

INTRODUCTION

When you hear the word "saint" what do you think of? Some of you may think of the New Orleans Saints or you may think of the song, "When The Saints Go Marching In." You may think of a St. Christopher medal. Actually a saint is someone who has been redeemed. We're saints and we're going to meet another kind of saint today.

One of my favorite stories is about a man in a local community. He was an absolute reprobate! He was a moonshiner, drug runner, a terrible husband and terrible father, and a gambler who never set foot in church—but he had a lot of money because of his illicit activities. Well he died. Of course the pastor of the local church was asked to do the funeral, although the man was not a member of the church. His brother, John, went to the pastor and said, "I know and you know and everybody knows what a terrible man my brother was. But pastor, I want you to stand up at the funeral service and I want you to say he was a saint." The pastor said, "I can't do that!" His brother said, "Listen, I know you are trying to build a building down there at your church and I know you need some money. If you will just simply say my brother was a saint, I'll give you \$100,000 for your building program. The pastor said, "I'll think about it." The next day the church was packed and everybody knew what kind of man he was. The pastor stood up and said, "You all knew this man. You knew he was a reprobate, an infidel who never darkened the doors of this church; he was a moonshiner, he sold drugs; he was a terrible husband and a terrible father but compared to his brother, John, he was a saint!"

When you talk about being a saint, you don't have to compare yourself to anybody, because Jesus makes you a saint. Let's get our perspective and our reference. The book of Revelation is divided into three easy parts: Past tense, present tense, and future tense. Chapters 4 and 5 paint a picture of the saints us gathered around the throne in heaven and the Lamb of God on the throne. He takes a book with seven seals and he begins to open these seven seals and each seal represents a judgement upon the earth.

In chapter six we studied six of the seals and each time a seal was opened some terrible judgement was poured out on earth: Earthquakes, death, famine, pestilence. They will be terrible, terrible times on earth like the world has never known. This is the seven-year period Daniel prophesied in Daniel 9. And what Jesus said about this time of Tribulation in Matthew 24; it parallels exactly Revelation, chapter 6.

In the series of the three sevens in this section of Revelation, talking about the seven-year Tribulation, there are seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls (or vials) of wrath poured out. The sequence of each one is the same, the first four occur, and then there is a little pause, then the next two and a longer pause and then the seventh. That's true of the seven seals. That's true of the seven trumpets. That's true of the seven bowls of wrath. It is an intentional design by the Holy Spirit to put some other information in the "parenthesis" between the sixth and the seventh seal, the sixth and the seventh trumpet, and the sixth and the seventh bowl. That may be a little confusing, but if you are trying to hold on to some kind of a chronological chain in this part of Revelation, it's in those series of sevens.

We are coming to the “parenthesis” between the sixth seal and the seventh seal. I call it “The Eye of the Storm,” because after six seals were opened and the terrible judgement, there’s a period of relative calm and rest. Look at chapter 6:17, to get a running start to chapter 7. “For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand? In other words, who can survive on earth during this great time of Tribulation? The answer is chapter 7. There is a group who will be protected and will be able to stand during the time of Tribulation. It’s a group of 144,000 Jews. Let’s read the first 8 verses.

John says, “After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree.” That doesn’t mean the earth is flat with four corners. We believe this is a reference to the points of the compass north, south, east and west. What a change that is because in the chapter before there was great natural disaster that came upon the earth. God says, “Hold it off for a moment.” Verse 2 “Then I saw another angel coming up from the east having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: ‘Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.’ Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.” Verses 5-8 are simply the names of the tribes each comprising 12,000:

1. Judah	12,000
2. Reuben	12,000
3. Gad	12,000
4. Asher	12,000
5. Naphtali	12,000
6. Manasseh	12,000
7. Simeon	12,000
8. Levi	12,000
9. Issachar	12,000
10. Sebulun	12,000
11. Joseph	12,000
12. Benjamin	<u>+ 12,000</u>
	144,000

Each one was 12,000. 12,000 times 12 tribes equals 144,000.

I. MANY JEWS WILL BE SEALED BY GOD

A. Judgment is suspended

Notice during the seven years of Tribulation many Jews will be sealed by God! The first thing we see happening is judgement is suspended. This awful time of wrath and judgement God pours out upon the earth is suspended for a brief period of time and this is why I mention it as “The Eye of the Storm.”

