***v.1 - the four winds*** *– probably the four riders of chapter 6. Brighton (p. 188) suggests that horsemen are restrained and Christians sealed because “once Christians are sent into the world, they will be hit by all the forces of the opposition and all the evils perpetrated by humanity.”*

***v. 2 - the seal of the living God*** *– See Genesis 41:41-42, Esther 3:10 for the use of signet rings by ancient kings.*

*v. 3 -* ***a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God*** *– See 2 Timothy 2:19, Ephesians 1:13-14, 2 Corinthians 1:22.*

*Note: The word for “seal” of God here is different than the word for “mark” of the evil one (Revelation 13:16-17), though both “seal” and “mark” are on the foreheads*

***How does the Holy Spirit “put the seal of God on the foreheads of His servants” these days? What VISIBLE SIGNS (MEANS) does He use to designate who the believers are and to protect them in their faith?***

Brighton (p. 180) divides this chapter into two scenes: verses 1-8, describing the “sealing” of the Church Militant, and verses 9-17, describing God’s victory through the Church Triumphant. These give John comfort because the sealing “means that no matter how much he and God’s people on earth suffer as they fulfill the mission of their Lord, God will protect them in their faith,” and when “he sees the church triumphant . . . he is full of joy and enthusiasm.”

 **7:1**[John the Apostle writes]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. **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: **3**“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**.”

Evil is not minimized, but it is put in its place, bracketed between Christ and prayer. There is a detailed listing of evil and a courageous facing of evil, but no explanation of it. . . . All evil takes place in an historical arena bounded by Christ and prayer. – Eugene Peterson, Reversed Thunder, Page 85

**4**Then **I heard the number** of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

***See the handouts “Who are the 144,000?” “Tribes of Israel” and “Numbers in Revelation 7” for more on these numbers***

*Brighton, p. 192: “ It is clear that a redefined list of the twelve tribes of Israel is used in Rev 7:5-8: a list that has been cleansed of any association of apostasy and idolatry; a list that emphasizes faithfulness to God, hence the inclusion of Joseph and Levi; and in particular a list that focuses on the Messiah because of the placement of Judah.” Cf. Jesus Matthew 3:9*

*v. 4.* ***I heard the number****& v. 9* ***I looked*** *. . .* ***a great multitude that no one could count.*** *Poetic / visionary parallel (Peterson) Cf. Psalm 1*

**5**From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed,

from the tribe of Reuben 12,000,

from the tribe of Gad 12,000,

**6**from the tribe of Asher 12,000,

from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000,

from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000,

**7**from the tribe of Simeon 12,000,

from the tribe of Levi 12,000,

from the tribe of Issachar 12,000,

**8**from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000,

from the tribe of Joseph 12,000,

from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.

**Psalm 1 (NIV)**

Blessed is the one

 **who does not walk in step with the wicked**

**or stand in the way that sinners take**

 **or sit in the company of mockers**,

2 but **whose delight is in the law** of the Lord,

 and **who meditates on his law** day and night.

3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,

 which **yields its fruit** in season

and whose **leaf does not wither**—

 whatever they do prospers.

4 Not so the wicked!

 They are like chaff

 that the wind blows away.

5 Therefore **the wicked will not stand in the judgment**,

 **nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous**.

6 For **the Lord watches over the way of the righteous**,

 but **the way of the wicked leads to destruction**.

 **9**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 before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding **palm branches** in their hands. **10**And they cried out in a loud voice:

***v.9 - from every nation, tribe, people and language –*** *that these are “from” every nation, tribe, people, and language indicates that they are representatives of each tribe, not some chosen for some inherent quality or achievement.*

*Brighton suggests that v.1-8 suggest a vision of the Church Militant, while the vision of v. 9-17 suggest a vision of the Church Triumphant:*

*The so-called* ***Church Militant*** *(v.1-8) is (1) still on earth; (2) limited in number; (3) subject to the distresses of the four riders / winds; (4) in need of the assurance of the seal of God; (5) arrayed in “military order”; (6) assumed to be “on mission status” (Matthew 28:19-20)*

*The so-called* ***Church Triumphant*** *(v.9-17) is (1) in the throne room of heaven; (2) countless in number; (3) not subject to the distresses of the four riders / winds; (4) confirmed in the assurances of the seal of God; (5) dressed in white robes and carrying palm branches; (6) assumed to be on “mission completed” status; (7) celebrating the victory that has been won by Christ, shared by them, and will be shared by those who will join them.*

***v. 9 -10 palm branches . . .* “*Salvation belongs to our God”*** *Cf. John 12:13 (Remember what “Hosanna” means?)*

“**Salvation belongs to our God**,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

 **11**All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, **12**saying:

“Amen!
Praise and glory
and wisdom and thanks and honor
and power and strength
be to our God for ever and ever.
Amen!”

 **13**Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

 **14**I answered, “Sir, you know.”

***v. 14 - the great tribulation*** *– not your average tribulation, but “the great” one (cf. Rev. 20:7, Matt. 24:15-31). But “some tribulations and sufferings will be so piercing and poignant that the very faith and foundation of the believer’s hope will be severely tried, almost to the point of despair and defeat. For that Christian at that moment, his sufferings and trials are his great tribulation” (Brighton, p. 199).*

 And he said, “These are they who have come out of **the great tribulation**; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. **15**Therefore,

“they are before the throne of God
    and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne
    will shelter them with his presence.
**16**‘Never again will they hunger;
    never again will they thirst.
The sun will not beat down on them,’[Isaiah 49:10]
    nor any scorching heat.
**17**For the Lamb at the center of the throne
    will be their shepherd;
‘he will lead them to springs of living water.’ [Isaiah 49:10]
    ‘And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’[Isaiah 25:8]”

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Behold a host, arrayed in white,Like thousand snow-clad mountains bright! With palms they stand; Who is this bandBefore the throne of light?These are the saints of glorious fame,Who from the great affliction came And in the flood Of Jesus’ bloodAre cleansed from guilt and shame.They now serve God both day and night;They sing their songs in endless light. Their anthems ring As they all singWith angels shining bright. | Despised and scorned, they sojourned here;But now, how glorious they appear! Those martyrs stand, A priestly band,God’s throne forever near.On earth they wept through bitter years;Now God has wiped away their tears, Transformed their strife To heav’nly life,And freed them from their fears.They now enjoy the Sabbath rest,The heav’nly banquet of the blest; The Lamb, their Lord, At festive boardHimself is host and guest. | O blessèd saints in bright arrayNow safely home in endless day, Extol the Lord, Who with His WordSustained you on the way.The steep and narrow path you trod;You toiled and sowed the Word abroad; Rejoice and bring Your fruits and singBefore the throne of God.The myriad angels raise their song;O saints, sing with that happy throng! Lift up one voice; Let heav’n rejoiceIn our Redeemer’s song! |

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