



Study

7

Alpha & Omega

Bible Studies in the Book of Revelation

Study # 7: Revelation chapter 7

Photo by Aaron Burden on Unsplash

ABOUT “Alpha & Omega”

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

~ Revelation 1:8

Alpha & Omega is the second series of Bible Studies especially written so that you can do them alone at home, or with others in a group. They don't depend on a leader or someone affirming the right answer. The title of this series comes from the introduction of John's letter to God's people, preparing them for the persecution and difficulty the Church of Christ was about to face. But it gives them (and us) two views of this: the seen reality of what God's people experience, and the unseen reality of God's glorious and gracious rule in Christ over all these events. They suffered, and we will suffer, but Christ rules even over the suffering ... and he is returning soon with saving victory for his Church!

INTRODUCING REVELATION 7

Revelation 7 is another passage where unnecessary and silly twisting of symbolism into a fantastical “reality” entertains the pens (computers) and tongues of many as they try to find an exact 144,000 somewhere in the kingdom of God. But this can go beyond ridiculous daydreams to what – as in the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses, whose lies deceive thousands with the fear that only 144,000 will enter heaven to be with Christ – is simply evil. Hopefully the simplicity and clarity of this chapter will become evident as it is read in the way it is written.

In Chapter 6, the Lamb (Christ) began to unseal the scroll that reveals the history of the tribulation – the time from the first to the second coming of Christ. The first four seals when broken gave rise to the symbolism of four terrifying horses and horsemen released upon the earth, making clear to the seven churches in Asia that the conquering and slaughter and famines and death they were about to face were God's judgement, sent as a foretaste of the wrath to come.

But the believers in Asia were not left with that dismal picture alone, for as the symbolic breaking of the seals continued, they learnt that the faithful who died entered into a righteous fellowship with God while they awaited the completion of the redemption of those for whom Christ died – then, and only then, to see God's final judgement in wrath upon the enemies of Christ and salvation in its fulness for his people.

This chapter returns to the image (with a slightly new symbolism) of the four judgements – further delaying the opening of the seventh seal while God reassures the believers in the Asian churches (and us!) that his salvation will be dramatically glorious and perfect for all of Christ's people – irrespective of the suffering they may experience on this earth while they await the return of Christ.

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Alpha & Omega #7 Revelation 7

GETTING STARTED

Please remember that this is God's Word. God used John to write God's words in God's way for us. So

1. Pray, asking God to give you his Spirit so that you will honour him, understand his word, and learn how to live better for Jesus.
 2. Read the passage listed above for this study. What is it mainly about?
 3. Now discuss/think about/answer the questions that follow.
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THE "SEALING" OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Please read Revelation 7:1-10

1. How are the judgements of Revelation 6 pictured in verse 1 of this chapter?

 2. Why are they prevented from continuing with their terrible judgements?
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SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Most of us today are unfamiliar with the idea of ancient "seals." These were impressions, often in wax using the dignitary's signate ring (ie the ring that stamped his signature) on a document to authenticate it. But it was also a term used for the branding (with a hot iron) their owner's signature/symbol on the forehead of on the back of the hand a slave. It is helpful to think of this sealing as similar to a brand or trade-mark in today's commercial world: the brand indicates authenticity, ownership, control etc.

3. Who is sealed and what "ownership" and protection is guaranteed by that according to v3?

4. What is the "seal" or branding given to Christians? (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:21,22)

5. What is the evidence that they have been "branded" in this way? (Galatians 5:22-24)

6. v4: The numbers in Revelation so far have been symbolic, rather than literal. There are a number of indicators that 12,000 from 12 tribes of Israel is symbolism again, not literalism:
 - a. See 7:9.

 - b. Consider these verses too, then explain what is shared by every instance of 12 or its multiples: 4:4; 21:16; 21:17; 22:2

 - c. The list of the tribes is not "normal", beginning with Judah instead of Reuben; no Dan; Joseph & Manasseh but not Ephraim

 - d. The 12 Tribes of Israel appear to represent *all* the redeemed (7:9 again & 5:9)

Alpha & Omega #7 Revelation 7

THE MULTITUDE OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Please read Revelation 7:11-1

7. Where is this multitude to be found?

8. What makes clear that that the multitude of 144,000 symbolises all believers?

9. What are they doing?

10. What reasons do they give for their worship of God?

11. List the blessings they enjoy and contrast them with what they experienced in the tabulation.

12. What symbolism (not explained here but is made plain as found in other portions of Revelation and other parts of Scripture) ...

a. ... As can be found in Revelation?

b. ... As can be found in the New testament?

c. ... As can be found in the Old Testament?

13. Pretty much every promise so far has been accompanied by an encouragement for the churches in Asia to do something (be faithful ... persevere ... repent etc). But there is no direct instruction to the churches in this chapter. What is the message for them and us even without specific instruction?

14. In the light of this passage: What can you thank God for? What can you pray for others? What can you trust God for?

15. In the light of this passage, what changes do you need to make: In your faith? In your worship? In your attitude? In your life?