In 1982 my mother and my father lived in Mobile, Alabama. Hurricane Frederick came off the Gulf of Mexico and slammed into Mobile, Alabama. My parents stayed there because my mother

was a public health nurse and it was her responsibility to man one of the first aid shelters. She said it was an amazing experience she would never do again. She said she would quit her job before she stayed behind again during a hurricane as those tornadoes were spawned by the hurricane and winds blowing in excess of 100 miles an hour tore down power lines and trees blew roofs off. But my father said there was a lot of wind and lightning and trees were blown down. He said but suddenly there was a silence and everybody in this shelter went outside and it was absolutely calm. They could even look straight up—and this was even worse since it was nighttime—and you could see the stars in the sky. In the darkness around them there was absolutely no illumination because all the power was out. You could see trees down. You could see cars overturned you could see power lines lying down on the ground. It was a terrible scene of devastation, but my dad said it was an eerie feeling to step out there in the middle of it and experience such calm. As you know, that was the eye of the hurricane. My father said in just a few moments the winds started again even more violent than before. They had to rush back into the shelter. Then there was another time of devastation from the elements.

B. The Jews are numbered

That’s really what’s happening here in the book of Revelation, because the six judgments God pours out upon the earth are given in rapid succession and then there is a period of relative calm when God says, “Hold back judgement!” and then it’s going to start again. Why is the judgement suspended? Because God has to do something. “Hold it back until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” That’s the second thing that happens, not only is judgement suspended, but the Jews are numbered. They are sealed and they are numbered.

This word “seal” is the same idea mentioned Ephesians of “God sealing believers with the Holy Spirit.” That means we are made secure by the Holy Spirit. It literally means to be protected, guarded. In ancient days, all the Roman Emperor had to do was put a wax seal with his insignia from his royal ring on any piece of property and it was a violation of Roman law to break that seal. So a seal was symbolic of protection. That’s what God is doing. He’s taking 144,000 of these Jews and protecting them from the wrath and the judgement that is to come. So who can stand during this time of wrath? Those 144,000 Jews. Many groups have claimed to be the 144,000.

When the Jehovah’s Witnesses started out, they claimed to be the 144,000 and they went around proselytizing until they made their number 144,000. They taught that when 144,000 Jehovah’s Witnesses were brought into the fold, Jesus would come back and it would be the end of the world, but guess what? They got over 144,000 and it didn’t happen. So, they have changed their teaching. Jehovah’s Witnesses now believe if they are diligent and faithful enough, they will be in the number of the 144,000 redeemed. That’s why they are so zealous to go knocking on your door, because they want to be named in that number. The only problem with that is when a Jehovah’s Witness comes to you and claims to be 144,000 simply ask them what tribe they are from! Say, “All right! What Jewish tribe are you from?” They say, “What?” Turn to Revelation, 7, and you say, “The Bible says very clearly that these are Jewish people who know their ancestry of their tribe.” When we say “tribe,” we’re not talking about Indians. There were 12 sons of Jacob and Joseph was one of them. They made up the tribes of Israel. This list is a little different than some of the lists in the Old Testament. Levi is not in here because Levi never

received any property. Dan is not listed in here, but I'll leave that to the experts. All we know for sure is this 144,000 are going to be numbered from the Jews.

There is another terrible heresy going around, perpetuated by the worldwide Church of God. It is that the lost tribes of Israel are actually the Anglo-Saxons and the Americans. We are the lost tribes of Israel. You just cannot prove that anywhere in scripture. The interesting thing about this is that we learn that Israel, the Jews, play a prominent role in the end times. The thing that makes it interesting to me is you go read your Old Testament and you read about the Jebusites and the Edomites and the Moabites and the Babylonians and all of these ancient people—where are they today? You can't find them. Can you find an Israelite? Sure you can! They're alive and doing well. Isn't it amazing that through the years the Jews have maintained their identity when other peoples of the earth have not?

