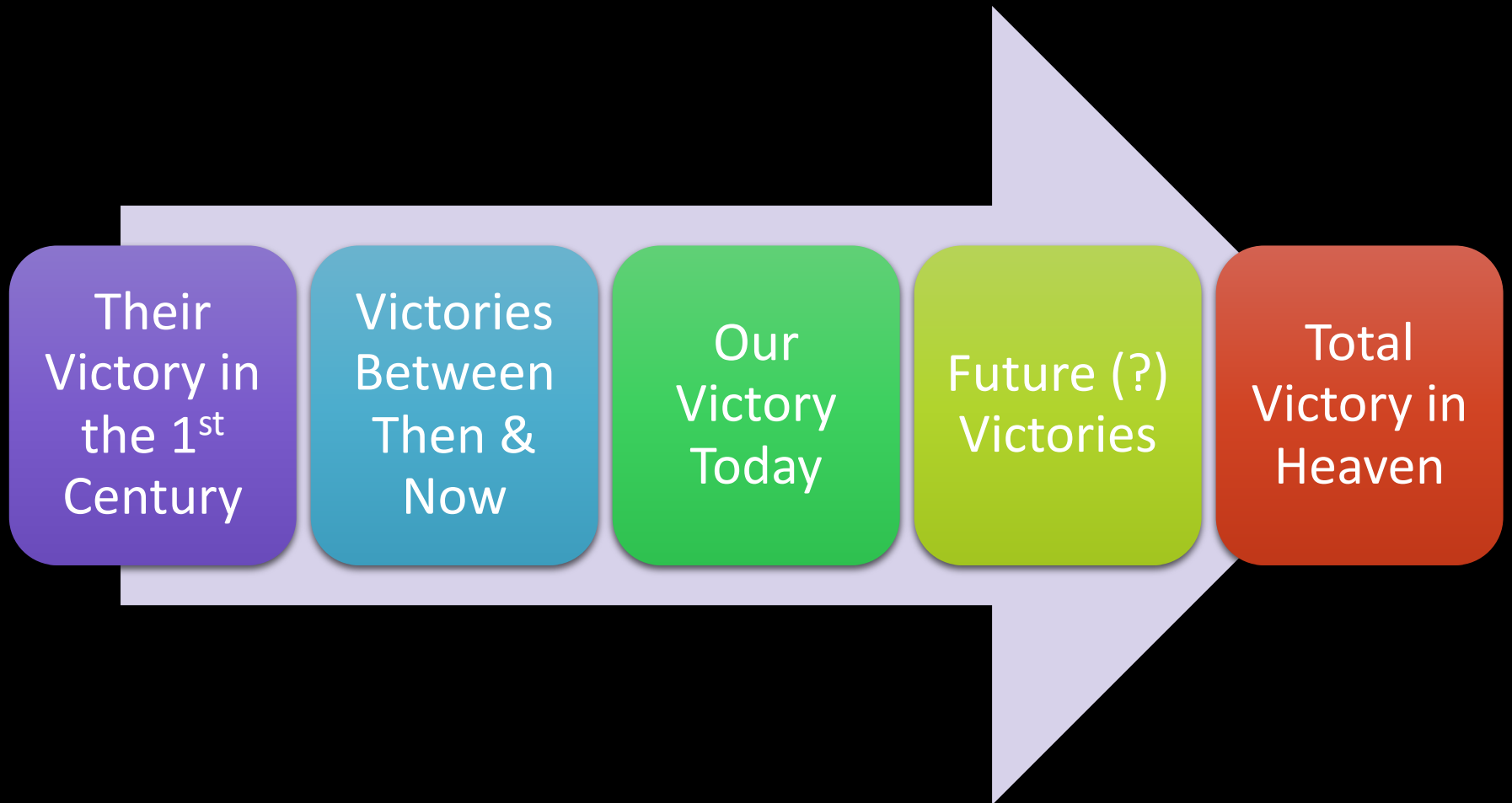


The Book of Revelation



A Contextually Appropriate Paradigm for Understanding Revelation 7; 20-22

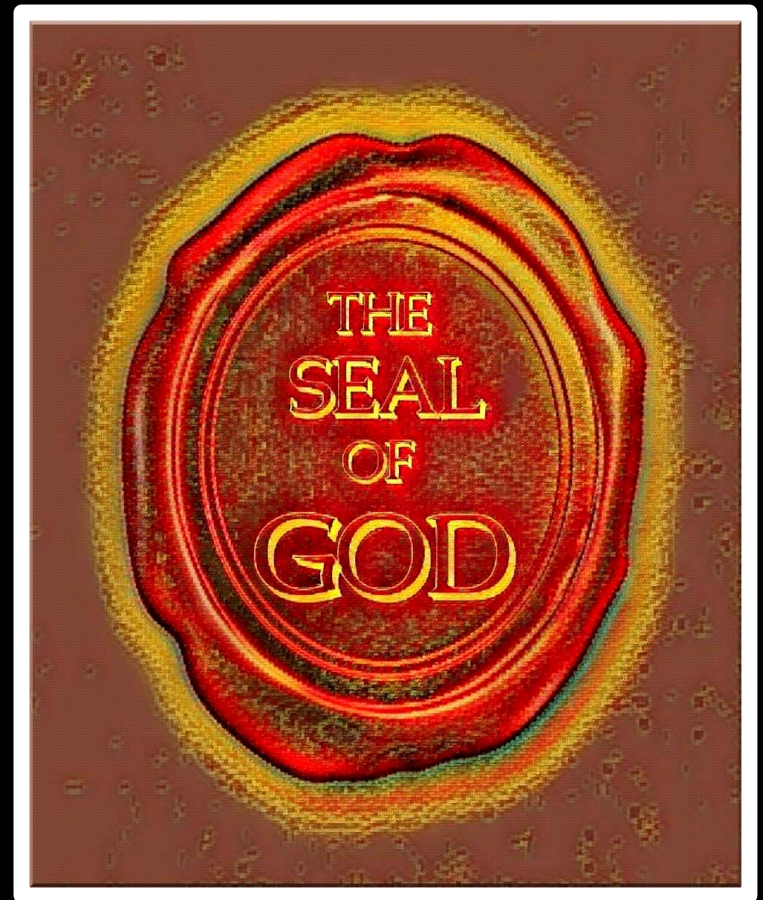


A Dramatic Delay... (7:1-3a)

- “Four” = Physical or Earthly Things
- “Winds/Corners of the Earth” = Indicates those committed to sin and refusing the salvation of Christ (cf. 6:15 and “the kings of the earth”). Wind was often connected to coming terror (e.g., the 10 plagues; Isa. 57:13; Jer. 18:17; 49:36; 51:1; Zech. 6:5). Wind/Spirit can also indicate salvation for God’s people (Ps. 18:10; Ps. 104:4//Heb. 1:7; Jn. 3:7f).
- “from the rising of the sun” – the place of God & salvation (e.g., 22:16; Ps. 84:11; Ezek. 11:23; 43:2; Mal. 4:2); hope is real, but only for God’s people (cf. 6:12)
- “The earth and sea (and trees)” = the dominion of Rome’s power; more importantly, the current agency of Satanic opposition
- “The Seal of the Living God” = Ownership (cf. 13:17; 14:1, 4, 9-11; 2Tim. 2:19); this also *authenticates* and *validates their status as* God’s people
- The Message: God’s heavenly army will afflict the unregenerate for their persecution of God’s people, but not until God’s people are first clearly identified as His

