

# SEQUOYAH HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## **“Seals: Marked”**

**Dr. Jay Howell**

June 27, 2021

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*And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the people of Israel:*

*From the tribe of Judah twelve thousand sealed,  
from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand,  
from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand,  
from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand,  
from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand,  
from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand,  
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from the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand sealed.*

*Revelation 7:1-8*

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Then John actually lists the number of those who were marked, those who were sealed, at 144,000, 12,000 from each tribe of Israel. Now there's been a lot of debate on who these 144,000 are supposed to be, because they show up more than once. Some say they're the faithful remnant of the people of Israel, after all it says they're from every tribe of Israel. Others say they're Jewish Christians who faced persecution. Still others say that they're meant to signify the "spiritual Israel," that is, the combined people of God, Israel and the church. Then, there's that number, 144,000. Is that an exact figure, no more no less, as in the angel only had so many passes to hand out? Or is it a nod on the number 12, which often suggests completion, which is then squared and multiplied by a thousand to emphasize that the total is more universal?

A lot of ways you could go with that it—I personally think it's a more symbolic, spiritual description than a precise numbering of x number of people from this group and that group—but the far more important thing that John's vision lifts up is what happens to them, what happens to these 144,000. They're marked with the seal of the living God.

So what does it mean to be marked?

I remember a friend growing up who shared her impression of life with an older brother. Her older brother was the protective sort, in a good way though—being protective can turn into being controlling sometimes, but that wasn't the case for her she said. Instead, she said it was like going through life with a force field around her. Why? Because she knew if anyone messed with her, her older brother would make sure nothing happened to her and, you know, that things got sorted out.

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Then John actually lists the number of those who were marked, those who were sealed, at 144,000, 12,000 from each tribe of Israel. Now there's been a lot of debate on who these 144,000 are supposed to be, because they show up more than once. Some say they're the faithful remnant of the people of Israel, after all it says they're from every tribe of Israel. Others say they're Jewish Christians who faced persecution. Still others say that they're meant to signify the "spiritual Israel," that is, the combined people of God, Israel and the church. Then, there's that number, 144,000. Is that an exact figure, no more no less, as in the angel only had so many passes to hand out? Or is it a nod on the number 12, which often suggests completion, which is then squared and multiplied by a thousand to emphasize that the total is more universal?

A lot of ways you could go with that it—I personally think it's a more symbolic, spiritual description than a precise numbering of x number of people from this group and that group—but the far more important thing that John's vision lifts up is what happens to them, what happens to these 144,000. They're marked with the seal of the living God.

So what does it mean to be marked?

I remember a friend growing up who shared her impression of life with an older brother. Her older brother was the protective sort, in a good way though—being protective can turn into being controlling sometimes, but that wasn't the case for her she said. Instead, she said it was like going through life with a force field around her. Why? Because she knew if anyone messed with her, her older brother would make sure nothing happened to her and, you know, that things got sorted out.

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