When I was growing up in South Alabama, there were two Jewish families in our little town. They were the wealthiest families in town. I thought all Jews were wealthy because they owned the textile mill there in Florala. One of their sons, was one of my best friends growing up. I used to go over to his house and he spent the night with me and we were best friends. In the third grade we had the same girlfriend, who got named as "Little Miss Peanut Queen" there in South Alabama. Alan and I used to carry on about trying to see who could win Gail Thompson's heart. I promise you I'll never forget the afternoon he came over to my house and he was sad and he was dejected and he said, "David, you can have Gail." I said, "Why? Are you giving up?" He said, (now this is a third grader), "My mother told me that I am a Jew and I have to marry a Jew and Gail's a Gentile so I guess you can have her!" I said, "Thank the Lord for that! I didn't know this stuff about Jews and Gentiles, but that's fine with me Alan." You know I get the girl! Isn't it interesting that even as a third grader his parents were telling him, "You need to maintain your Jewish identity!" Why is that happening through the years?

The Bible says very plainly that God is not through with the nation of Israel! Let me say it clearly and loudly: Anyone who does not accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and they die without Jesus Christ they go to Hell whether they are a Jew or a Gentile. But as a nation, as a people, God has been preserving Israel for a purpose. Look in Romans 11:1. Paul says, "I asked then. Did God reject his people?" meaning the Jews "By no means!" He says, "I'm an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin." He knew which tribe he was from. "God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew." If you keep reading, it basically says God blinded the eyes of the Jews until a time when the Gentiles would be the recipients of his glory! "I ask you: 'Did they [Israel] stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?' Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!" That means when they fully come into the gospel. Then he goes on to say in verse 22. "Consider therefore the kindness and the sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness sternness of God." You can't talk about just the goodness of God. Neither can you just talk about the wrath of God. You have to consider both of them. "Otherwise, you also will be cut off and if they [the Jews] do not persist in unbelief" now at this moment the Jews basically are persisting in unbelief, but when that stops "they will be grafted in." That's using an analogy from plants. Here's a plant and here's the roots and here's the trunk and something has been cut out. God cut the Jews out when

they rejected Jesus, but he said, "He's going to graft them back in if they will stop persisting in unbelief." keep reading Verse 24 "After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature [Gentiles] and contrary to nature we were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches [the Jews] be grafted into their own olive tree! I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited. Israel has experienced a hardening in part *until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.*" Right now God is primarily giving his message to the Gentiles, but when the full number of the Gentiles has come into the kingdom and the church is raptured up, then Israel is going to be his prime directive again. It is saying if we as Gentiles came from a wild plant and we were grafted in and we loved being Christians how much more can the Jews be grafted in because they are part of the natural olive tree. How many of you have ever known a Jewish Christian? Aren't they the most fired up the most excited people for Jesus you've ever seen? Why? It's because they're part of the natural olive tree. It's almost easier for them.

Several years ago in our church in Alabama, a young Israelite named Jacob came to speak to our church. He was born in Israel after 1948, when Israel became a nation. He was born in Israel and raised in Judaism, but he was converted to Christ. Jacob is one of the most zealous Christians I've ever seen. His whole calling in life is to spend his life there in Israel where he was born and raised leading Jews to Jesus Christ! You talk about somebody fired up! I'll tell you he is! That's just to let you know God is not through with Israel. That's why He's preserved them through the years.

Let's go back to Revelation 7. Who then are these 144,000 Jews? If you want to know a little bit more; let's see what the Bible says about them. Look at Revelation 14, and see when they appear the next time but now they are in heaven. In chapter 7 they are on earth being sealed in chapter 14 they are in heaven with the Lamb. Let's read in Revelation 14:1, "Then I looked and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads." Some say this is the picture of Mount Zion in heaven some say it's on earth "And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like harpists playing their harps." This is talking about the 144,000 "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 redeemed Jews. "These are those who did not defile themselves with women" Ladies, you appreciate that reference there, but this means is they were so zealous for God they never even got married. "They kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths: they are blameless." That's what it says about this group. Back to Revelation, 7.

