

Revelation as Trilogy
The Fellowship of the King
Chapter 7: God Seals the Fellowship

Introduction: As with any good hero story, the hero needs a team, or in this case a fellowship to travel with him. The hero needs a group of loyal followers who will be willing to go on the journey of salvation and risk everything, including death, along the way. This chapter shows us that God will choose a “remnant”, or Fellowship, from among every tribe, nation and language on the face of the earth to travel with the Lamb/Jesus as he works to recreate a fallen and chaotic creation. This fellowship is the answer to the question from the previous chapter, “Who is able to stand?” As you read this, note the emphasis on the universality of the gospel and the assurance that comes from being one of the elect fellowship. This chapter also contains some foreshadowing of the outcome of the hero’s work, intended to give hope to those living in times of distress.

The Story: This chapter begins with a calm amidst the storm of chaos being unleashed on the earth. In some ways it is reminiscent of being in the eye of a hurricane when all is calm, but you know that there is more storm to come. God’s angels at the four corners of the earth (meaning covering all of creation), are instructed to hold back the winds of destruction just long enough for God’s angelic messenger who is coming with the rising sun, to choose and seal the Fellowship. The Fellowship will consist of 144,444 persons, with 12,000 coming from each of the Jewish tribes. There are several things we should note about this choosing and sealing. First, within the Old Testament there are no fewer than twenty variants of a listing of tribes. This means that this list is representative of the righteous remnant of Israel, and not an exhaustive listing of all the tribes. This can be seen in the fact that the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are missing. It is speculated that they are missing because the Old Testament lists them as apostate and perhaps even bringing forth the evil-one (Judges 18:18-19). Second, the Jewish tribes are sealed before the Gentiles are sealed because they are those who kept the faith and birthed the Christ (remembering that the Jerusalem church was composed of Jews and not Gentiles). Third, the number 144,000 in numerology is the perfect holy number, or $12 \times 12 \times 1000$. It is not an actual head count. Finally, to be sealed means to be given God’s mark, which claims the individual as God’s own and a member of the fellowship.

As we continue in the chapter, we discover that the fellowship is not limited to the righteous Jewish remnant. It also includes “a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages...” These are the Gentiles who have been faithful to the hero/Lamb as members of the fellowship. Though they are not sealed in the same way, they are given white robes (which were given at baptism to new believers), palm branches (which are waved when a king enters a city) and sing to the glory of God (note again the seven-fold song of praise). These are those who have come through the ordeal and will be cared for by God and the Lamb until the hero’s recreative quest is complete. Finally note the language about springs of water and wiping away all tears. We will encounter these images once again at the end of the book.

Reflection: this chapter is the conclusion to the first section of the book. It leaves us with several important concepts. First, God has a plan for the redemption of creation. Second, this plan involves the work of the hero/Lamb/Jesus. Third, this redemptive work will not be easy. People will perish along the way. Fourth, the hero does not go on this redemptive journey alone but has a Fellowship beside him. Fifth, the Fellowship is a chosen community, sealed for the journey. Sixth, God cares for and comforts members of the Fellowship who die for their faith.

Questions:

1. How do you understand this concept of being sealed in your own life?
2. Does this explanation of the 144,000 help or hinder your understanding of the number?
3. What is the most meaningful part of this chapter for you?