



Date: 4-19-2026

Sermon: Who is Able to Stand?

Text: Revelation 7

Revelation 7:1-3 NLT

1 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. 2 And I saw another angel coming up from the east, carrying the seal of the living God. And he shouted to those four angels, who had been given power to harm land and sea, 3 "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."

Notes:

1. God _____ judgment to seal His people.

Revelation 7:4-8 NLT

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

Notes:

2. God saves a _____ people.

Revelation 7:9-12 NLT

9 After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. 10 And they were shouting with a great roar, "Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!" 11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living beings. And they fell before the throne with their faces to the

ground and worshiped God. 12 They sang, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength belong to our God forever and ever! Amen."

Notes:

3. God's sealed people become a _____ multitude.

Revelation 7:13-17 NLT

13 Then one of the twenty-four elders asked me, "Who are these who are clothed in white? Where did they come from?" 14 And I said to him, "Sir, you are the one who knows." Then he said to me, "These are the ones who died in the great tribulation. They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white. 15 "That is why they stand in front of God's throne and serve him day and night in his Temple. And he who sits on the throne will give them shelter. 16 They will never again be hungry or thirsty; they will never be scorched by the heat of the sun. 17 For the Lamb on the throne will be their Shepherd. He will lead them to springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

Notes:

4. The Lamb brings His people _____ tribulation into eternal comfort.

Application:

1. Stop reading world events as proof that God has lost control.
2. Your greatest need is not physical safety but spiritual security.
3. Do not confuse comfort with security.
4. Worship is the right response to being sealed.
5. If you are not in Christ, Revelation 7 is both warning and invitation.

Notes:

Life Group Questions – Revelation 7

1. Get to Know You

What is one thing in life that makes you feel secure or protected, even in a lighthearted way?

2. Digging Deeper

Revelation 7 answers the question, “Who is able to stand?” by showing that God seals, preserves, and saves His people. What does this chapter teach us about God’s sovereignty, the believer’s security, and the relationship between suffering in this life and final salvation in Christ?

3. Application

What is one fear, pressure, or area of uncertainty in your life where you need to trust more deeply that God is in control and will keep His people?

Revelation 7:1-3

HISTORICIST

Elliott takes the visions of the two companies in this chapter to comprise the second half of the sixth seal. The four destructive angels, withheld until the sealing of God's servants is completed, are said to be the "threatening tempest of barbarians who would be unleashed against the Roman Empire through the sounding of the first four trumpets." The sealing of the servants of God is for their protection against the same invaders. He says, "The sealing appertains chronologically to the times following on the politico-religious revolution under Constantine and his immediate successors in the fourth century."

Having earlier described the gathering of barbarians against Rome under the figure of the sixth seal, Albert Barnes holds that the four winds (v. 1), here seen as being withheld, have a double reference: (1) to the winds of the impending wars that led to Rome's demise (agreeing with Elliott) and (2) to the winds of error that came into the church in the days of Constantine through moral laxitude and later heretics like Arius and Pelagius. As the church was about to face its darkest period, it was necessary for God to identify His genuine servants for spiritual preservation. This is symbolized by the sealing of God's servants in this vision. Barnes sees a probable fulfillment of this prophecy of preservation in the beneficent attitude toward Christians shown by Alaric, the king of the Goths, when he was sacking Rome. Gibbon notes: "Alaric himself was heard to say that he waged war with the Romans, and not with the apostles."

Various alternative views see the sealing as referring to the Albigenses and the Waldensians, to the time of the Reformation, or to the period after the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Of the sealing on their foreheads (v. 3), Matthew Henry writes:

God has a particular care and concern for his own servants in times of temptation and corruption.... The seal of God was set upon their foreheads, a seal known to him, and as plain as if it appeared on their foreheads.

Henry and Adam Clarke, largely historicists, agree with the preterists in seeing chapters 6 and 7 as pertaining mostly to the fall of Jerusalem in the first century. Clarke sees the four corners of the earth (v. 1) as "the extreme parts of the land of Judea." The withholding of the winds is:

keeping the whole land free from evil, till the church of Christ should wax strong, and each of His followers have time to prepare for his flight from Jerusalem, previously to its total destruction by the Romans.... It is worthy of remark that not one Christian perished in the siege of Jerusalem; all had left the city and escaped to Pella.