Who were they? The best way I can describe it is that in the future during the time of Tribulation God is going to protect, seal 144,000 Jews. They are going to be like 144,000 apostle Pauls going around this world preaching. You've seen what one apostle Paul could do who was a Jew who was not married who followed the Lamb wherever he went. There was no guile found in his mouth. Paul was absolutely sold out! When you multiply that times 144,000 and we see these Jews going around preaching during the time of Tribulation, talk about the last great awakening! Some say during the time of Tribulation nobody will be saved. That's not true! There will be

some who will be saved but they will be Tribulation Saints. Let me stop right here and remind you I believe that when Jesus comes to rapture the church, *all* Christians will be caught up to be with the Lord in heaven. We will not be here during this time of Tribulation. That's talking about the future.

Let's go on and talk about this second group in chapter 7: "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 in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.' All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures." Every time you see the word "elders" That's us. "They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: 'Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!' Then one of the elders asked me, 'These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?'" That's what you call "a leading question." Verse 14, John says, "I answered, 'Sir, you know.'" And he said, "These are they who have come out" literally that's not a good translation It is the Greek participle, *erchomai*, which literally means "these are those who are coming out right now." This is a key verse so look at it verse 14, "These are those that are coming out of the great Tribulation."

People ask, "Why do preachers call that the 'seven-year Tribulation?'" Jesus said in Matthew 24, "It will be Tribulation like the world has never known." And here it says, "These are those who are coming out of the Tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, 'They are before the throne of God and they serve him day and night in his temple; And he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.'"

II. MANY GENTILES WILL BE SAVED BY GOD

A. Who are they?

In the first section, many Jews will be sealed by God and many Gentiles will be saved by God. Let's answer the question, "Who are these?" Who is this group described in Revelation 7? They are Tribulation Saints. They are not what we call New Testament believers like us, not the church. These are Gentiles who are saved during the time of Tribulation and they die terrible martyr's deaths because of their belief in Jesus Christ. This is what it says about them Verse 16: "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

I think you know by now that, when it comes to eschatology, I believe what is called "a pre-tribulation rapture." I believe the Bible teaches that Christians, believers, the church is going to be raptured out before the Tribulation comes. Some Christians are preaching and teaching "a mid-Tribulation rapture." They believe Christians are going to live through about the first half of the Tribulation then halfway through the Tribulation will be caught up. Do you know why they believe that? Because they say that's who these people are. This is the church. As I have already said, I believe we are pictured by the elders already in heaven from chapter 4 onwards. What I

want us to do here I want us to contrast the two groups as they are described the 24 elders (us) and these Tribulation Saints.

The Difference Between the 24 Elders (us) and the Tribulation Saints

1. We are kept out of the Tribulation. That's what Jesus promised to the Church in Philadelphia. He said, "I shall keep you out of the hour of Tribulation that's coming upon the whole world." The Tribulation Saints are coming out in the middle of it.
2. It says in chapters 4 and 5 we are wearing white garments. This means dressing white dressing. Literally, the Tribulation Saints in verse 13 "are wearing white stoles it is the Greek word *stole* which is not a garment that you wear, it's like a mink stole, something that is wrapped on you so we appear differently.
3. We are seated on thrones around the Lamb. This group is standing before the Lamb.
4. The Bible says we are wearing crowns. The Bible speaks of crowns the crown of life the crown of glory the crown of suffering. This group is not pictured as wearing crowns.
5. We are pictured as playing harps the 24 elders. This group is pictured as holding palms not playing harps.
6. The 24 elders the New Testament saints we are pictured as singing a new song. This group the Tribulation Saints it never says they sing. They are kind of like angels. They are shouting aloud.
7. The elders are pictured as kings and priests. We will reign with him we will rule with him. But this group is pictured as servants of God.

B. How are they treated?

There are enough differences between these two groups that I don't think it is talking about the same group here. So how is this group treated? This group will be coming up out of the Tribulation. Here's the scene I believe we are in heaven already. We're around the throne. We've been worshiping the Lamb in glory. We've had the marriage feast of the Lamb and this group of Saints are coming out of the Tribulation. They are being killed, martyred and are coming on to heaven. There's a huge crowd of them. How are they treated?

