

Who is Able to Stand?

Revelation Chapter 7

- I. God has never abandoned His creation.
 - A. In all of God's judgement and wrath, He shows mercy and grace.
 - B. Through all the judgement and wrath in chapters 6 to 19, God pushes the “pause button” and reveals “good news”.
 - C. Chapter 7 shows us there will be great tribulation, but there will be great salvation.
- II. Things will get worse!
 - A. After the seals are opened, the seven trumpets are released followed by the seven bowls of judgement—everything intensifies during the seven year tribulation.
 - B. The big question: 6:17 **For the great day of wrath has come, and who is able to stand?**
- III. The seven-year Tribulation summery.
 - A. There will be a great reckoning.
 - B. There will be demonic troublemaking.
 - C. A time of spiritual outpouring.
 - 1. God's heart is merciful.
- IV. God's pause of judgement—His mercy.
 - A. In chapter 7, two wonderful truths emerge:
 - 1. In wrath God shows mercy.
 - 2. The Lord keeps His promises.
 - B. How will it be possible for people to come to Christ if the church has been “removed”?
 - 1. Two influential witnesses (Chapter 11).
 - 2. A world traveling evangelistic angel (Chapter 14).
 - 3. 144,000 Jewish evangelists.
 - C. God pushes the “pause button” on His wrath (7:1-3).

1. Four angels—Messengers of death and destruction (7:1)
 2. One angel—Messenger of grace and mercy (7:2-3)
- D. The seal of the living God.
1. A seal is a sign of *possession* and *protection*.
 2. All Christians are “sealed” in Christ (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13).
- V. Who are the 144,000?
- A. God keeps His promises to Israel.
 - B. Verse 4 says the 144,000 are from **every tribe of the sons of Israel**.
 - C. God’s irrevocable promise to Israel:
 1. Genesis 12:1-3 (Abrahamic Covenant) 2 Samuel 7:12-16 (The Davidic Covenant) Romans 11:26–29, citing Isaiah 59:20–21; 27:9; Jeremiah 31:33–34 Zechariah 12:10.
 - D. The 144,000 show up with Jesus on Mt. Zion as “redeemed”—Revelation chapter 14
- VI. The second vision (Vs.9-17).
- A. There will be too many of the redeemed to count—reminiscent of Gen. 15:5; 32:12.
 1. From every people group of the world (current count—11243).
 2. A revival the world has never seen!
 - B. These are the ones who “will stand”!— The redeemed in Christ stand before the throne of God and before the Lamb!
 - C. They will be worshipping God for who He is, not for what He has done.
 - D. They “**washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb**”.
 1. There is power in the blood of Jesus Christ.

The blood of Jesus Christ has great power! There is perhaps not a phrase in the Bible that is so full of secret truth as is “The blood of Jesus.” It is the secret of His incarnation, when Jesus took on flesh and blood; the secret of His obedience unto death, when He gave His life at the cross of Calvary; the secret of His love that went beyond all understanding when He bought us with His blood; the secret of the enemy and the secret of our eternal salvation. – Corrie Ten Boom

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Revelation Chapter 7

Please turn in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 7...

Last Sunday we took in the entire chapter 6 which was basically an overview of the coming terrible Tribulation period that will get detailed out over the next 12 chapters...

Someone came up to me after the service last week... after hearing the coming terrible, bad news, obviously having calculated how long it will take for us to get through it all... said to me... *I don't know if I can take so much bad news for the next three, four months...! Do we have to go through all that?...*

I tried to console her by saying *Oh, we won't be going through this for three or four months.... More like a year!*

Better to go through the tribulation hearing about it than physically going through it!... we have a God of grace... in all the bad news in the Bible... there is always good news!... Never has God abandoned His people... Never has He abandoned the earth!...

There has never been a time when God completely withdraws from His world and let's evil have **it ALL**...in all His judgements and in all His wrath ...God shows mercy... has grace....so yes, from chapters 6 all the way to chapter 19 we get an abundance of terrible things going on...

But several times during all His wrath... God pushes the pause button and gives us a break...a parenthesis...often breaks the terrible with good news...very, very good news... we have arrived at one of those times... Revelation chapter 7 is an “interlude” between the 6th and 7th seals of judgement....

This is one of the greatest passages in the entire Bible to encourage us...to know that even though God's terrible wrath will eventually come down on all the earth... in the midst of it all... there will be great victory for Christ...

There will be *great tribulation* but there will be *great salvation*.

Chapter 7 should greatly encourage us to participate in this right now...to be passionate about spreading the good news of Jesus Christ to a lost world... to get even a bit radical about it...because we get the promise from Jesus Christ Himself that people from every *ethnos*...every ethnic group...every nation will be reached and will join together before the throne of God and the Lamb.

There is coming in the future what I see as the greatest revival history has ever seen... possibly greater than Pentecost in Acts when thousands and thousands came to Christ daily... greater than

the Reformation or the Great Awakening in 18th century America...greater than all the revivals put together...

I remember the church I grew up in would periodically have “*Revival Meetings*”...some *prophet from out of town* would come in and we would have a week of meetings to “revive” us... there would be a sign in front of the church that said something like “**Revival tonight from 7:00pm to 8:30 pm**... as if we could schedule revival... Only God revives... and it is on His clock.

God has put on His calendar the ultimate revival during the worst of times the earth will ever see...when the world will be hit the hardest in judgement... will come some of the greatest salvation...

Jesus has been opening the seven seals of judgement... we got through six of the seals in chapter 6... we saw the four Horsemen of the Apocalypse...where massive destructions sweep across the earth...we see martyred saints in heaven praying to God to take vengeance on those who killed them...

Revealing that... even though the church...all believers and followers of Christ... has been removed, raptured from earth prior to the Tribulation... many have come to Christ during the tribulation... and were martyred for their faith.

The rich...the poor... the kings and servants all try to hide from God’s terrible wrath...it all looks hopeless... it appears no one will survive all this...in fact...a quarter of the earth’s population is decimated...

Can it get any worse?... we haven’t even gotten to the seven trumpet judgements... In Revelation 8 hail and fire come down from the sky...Revelation 9 the bottomless pit is opened up and locust, scorpions cover the earth...to torment the unsaved for five months...demons are released... man will want to die...*but death flees from them*...

Seven bowl judgements poured out over the entire earth...chapter 16 malignant sores... water sources are poisoned...turned to blood... the sun scorches everybody... smoke falling stars heat blood poison war demons dragons pain sores spirits like frogs earthquakes hail death torture plagues...all that is really bad!

John ended chapter six with a question in light of this terrible universal judgement...

(17) For the great day of wrath has come, and who is able to stand?

God’s wrath has come... could it get any worse?... To sum it up... the Tribulation period of seven years is **1. “divine reckoning”** where God displays His sovereignty over all mankind... all nations...**2. Demonic troublemaking**... God uses the skill of Satan and his demons to carry out much of His wrath **3. A time of spiritual outpouring!**... which is the heart of God.

Remember Peter?...2 Peter 3:9 **The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.**

God's heart is merciful...

Paul writes to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:4 God...**who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

Habakkuk 3:2

2 O Lord, I have heard the report about You, and I fear. Lord... you are a just God... you are a holy God... You cannot exist with or tolerate evil... you pour out Your wrath on the wicked... all evil.

O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years;

In the midst of the years make it known;

In rage remember compassion.

(17) For the great day of wrath has come, and who is able to stand?

Chapter 7 answers that question...*who is able to stand*....Chapter 7 consists of two visions given to John...the first vision verses 1-8 and the second is 9-17 and these two visions are good news!...very good news!... two wonderful truths emerge... 1. **In wrath God shows mercy**.... And2. **The Lord keeps His promises**...

How will it be possible for people to be saved during the Tribulation if the church has been removed.... Who will preach to them? They will be able to get the gospel from a few sources:

1. There will be two witnesses introduced in chapter 11...two witnesses come to Jerusalem, not only do they have the message, they can do miraculous works... we are told “**the whole world will be watching them**”...

John was probably wondering *How can it be possible for the entire world to watch them?*... not a problem today is it?!...

2. There will be an angel flying around the atmosphere of the earth preaching the gospel... all that the church hasn't been able to do in two thousand years, the angel will be able to do in a couple days...

Revelation 14:6 **Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who inhabit the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.**

3. There will be 144000 Jewish evangelists released on the earth....which I will propose this morning.... Let's go through this:

Read verse 1

Many think these four angels are the same four angels who announced each seal judgement...It is believed that everything that takes place in chapter 7 takes place during that time of artificial peace brought on by the white horseman making this is not in chronological order....

Some have used this verse to show that Science and the Bible are in conflict with each other... the Bible is saying the world is flat... with "four corners"... it's just a figure of speech...it is the idea of a compass with four directional points... North, South, East and West...

The picture is that these four angels are holding back this wrath that God has unleashed on the entire world... all four corners... for a period of time... this is God's grace... it's a pause of His judgement...

These angels apparently have the power to control the elements...to cause calamity over the entire earth... but there is a fifth angel:

Read verse 2

While the other four angels were "*messengers of death and destruction*"... this fifth angel is one of "*grace and mercy*"...and this angel carries with him "*the seal of the living God*"...we're going to see this seal in use in a moment... But in Revelation 14:1 tells us that this seal is the **name of the Lamb and the name of the Father.**

This seal has its roots way back in the Old Testament book of Ezekiel 9:4 **The Lord said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being done in its midst."**

Seals are important... a king would "seal" his legal documents or proclamations with a wax seal... **the seal is a sign of possession and protection**... It is this angel that instructs the other angels to hold back more judgement... pause...

Read verse 3

The seal here is a stamp of divine ownership...it is a divine commitment... from God Himself... that you are His possession... He will protect you... if you have the seal you have God's guarantee He will keep you from His wrath that is to be poured out.

We are sealed with the Holy Spirit

2 Corinthians 1:22

who also sealed us and gave the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts.

Ephesians 1:13

In Him, you also, after listening to the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise... If you have Christ as Lord of your life... you are sealed... He possess you and He will protect you!....THIS IS GOOD NEWS!....By the way... isn't it interesting that when we get to chapter 13 there will be another marking on foreheads... the mark of the beast... the great counterfeit!

Now we meet the 144,000.

Who are the 144000?... it seems like everyone wants to be one of them... the Jehovah Witness say they are the 144000... so do the Seventh Day Adventist...I remember back J.Herbert Armstrong and The Worldwide Church of God said they were the 144,000...*who are they?*

If you're a preterist you would say something like... *it's a symbolic number representing the number of Jewish Christians who escaped doomed Jerusalem before the fall in 70AD.*

If you are an amillennialist you might say *its symbolic of Christ's true church...* if you take the passage literally like I do there is no guessing who the 144000 are... it says right there!

Read verse 4

From every tribe of the sons of Israel... and then He lists them...

Read verses 5-8

So I am convinced that the 144,000 sons of Israel represent Jewish believers... Jews that came to Christ during this Tribulation period... Who now have the seal of God and of Jesus Christ on their foreheads... how dogmatic am I on this?... I've tried the other views... there was a time I might not have been as dogmatic... maybe... puppydogmatic... but I remain pretty dogmatic.

I believe that God remains faithful to His covenant with Israel...

God's promises to Israel

Genesis 12:1-3 (The Abrahamic Covenant)

Yahweh Appears to Abram

And Yahweh said to Abram,

“Go forth from your land,

And from your kin

And from your father's house,

To the land which I will show you;

2 And I will make you a great nation,

And I will bless you,

And make your name great;

And so you shall be a blessing;

**3 And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”**

2 Samuel 7:12-16 (The Davidic Covenant)... Romans 11:26–29, citing Isaiah 59:20–21; 27:9; Jeremiah 31:33–34, says:

“And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.’ As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.”

Zechariah 12:10

10 “And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

Today in Israel this is certainly not happening... not only is it not a “Christian Nation”... it is not a God believing God fearing Jewish nation...most have turned their back on God... but God has not forgotten His people Israel... He does not cancel His irrevocable covenant due to performance...

And for all of us under His New Covenant... the blood of Jesus Christ... we should be very thankful for a God who keeps His promises even when we don’t...Remember... **“Israel the unfaithful... you and me the unfaithful...”** Thank God for His mercy and grace!

Did you know that about $\frac{3}{4}$ of your Bible is about the Hebrew race?...just about every author in Scripture was Jewish...all the apostles of Jesus Christ were Jews.

Oh... Jesus was.... A Jew... the very first Christian congregation was Jewish... the prophetic calendar given to the Old Testament prophet Daniel is about the Jewish nation...one of the biggest parts of the Tribulation is to prepare Israel... the Jews’, to receive its Messiah Jesus Christ...

That’s why the Tribulation is called “*the time of Jacob’s trouble*” ...Jeremiah 30... the tribulation is to give Israel trouble to get their attention... to wake them up...many will be saved and sealed... possessed and protected by God... One of His redeemed....saved!

We see them again in chapter 14... they are surviving the time of Jacob’s trouble...they show up on Mt. Zion with Jesus Christ... the Lamb...listen to what is said about them:

1. Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him 144,000, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. 3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. And no one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been purchased from the earth. 4 These are the ones who are not defiled with women, for they are virgins. **These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as **first fruits** to God and to the Lamb.**

First fruits... firstfruits are the beginning of the harvest—literally the first fruits that the farmer gathers out of the fields, orchards, or vineyards.... The quality of the first fruit that shows up on the vine will be an indicator of the harvest to follow... the Jews here are the first fruits of the Tribulation period... Much... much more is to follow...

And in chapter 7...there is much, much more to follow...but to address future emails of enquiry... yes I know that the list of the 12 tribes is a bit different than the original list... I think...if I counted right... there are 19 lists of the 12 tribes in the Bible... the first list is different than this list...

Some use this difference as “proof” that this is not talking about Israel... I’m not going to get into this because of time... but I will say... Ephraim is not mentioned but Manasseh is...both sons of Joseph... but Joseph is mentioned here but not in the other 19...Dan is not mentioned here...

The quick... Ephraim and Dan are omitted because of gross idolatry....I have a lot I could say on this... but I’m sparring the non-nerds....here’s the thing... the main point of the 144000 is not so much their identity **but that Jews and gentiles alike will one day gather around the throne of heaven!!!** And if you don’t get anything else... get this:

Our God in this day...in that future day...and in every day...has faithful servants who are His possession and they have His protection....as unfaithful as Israel has been... and as unfaithful as we have been... our God is completely and utterly faithful!...having sealed us with the Holy Spirit!

He maintains His covenant promises to His people.... We can find ourselves saved and secure....

Well... I spent too long on the first vision... the second vision is found in verses 9-17... this is amazing...

Read verse 9

Some...many say the number 144000 doesn't mean anything literal...here... John says he couldn't come up with a number... too many of them!... numbers are important!... he had a specific number of 144,000... now the number is too high to be able to count...

This is reminiscent of what God promised Abraham in Genesis 15:5... **“Now look toward the heavens, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.”**... there's too many to count!

Genesis 32:12... **‘I will surely prosper you and make your seed as the sand of the sea, which is too great to be numbered.’**”

Countless people from all four corners of the earth!...today there are 11243 known people groups in the world... John is telling us there will be representatives in heaven from all 1143 groups!...as of 2014 the last study on this by the International Mission Board...IMB... out of the 11243 groups, there are still 3056 still “unengaged”...

3.7 billion people have yet to hear the gospel...John is telling us they will!...

This is where we see a revival unlike the world has ever seen... do you realize the scope of all this?... this is massive... this is so encouraging... today we look around and people are rejecting the gospel all over the four corners...people are going to see the truth!...notice that these people are what?... STANDING!...

(17) For the great day of wrath has come, and who is able to stand?

They...the redeemed in Christ **stand before the throne of God and before the Lamb!**

What are they wearing?... they are clothed permanently in “white robes”... symbolic of ultimate victory.... Victory over what?... sin and death!... white is purity... they stand before God THROUGH the blood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ... imputed... out on them HIS righteousness... the perfect righteousness of the Lamb!

God looks at these white robed believers and He sees His Son... they are worshipping Him...what are their instruments of worship?

What are they holding?... Palm branches...instruments of celebration and praise... Palm Sunday...

What is their confession? ...They are crying out in a loud voice:

Read verse 10

What is their response?

Read verses 11

They fall down as low as they can go and worship...

What did they say?

Read verse 12

This is one of the most holy scenes in the Bible...this is truly sacred...all these on their faces have detached themselves from everything but God and the Lamb... His Son... have you ever been there?

Where you finally let go of everything and are in the absolute presence of the Mighty...we can't stay there very long!... but oh what a glorious position to be in.... to be so enmeshed with the Savior all you see is Him.... Not your failures... your shortcomings...your sin...just Him.

What strikes me is what they said while on their faces... they weren't acknowledging the things God has done... we do that... *thank you God for doing this...for doing that for me... thank you for...* no.... they speak not of *what God has done... but to **who** God is!*

The blessing...

the glory... The glory of God is the beauty of His spirit.... the glory of God is revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth"

Wisdom...His divine unlimited knowledge and perspective.

Thanksgiving...

Honor... His highest esteem.

Power..... *dunamis* (dynamite)...God's omnipotence.

Strength...

All of that... has one focus... one direction.... One and only one who is deserving...**To our God forever and ever!**....

Read verse 13

One of the 24 elders who were sitting on their thrones in chapter 4... remember?... many think these are elders representing the raptured church now all in heaven... one of them is struck by this massive congregation of people in white robes.... *Who are these people?*

I love John's response... it's my response when I don't know the answer but I don't want to admit it...

(14) and I said to him..."my lord, you know..."

Fortunately he did know... must have been playing with John....**these are the ones who come out of the great Tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb...**

The *great Tribulation* is a distinction from general tribulation the world has always seen...Jesus said in John 16:33 **you will always have trouble in this world...**but this is THE Great Tribulation period...

Mathew 24:21 **For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.**

The scene is vivid isn't it?... *they washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb to make them white!*

Power in the Blood (14) Corrie Ten Boom

The blood of Jesus Christ has great power! There is perhaps not a phrase in the Bible that is so full of secret truth as is "The blood of Jesus." It is the secret of His incarnation, when Jesus took on flesh and blood; the secret of His obedience unto death, when He gave His life at the cross of Calvary; the secret of His love that went beyond all understanding when He bought us with His blood; the secret of the enemy and the secret of our eternal salvation. ~

Read verse 15-17