Sealing of the Faithful (7:3b-8)

- Clearly rooted in the symbolism of Ezek. 9:4ff in which God's people are spared from God's destructive judgment.
- Contrast between those marked by God (7:3; 14:1; 15:2; 20:4; 22:4) and those marked by Satan (13:15-18; 9:4; 14:9-11; 16:2; 19:20)
- God's name is upon His people (cf. 3:12; 14:1; 22:4). Also, strong connections to the Christian's relationship to the Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30; Rom. 8:16).
- Note that they are exempt from *punishment*, not necessarily *suffering* (cf. Ezek. 21:3ff).



The 144,000 (7:3b-8)

- 144,000 is a symbolic number (cf. 1:1; Matt. 18:22) including TOTALITY – all of God’s people will be cared for! (12x12x10x10x10; cf. 13:16f; Isa. 40:26; Amos 9:9; Matt. 10:29f)
- Israel is a figure for God’s true people (cf. Gal. 6:16)
- This is military imagery – OT censuses were to determine fighting strength
 - Notice the male specification in chapter 14
 - Robes washed as after battle (7:14; cf. Num. 31:19f, 24)
- Judah is listed first as the tribe of the Lion (cf. 1Chron. 12:23ff; Gen. 49:8-10)
- Dan and Ephraim (changed to “Joseph”) are noticeably omitted; is this because they are associated with idolatry in the OT?