1. They are protected

They are protected by God. "Never again will they hunger. Never again will they thirst." Why does it say that? We're going to see a little bit later that the Antichrist has his own sign, 666. We'll get to it. The Bible says for anybody on earth during the time of Tribulation who does not bear the "mark of the beast" they cannot buy or sell. They can't go down to the grocery store and buy food. They are considered social outcasts. So because this group is believers, because they are Tribulation Saints, they would never take the mark of the beast and they're going to hunger

they're going to thirst. They're going to be burned. It says, "The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat."

By the way this is one of the greatest promises of protection in the Bible. Do you know what a double negative is? "Don't never use double negatives when you talk because it's bad grammar" but right here in the Greek there is a pair of double negatives. It's almost like a "quadruple negative." It's like using negatives like this. A guy walks up to a door and he's trying to get work. He says, "You don't know nobody what nowhere wants nobody to work for them don't you?" He's just piling negatives on each other until it doesn't make sense. There are four of them right here. In the Greek language they don't cancel each other out they *intensify* it. This is what it literally says "Never, no never, no never again will they hunger. Never, no never, no never again will they thirst. The sun will not never, no never beat upon them nor never, never any scorching heat." It's that kind of an intensive promise. God says, "You've been through the fire on earth during the Tribulation now you're protected."

2. They are refreshed

Not only are they protected, but they are refreshed. It says in verse 17 the Lamb will be among them as their shepherd he will lead them to springs of living water. This is not too different than what we are going to experience in heaven. It says in the last chapters of Revelation there is going to be a "spring of living water," a water of life and Jesus is going to say, "Anyone who has a thirst, come and drink of the water of life." Come and drink freely. They are going to be refreshed. It's true that when you have been outside on a hot day exerting yourself, there's nothing more refreshing than ice cold water and this is a picture of the eternal refreshment of heaven.

3. They are comforted

Not only will they be protected and refreshed but they will be comforted. You can really say this about all of us too. They'll be comforted in heaven. Look at verse 17: "for God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Have you ever heard anybody say there will be no tears in heaven? There will be no crying in heaven. I don't know that it's true because at least at this point there's a time that there are tears in their eyes that have to be wiped away. What are these tears from? You know what they are from, because these Tribulation Saints have had to suffer such terrible persecution such terrible torture under the Antichrist, they have had it so terrible and their family members have been killed and they have been tortured; I tell you the persecution during the time of Tribulation as Jesus described it in Matthew, 24, is going to be so intense and so terrible that by comparison the Jewish Holocaust of World War II is going to look like a Sunday School Class. In comparison, multiples of the six million Jews killed by the Nazis are going to be killed during the persecution of the beast during the time of Tribulation. That's why they are weeping. That's why when they go to heaven God has to wipe away the tears from their eyes.

CONCLUSION

If anything spurs you onward, it ought to be this. *You do not want to be left behind!* What's it going to be like the first Sunday after Jesus raptures the church? We make jokes about it and say

things like, "Mostly deacons will be there in church and most of the choir will be there," but I want to tell you the first Sunday after Jesus raptures the church, the church buildings are going to be PACKED, because there are going to be some people who know and have heard all about this and when it happens, they are going to realize they were counterfeit Christians and never were saved and now they have been left behind and what a terrible, terrible time it's going to be!

I'm glad I'm born again! I'm glad I am saved. I'm glad I have blessed assurance Jesus is mine Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine. If you don't have absolute certainty of your salvation, you need to get that today!

OUTLINE

During the seven years of tribulation:

I. MANY JEWS WILL BE SEALED BY GOD (vs. 1-8)

- A. Judgment is suspended (vs. 1-3)
- B. The Jews are numbered (vs. 4-8) *See Romans 11*

II. MANY GENTILES WILL BE SAVED BY GOD (vs. 9-17)

A. Who are they? Tribulation Saints

The Difference Between:

24 ELDERS (us)

- 1. Kept out
- 2. White garments
- 3. Seated on thrones
- 4. Wearing crowns
- 5. Playing harp
- 6. Singing new song
- 7. Kings and priests

TRIBULATION SAINTS

- 1. Coming out
- 2. White robes
- 3. Standing
- 4. No crowns
- 5. Holding palms
- 6. Crying aloud
- 7. Servants

B. How are they treated?

- 1. Protected
- 2. Refreshed
- 3. Comforted



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes