Progressive Dispensationalist:** "Already" sealed believers (church as spiritual Israel) protected in present age; "not yet" full protection in eschatological trials; 144,000 as symbolic of redeemed from all eras; clarifies "already/not yet" tension, blending Israel/church in new covenant; further details describe the seal as progressive empowerment by the Spirit, integrating with blended genres to show kingdom continuity, critiquing preterism for over-historicizing without future scope.

**Supporting Scriptures:** Romans 11:26 (all Israel saved); Galatians 6:16 (Israel of God as church); Ezekiel 37:9–10 (four winds bringing life).

- **Classical Dispensationalist:** Literal 144,000 Jewish evangelists sealed for ministry during future Tribulation; tribes as ethnic Israel (distinct from church); "winds" as literal judgments held back; clarifies grammatical-historical literalism, post-rapture; further details stress the tribal list's omissions (e.g., Dan) as significant for end-times roles, integrating as protection for Israel's remnant in dispensational shift to judgment, critiquing idealism for non-literal blending.

**Supporting Scriptures:** Isaiah 27:12–13 (gathering Israel from ends of earth); Zechariah 12:10 (mourning for pierced one); Joel 2:28–32 (Spirit poured on all flesh).

Who or what does the 144,000 represent? Which view's supporting Scriptures best address God's protection?

**The Great Multitude (Rev. 7:9–17)** Key elements: Innumerable multitude from all nations before throne/Lamb; white robes, palms; worship; elders explain they came from great tribulation; Lamb shepherds, wipes tears.

- **Preterist:** The multitude as 1st-century Gentile converts joining the remnant, vindicated post-AD 70; "great tribulation" as Neronian persecution/AD 70; robes/palms symbolize purity/victory; clarifies expansion of God's people beyond Israel, integrating as hope amid historical judgment; further details include palms as feast of tabernacles imagery (Lev. 23:40) for covenant renewal, critiquing futurism for postponing universal ingathering.

**Supporting Scriptures:** Isaiah 49:10 (no hunger/thirst, guided by compassion); Psalm 23:1 (Lord as shepherd); Joel 2:32 (whoever calls on Lord saved).

- **Idealist:** Timeless; multitude as complete redeemed from all ages, triumphant after trials; "tribulation" as ongoing persecution; Lamb's shepherding as eternal comfort; clarifies symbolic victory, critiquing literal counts; further details portray white robes as righteousness (Isa. 61:10) and palms as joy (John 12:13), emphasizing multivalent hope in spiritual battles.

**Supporting Scriptures:** Isaiah 25:8 (wipe away tears); John 10:11 (good shepherd); Psalm 118:15–16 (shouts of joy in tents of righteous).

- **Progressive Dispensationalist:** "Already" redeemed multitude in heaven; "not yet" full shelter; tribulation as present sufferings escalating; clarifies progressive inclusion of nations in kingdom; further details describe the throne/temple as blended heavenly/earthly reality, critiquing classical dispensationalism for separating church/Israel.

**Supporting Scriptures:** Micah 4:1–2 (nations stream to God's mountain); Ephesians 2:19 (fellow citizens in God's household); Isaiah 4:5–6 (canopy of protection).

- **Classical Dispensationalist:** Literal Tribulation saints (Gentiles converted by 144,000); post-rapture; multitude distinct from church; clarifies future millennial blessings, critiquing non-literal blending; further details stress "came out of great tribulation" as specific 7-year period, integrating as comfort for end-times converts.

**Supporting Scriptures:** Zechariah 8:23 (nations grasp Jews' robes); Revelation 21:4 (no more tears in new order); Daniel 12:1 (deliverance in distress).

What does the multitude's worship teach about diversity in God's kingdom? Discuss supporting Scriptures on hope.

**Comparison Table:**

Element	Preterist (Gentry)	Idealist (Hamstra)	Progressive Disp. (Pate)	Classical Disp. (Thomas)	Example Supporting Scriptures
144,000 (7:1–8)	1st-century Jewish Christians	Complete church sealed	Symbolic redeemed now/future	Literal Jews in Tribulation	Ezek. 9:4; Eph. 1:13; Rom. 11:26
Multitude (7:9–17)	Gentiles post-AD 70	Redeemed from all ages	Heavenly multitude in tension	Tribulation converts	Isa. 49:10; John 10:11; Rev. 21:4
Application	Protection in historical crisis	Endurance through trials	Kingdom inclusion now	Future evangelism/hope	Ps. 23:1; Mic. 4:1–2

**Questions:**

1. How does chapter 7 provide relief after chapter 6's judgments?
2. Which view best explains the 144,000 and multitude?
3. What encouragement does this offer persecuted believers today?

