

God Always Provides A **Witness!** Will You Be One?



*"³ ...until we have placed the seal of God on the foreheads of his **servants**. And I heard how many were marked with the seal of God—144,000 were sealed from all **the tribes of Israel**"* Revelation 7:3-4 NLT

- Do you think the world will get so evil that churches will close and no one will know about God or hear the Gospel?

Revelation 6 begins the **7-year Tribulation**, the darkest days of human history (Dan. 12:1; Matthew 24:21-22). The Bible reveals that no time in history equals the turmoil, destruction, and display of evil as that of the Tribulation period.

Revelation 7 continues the description of the Tribulation. We see that God provides a **witness** to the Gospel even during the dark days of the Tribulation. This is evident by **the saved martyrs** mentioned in verses 9-17. No matter how Godless and sinful the world becomes - God always provides a witness. Paul wrote in Romans 5:20, "*...But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant.*" NLT.

The Central Lesson:

Even in the darkest days - God raises up His servants to advance the light of the Gospel. Are you willing to be His witness in today's darkness?

1. **ANGELS** are real and active in carrying out God's agenda on earth (7:1-3).

*"Then I saw four **angels** standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds so they did not blow on the earth or the sea, or even on any tree."*

Angels are created spirit beings that serve God. They are mentioned 108 times in the Old Testament and 165 times in the New Testament. They are active in the world even though we cannot see them. They are powerful beings. They can hold back the four winds (Rev. 7:1) and have power over the earth and sea (Rev. 7:2-3). They sometimes manifest themselves in their physical appearance as men (Heb. 13:2).

In the Bible, angels **communicate** messages from God to people (Acts 7:52-53), **provide** for needs (Matt. 4:11; Gen. 21:17-20), **protect** (Dan. 3 and 6), **deliver** from danger (Acts 5 and 12), **strengthen** and **encourage** (Matt. 4:11; Acts 5:19-20; 27:23-25), **answer prayer** (Dan. 9:20-25; 10:10-12; Acts 12:1-17).

2. In a world dominated by evil, God still has His **WITNESSES** who serve and advance the Kingdom of God (7:3-8).

*"Wait! Don't harm the land or the sea or the trees until we have placed the seal of God on the foreheads of his **servants**."* (7:3) NLT

Who Are the 144,000?

The Jehovah's Witness cult believes that only 144,000 persons will go to heaven, starting from the time of Jesus. They will be co-rulers with Jesus over the inhabitants of a paradise earth. The 144,000 will have spiritual bodies, but everyone else will have a fleshly body. They believe the Jehovah's Witness "anointed remnant" of the 144,000 has replaced Israel and are "spiritual Jews."

The Bible makes **two important designations** about the 144,000. They are (1) **Jews** from the tribes of Israel (7:4-8), and (2) God's "**servants**" (7:3).

*"⁴ And I heard how many were marked with the seal of God—144,000 were sealed from all **the tribes of Israel**: ⁵ from Judah 12,000, from Reuben 12,000, from Gad 12,000, ⁶ from Asher 12,000, from Naphtali 12,000, from Manasseh 12,000, ⁷ from Simeon 12,000, from Levi 12,000, from Issachar 12,000, ⁸ from Zebulun 12,000, from Joseph 12,000, from Benjamin 12,000.*

The Bible does **not** explicitly say that the 144,000 are **witnesses**. However, this is **highly likely since proclaiming the Gospel is the primary job of God's servants** (See Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). Furthermore, Jesus said that there would be an **aggressive expansion of the Gospel** throughout the world **during the Tribulation period**. *"And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come."* (Matthew 24:14). The 144,000 will be a significant part of God's witness proclaiming the Gospel during the Tribulation period.

Notice the Adjustment to the List of the 12 Tribes of Israel

The Revelation list of the 12 tribes has some subtle changes to the Old Testament list of Genesis 49. (1) **Judah** is mentioned first because it is both the tribe of David and Jesus the Messiah (Genesis 49:8-12; Matthew 1:1). (2) **Levi** had no tribal allotment because the Levites work for God in the Temple (Deuteronomy 18:1), but in Revelation 7, the tribe is given a place as a **reward for faithfulness**. (3) **Dan** is not mentioned, possibly because it was known for **rebellion and idolatry** (Genesis 49:17 Judges 18:30-31). (4) The two tribes representing **Joseph** (usually called Ephraim and Manasseh, after Joseph's sons) are called Joseph and Manasseh because of Ephraim's rebellion. **Notice that faithfulness to God is honored. Unfaithfulness results in a loss of honor.**

What is meant by the phrase "**SEAL**" (7:3)?

In the Bible, a seal indicates **ownership** and **protection**. Today, God's people are "**sealed**" by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14). As Bible teacher Warren Wiersbe explains: "This is God's guarantee that we are saved and safe, and that He will one day take us to heaven."

The "**seal**" of God on believers today, and the 144,000 during the Tribulation period, is not visible to the natural eye but is easily recognized in the spirit world. The Angels of God, as well as the demons and Satan himself, can immediately see the seal and know who God's servants are.

Conclusion:

Even in the darkest days - God raises up His servants to advance the light of the Gospel. Are you willing to be His witness in today's darkness?

Action Steps: ► Receive Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's Bible study. ► Attend a small group. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus. ► Read Revelation 7. *What do you learn about witnessing?*