

Sealing of the 144,000 from the Tribes of Israel  
Chp. 7:1-8

## Verse 1

Note the change in the picture between chapters 6 and 7. What might follow chapter 6 more naturally would be a vision of the ultimate triumph of the Church. John gives us this vision after the seven trumpets have sounded. Before we hear the note of victory, John goes through the whole process again in the series of the seven trumpets.

Who will be able to stand? Here we get the answer. John saw "four angels holding (*kratountas* - holding back or keeping under complete control) the four winds of the earth, in order that (*hina* clause or purpose clause) wind (no definite art.) should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree." Here we see the symbol of God's sovereign power over the universe.

## Verse 2

Another angel "coming up from the rising of the sun, having a seal of the living God, and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given (to them) to harm the earth and the sea." God sent another authorized messenger from the east (from the rising of the sun) to command that the other angels hurt not the earth.

## Verse 3

They were commanded not to harm the earth - "until we may seal (*sphragisōmen* - 1st aor. act. subj. - by a single act) the seals of our God on their foreheads."

These angels are from the imagery of Zechariah 6:1-8. John had used this passage before, and gave it a different application. The destruction of the earth would not be allowed to happen until the number of the saved is determined.

## Verse 4

John declared that he "heard the number of the ones having been sealed (*esphragismenōn* - passive, perfect, participle - the act of sealing is complete and was done by God). 144,000 having been sealed out of (*ek*) every tribe of the sons of Israel."

The Jehovah's Witnesses are not among the 144,000 as they so arrogantly claim, because these had already been sealed in the New Testament period. The sealing was not a future act as

the form of the verb signifies (pass. perf. part.). The symbolism asserts that there were twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. If taken literally, this means physical Jews. We must keep in mind the New Testament redefinition of the term Israel and its significance. (See especially Romans chps. 9-11, Galatians, and G. A. Danell, *Studies in the Name Israel in the Old Testament*, Uppsala, Sweden, 1946; study also the theme of the Remnant in both Testaments.)

#### Verses 5-8

Whether the figure of 144,000 is literal or figurative, we can still understand the basic import. If we take the number literally, it is specifically applied to Jews - or the twelve tribes of Israel. The list of the tribes given here is not found in the Old Testament form. Levi (vs. 7) is included here, but was not actually a technical tribe. Dan is omitted, Manasseh is put in his place, but as a son of Joseph he is included in the Joseph tribe mentioned in verse 8.

## SECTION 22

### Text 7:9-12

9 After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 and they cry with a great voice saying, Salvation unto our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb. 11 And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and about the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces and worshipped God, 12 saying,

Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

### Initial Questions 7:9-12

1. Are there only Jews present in this next scene after the sealing of the Israelites - vs. 9?
2. What does the waving of palms signify - vs. 9? (See Triumphant entry of Christ - Matt 21:1ff.)
3. Does vs. 11 clearly state that only God is worthy to be worshipped? (Not angels, nor Mary, nor any one else.)