**Homework:** Read Revelation 8–9 and note trumpet judgments.

## Summary of M. Robert Mulholland Jr.'s Take on Revelation Chapter 7

In his commentary on Revelation in the *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation* (Tyndale House, 2011), M. Robert Mulholland Jr. interprets Chapter 7 through an idealist lens with "already/not yet" eschatology, viewing it as an interlude providing timeless reassurance amid the judgments of Chapter 6. The chapter contrasts the sealed servants on earth (militant church) with the victorious multitude in heaven (triumphant church), symbolizing God's protection and ultimate redemption for believers in any era of tribulation. Mulholland emphasizes that the seals' unfolding exposes the chaos of the rebellious "Babylon" world, but Chapter 7 reveals the "already" security in Christ (spiritual sealing) while awaiting the "not yet" consummation (full victory). He subverts Jewish apocalyptic expectations by portraying the sealed as a new covenant people (including Gentiles), not a literal restored Israel, calling for radical discipleship—endurance and witness amid suffering. The chapter's structure (earthly sealing, heavenly worship) draws readers into visionary participation, confronting complacency and assuring that God's people are preserved through trials, not removed from them.

Mulholland critiques overly literal interpretations (e.g., 144,000 as ethnic Jews or future evangelists), arguing the symbols are multivalent, rooted in Old Testament imagery (e.g., Ezekiel's marking, census symbolism), to convey ethical imperatives: Believers must live as sealed servants in a hostile world, embodying kingdom values until the Lamb's shepherding is fully realized.

### Key Interpretations

- **The Four Angels and Winds (7:1–3):** Angels restraining destructive forces (winds as chaos/judgment, Ezekiel 37:9) symbolize God's sovereign control, delaying full judgment for sealing; timeless reminder that tribulation is limited, allowing time for faithfulness.
- **The 144,000 Sealed (7:4–8):** Not literal Jews but symbolic of the complete church (12 tribes x 12 apostles x 1,000 = totality/perfection); sealed on foreheads (Ezekiel 9:4) as God's ownership and protection against spiritual harm (not physical escape); represents the "militant" church serving amid trials.
- **The Great Multitude (7:9–17):** Innumerable from all nations, the "triumphant" church after tribulation; white robes (purity, Isaiah 61:10) and palms (victory, Leviticus 23:40) symbolize resurrection life; "great tribulation" as ongoing persecution (not a specific future event); Lamb's shepherding (Psalm 23; Isaiah 49:10) and wiping tears affirm eternal comfort, subverting despair with hope.

Mulholland's focus is devotional: Chapter 7 encourages perseverance, assuring that sealed believers participate in Christ's victory, transforming suffering into witness in the "between" time.

### Preterist Perspective on Parallels Between Revelation 7 and Josephus' Writings

The Preterist view interprets Revelation 7 as a symbolic depiction of God's protection and vindication of His people during the "great tribulation" of the first century, specifically the Jewish-Roman War (AD 66–73) and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. In this chapter, the sealing of the 144,000 (Rev. 7:1–8) represents the spiritual safeguarding of the complete remnant of faithful Jewish Christians (symbolic number: 12 tribes x 12,000 = totality), while the great multitude (Rev. 7:9–17) symbolizes the triumphant church (including Gentiles) emerging victorious after the tribulation, worshiping in heaven. Preterists argue this fulfills Jesus' warnings in Matthew 24:21 ("great tribulation") and parallels the

historical events of AD 70, where Christians were reportedly spared the worst horrors by fleeing Jerusalem beforehand (based on divine warning, as per tradition in Eusebius and Epiphanius). While Josephus (a Jewish historian who defected to Rome) does not explicitly mention Christians or "sealing," his eyewitness accounts in *The Wars of the Jews* (c. AD 75) provide vivid details of the siege's chaos, which Preterists see as the backdrop for Revelation 7's imagery of restrained destruction (winds held back) and survivors "coming out" of tribulation. Josephus' descriptions emphasize the selective nature of survival and divine portents, aligning with God's protection of the faithful amid widespread judgment.

### **1. Restrained Destruction and Protection (Paralleling Rev. 7:1–3 – Angels Holding Back Winds/Harm Until Sealing)**

Preterists see the angels holding back destructive winds as symbolic of God delaying full judgment on Jerusalem to allow the faithful (sealed remnant) to escape. Josephus describes supernatural omens and delays in the war's escalation, interpreted as divine restraint giving time for the righteous to flee (per Luke 21:20–21). This aligns with the sealing as spiritual protection from harm.