The Triumphant Saints (7:9-17)

- The “144,000” & the “innumerable multitude” are in reference to the same people (McGuiggan, 118).
- This is a before and after picture: the first in reference to *the fighting force for the battle*; the second in reference to *the victorious*.
- The innumerable multitude is an intentional fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (cf. Gen. 13:16; 15:5; 17:4f; 22:17).
- They are from “every nation” (cf. 5:9; Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:29), “standing” (cf. 6:17), and in white robes (3:4f; 6:11; 19:8).

The Triumphant Saints (7:9-17)

- A Feast of Tabernacles scene (cf. Lev. 23:40, 43)
- Imagery used of military victory in intertestamental literature (cf. 1Macc. 13:51; 2Macc. 10:7)
- Singing again for the salvation brought through Christ as Jesus is depicted as equal in deity with the Father. Essentially, we are returning to the throne scene in chapters 4-5. Note the priestly verse followed by a responsive verse.
- God's reign brings victory. They partake in victory by resisting Roman (aka Satanic) power (cf. 12:11).

The Triumphant Saints (7:9-17)

- “Who are these?” – John wisely deflects to the elder (cf. 5:5)
- The “great tribulation” – used in Matt. 24:21, 29 of a temporal judgment on Jerusalem (cf. 1Cor. 7:26). It conveys a time of judgment on a wicked nation and the testing of the faith of God’s people. This is one of those places where capitalization and paragraph headers can be misleading...
- Washing of their robes (cf. Isa. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1Jn. 1:7) – tribulation refined their faith, reflected in their clothing
- Glorious victory, relationship, and priestly imagery originating in the OT, descriptive of fellowship with God in the Messianic era (cf. Ps. 23; 121:5f; Isa. 4:5f; 25:6-8; 40:11; 49:8-10; 60:19-22; 65:13-19; Ezek. 37:26-28; 47:1-12; also, Jn. 4:14; 1Cor. 3:16; 2Cor. 6:16). Note that these believers are in the inner sanctuary (*naos*), not just the general Temple (*hieron*). They serve day and night (cf. 4:8; 12:10; 14:11; 21:25; 22:5; Luke 2:37).

Is 7:9-17 Describing Heaven?

- Yes, PRINCIPLES here can be applied to Heaven. However, do not bypass the well-established context and purpose of the book!
- John is speaking to a specific audience (1:4, 11, 20 – *7 churches of Asia Minor*) in a specific time (1:1, 3 – *shortly, near*) with specific issues (Chs. 2-3) with a specific genre (1:1 - *apocalypse*) that incorporates hyperbolic and intense imagery (1:1 – *signified*).
- The language here is used repeatedly in the Old Testament in reference to victories THIS side of Heaven. No more hunger, thirst, etc. are all images of God's care that can and are used of God's people in their earthly experience. When we only apply this in reference to Heaven, we bypass what the Scriptures say and we also develop systems of thought foreign to the Scriptures (e.g., no tears in heaven, even though God in Heaven is repeatedly said to be sad, grieved, have pity, etc. – e.g. Gen. 6:6; Judg. 2:18; Ps. 78:40; Isa. 63:9f; Jer. 14:17; Eph. 4:30).
- “*We must keep remembering that all John sees is vision—he is seeing pictures. These pictures may or may not embody some literal elements...Because John describes an object, person or group, as being in heaven, we are not to automatically conclude that's where they dwell. There are reasons why certain things are seen as in, or coming from heaven and others are seen coming out of the earth or sea, or the abyss.” (McGuiggan, *The Book of Revelation*, LTBSST, 120)*

The Big Picture of Chapter 7

“All right—what did we see in chapter seven? We saw a message of comfort to the brotherhood in the face of the coming storm. We saw the believers as a numbered throng of 144,000 sealed against punishment and marked out to be preserved through the storm. We then saw that same group as having victoriously come through the great tribulation. In this view they were described as joyful worshippers at a fest of Tabernacles and then as a flock of well-shepherded sheep! Assurance is the key thought throughout the section.”

*(Jim McGuiggan, *The Book of Revelation*, Let the Bible Speak Study Series, 1976, 120-121)*

The Overall Message



In the end;
GOD WINS