

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Chapter 7 is an aside from the main narrative of Revelation. In it we see all three of the basic peoples of scripture: The Jews, the Gentiles, and the church. Each has a distinct history in the time leading to the end and follows its own track through Revelation. Let's summarize:

The Jews: God's Earthly People

- Unbelieving Jews are among the persecutors of the early church in Chapters 2-3.
- A remnant of 144,000 are sealed for salvation in Chapter 7. They reappear at the start of Chapter 14.
- The Jews will worship in an earthly temple during the tribulation and converted Jews will evangelize the Gentiles (Chapter 11).
- In Chapter 12, Israel is pictured as a woman who gives birth to a Son (Christ). She is later pursued by a dragon (Satan), symbolizing persecution suffered by the Jews during the tribulation.
- In fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, the Jews are gathered again into the land of Israel during the millennium (Chapter 20). They will continue to observe the law of Moses, including temple sacrifice.

The Church: God's Heavenly People

- The church is raptured to heaven in Chapter 4, when the believers are given new bodies and rise to meet the Lord in the air.
- The twenty-four elders represent the church in heaven, praising God and following events on the earth.
- The church is the bride in the marriage supper of Chapter 19.
- The Christian saints accompany Christ at His victorious second coming in Chapter 19 (but note there is no mention of their using their swords on His behalf).
- During the millennium, the saints will rule

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over the earth from heaven.

- The church enjoys eternal blessings with the Lord in the New Jerusalem along with the redeemed of every age.

The Gentiles represent the third great ethnic group of Scripture. They receive the wrath of God through much of Revelation, with a notable exception. See below.

Notes on Chapter 7

7:1-3 The judgment pauses for a short time as the servants of God are sealed. The four winds are reminiscent of the four kingdoms of Daniel 7 and may represent hostile earthly powers.

7:4-8 The listing of specific tribes indicates these are literal Jews and not symbolic of some group of Christians. The list of tribes differs from the traditional roster in that Levi is present, Dan is absent, and Joseph takes the place of his son Ephraim. Some say that Dan was the first tribe to turn to idolatry; others that the prophecy of Genesis 49:17 predicts that the Antichrist will come from Dan.

7:9 The mention of nations, tribes, and people indicates that these are Gentiles. That they are distinct from the Jews in the earlier verses tells us this is not the raptured church, where Jews and Gentiles are fused together into a single people (Eph. 4:15).

It may be they are a select number of Gentiles who are sealed along with the Jews and pass through the tribulation with them. It appears they will serve in the millennial temple with the Jews, somewhat like the Levites.

7:14 The members of this multitude are saved by trusting in the blood of Jesus, just like all believers.

7:15-17 The blessings promised in these verses tend to align with the kingdom prophecies of the Jews more than the heavenly blessings of the church.