- **Excerpt from Josephus:** "Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers, and such as belied God himself; while they did not attend nor give credit to the signs that were so evident, and did so plainly foretell their future desolation, but, like men infatuated, without either eyes to see or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them. Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year... At the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which lasted for half an hour. This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskillful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes, as to portend those events that followed immediately upon it." (*Wars* 6.5.3)
- **Preterist Parallel:** These signs (sword-star, comet, unnatural light) signal impending doom but also divine warning/restraint, allowing time for the "sealed" (Christians) to heed and flee to Pella before the full "winds" of destruction (Roman siege) hit. Preterists note Josephus' "denunciations that God made" as God's merciful delay, similar to the angels' hold until sealing is complete.

### **2. The Sealed 144,000 as Protected Remnant (Paralleling Rev. 7:4–8 – Sealed from Tribes of Israel)**

Preterists view the 144,000 as symbolic of the full number of faithful Jewish believers in the 1st century, sealed (protected) from the war's judgments. Josephus doesn't count survivors but describes selective escapes and portents that Preterists see as divine marking/protection for the remnant.

- **Excerpt from Josephus:** "The number of those that perished during the whole siege of Jerusalem was 1,100,000... The greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation [with the citizens of Jerusalem], but not belonging to the city itself; for they were come up from all the country to the feast of unleavened bread, and were on a sudden shut up by an army... But the famine was too hard for all other passions, and it is destructive to nobler things... The number then of those that were thus slain was 600,000." (*Wars* 6.9.3–4)
- **Preterist Parallel:** Amid 1.1 million deaths (mostly Jews gathered for Passover), a remnant survived or escaped, symbolizing the sealed 144,000 (complete Jewish-Christian remnant). Preterists link this to the tradition of Christians fleeing before the siege, protected (sealed) from the famine and slaughter, as God's judgment fell on apostate Israel but spared the faithful.

### 3. The Great Multitude Coming Out of Tribulation (Paralleling Rev. 7:9–17 – Multitude from All Nations, Washed Robes, No More Hunger/Thirst)

Preterists see the multitude as the victorious church (Jews and Gentiles) emerging from AD 70's "great tribulation," worshiping in heaven. Josephus' accounts of survivors from various nations and the war's end parallel the multitude's deliverance.

- **Excerpt from Josephus:** "The number of the captives taken in the whole war was collected to be ninety-seven thousand... Those that perished during the whole siege [were] eleven hundred thousand, the greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation, but not belonging to the city itself; for they were come up from all the country to the feast of unleavened bread, and were on a sudden shut up by an army, which, at the very first, occasioned so great a straitness among them that there came a pestilential destruction upon them, and soon afterward such a famine as destroyed them more suddenly." (*Wars* 6.9.3)
- **Preterist Parallel:** The 97,000 captives from "all the country" (diverse backgrounds) survived the siege's famine, pestilence, and death, paralleling the multitude "coming out of the great tribulation" (Rev. 7:14). Preterists see this as the church's vindication post-AD 70, with "no more hunger/thirst" (Rev. 7:16) contrasting the siege's horrors, and white robes symbolizing purity after "washing in the Lamb's blood."

### 4. Voices and Divine Warnings (Paralleling Rev. 7:10 – Multitude Crying Out in Worship/Salvation)

Preterists note Josephus' supernatural voices as echoes of divine activity, paralleling the multitude's cries.

- **Excerpt from Josephus:** "At the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which lasted for half an hour... Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night... [And] a voice as of a great multitude, saying, 'Let us remove hence.'" (*Wars* 6.5.3)
- **Preterist Parallel:** The "voice as of a great multitude" signaling divine departure from the temple parallels the heavenly multitude's cry "Salvation belongs to our God" (Rev. 7:10), marking the shift from old covenant judgment to new covenant salvation. Preterists see this as God's abandonment of apostate Jerusalem, protecting the sealed remnant.

In summary, from a Preterist perspective, Josephus' accounts of omens, selective survival amid massive death, and the war's international scope parallel Revelation 7's themes of protection (sealing) and victory (multitude), fulfilling prophecies of judgment on Israel while preserving the faithful church. These historical details underscore the "soon" fulfillment (Rev. 1:1) in AD 70, though Josephus, as a non-Christian, attributes events to fate rather than prophecy. For deeper reading, see Kenneth Gentry's *The Beast of Revelation* or David Chilton's *Days of Vengeance*.