PRETERIST

The reason for inserting a vision of this sort here, prior to the breaking of the seventh seal, is that the first six seals have been described with a focus on their effect upon the apostate nation of Israel. The question naturally arises—and indeed is asked in the closing verse of chapter 6—whether anyone will be spared the effects of these judgments when they fall. Thus before any wind of disaster can blow across the land, we see that God has identified his faithful ones and set them apart for a separate fate. Jerusalem twice fell to invaders because of God’s judgment upon them: first, in 586 B.C., to the Babylonians; and second, in A.D. 70, to the Romans. Prior to the conquest in 586 B.C., God took care to identify His own and to separate them for safety during the holocaust. This fact was symbolically portrayed to Ezekiel in a vision of an angel marking God’s faithful with an ink mark on their foreheads. Following this marking, six angels with deadly weapons were dispatched against Jerusalem to slaughter its inhabitants (Ezekiel 9).

Here a similar vision is given to John prior to the second destruction of Jerusalem in his own day. This time, before the four winds (v. 1) are unleashed upon Israel, God’s servants are sealed on their foreheads for their preservation. The last words in chapter 6 were: “The great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (Compare the similar question and context of Mal. 3:2). The present vision answers this question. Those who survived the holocaust of A.D. 70 were those who possessed the seal of God (Eph. 1:13), that is, the Jewish believers in Christ. That the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem actually escaped to safety prior to the siege is a matter of history (see note at next section).

FUTURIST

One distinctive of many dispensationalists is their unashamedly literal interpretation of the four winds, the four angels, and the four corners of the earth (v. 1), though Henry Morris points out that the latter expression is better translated “four quarters of the earth” (cf. 20:8). To those who take this literal approach, this passage offers evidence of the angels being in control of the natural elements (e.g., the winds). The mission of these four angels is “to prevent an outbreak of the fury of the elements. Very soon such

an outbreak will occur ... The purpose of the suspension is that a certain group may be sealed" (Ryrie). Walvoord writes:

In contrast to chapter 6 which seems to give the chronological events of the great tribulation, chapter 7 does not advance the narrative but directs attention to two major groups of saints in the tribulation ... A description of this is given ... which is so plain that no one should question whether people will be saved after the rapture.

Mounce understands the interlude of chapter 7 as "a stylistic feature repeated in the trumpet sequence (10:1–11:13) contrasting the security and blessedness which awaits the faithful and the panic of a pagan world fleeing judgment."

SPIRITUAL

After these things I saw (v. 1) does not indicate a sequence of events, but only the order in which the visions were presented to John. The four winds (v. 1) held in abeyance are probably to be identified with the four horsemen who appeared earlier. This suggestion is supported by Zechariah 6:5, where, concerning the four horses that appeared in his vision, the prophet is told "these are four spirits [or winds] of heaven." Thus, the sealing of God's people, as described in this vision, has taken place prior to the breaking of the first four seals.

The terrifying judgments described in the first six seals invite the natural inquiry, "What is to become of the faithful people of God in the midst of such mayhem and devastation?" What John saw here gave the answer to the question with which the previous chapter closes: "Who is able to stand?" The answer, of course, is those who have the seal of God on their foreheads (v. 3; cf. 9:4). Whenever God sends judgment on societies or civilizations, He is mindful of those who are His own and who bear His seal. The four horse judgments are never released upon the earth until God's redeemed are identified and sealed for special protection.

Revelation 7:4-8

HISTORICIST

Elliott and Barnes see the 144,000 as symbolic of the entire church, "the Israel of God." According to Elliott, "the twelve tribes of Israel, and the 144,000 mentioned in them, designate respectively the visible professing Church in the Roman empire, and Christ's true Church, the election of grace, gathered out of it." These, as noted in the previous segment,

arose after Constantine's conversion and were sealed to be preserved against the barbarian invasions about to be unleashed upon the empire in the first four trumpet judgments (ch. 8).

Matthew Henry is a historicist who tends to follow the preterists in his general approach to the breaking of the seven seals:

In this list the tribe of Dan is omitted, perhaps because they were greatly addicted to idolatry; and the order of tribes is altered, perhaps as they had been more or less faithful to God. Some take these to be a select number of Jews who were reserved for mercy at the destruction of Jerusalem; others think that time was past, and therefore it is to be more generally applied to God's chosen remnant in the world.

He thinks the former view is more probable.

PRETERIST

God always has had a remnant in Israel who are faithful despite widespread apostasy. God knows their number. He told Elijah of 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Since Jesus came, the only Jews remaining faithful to the God of Israel were that remnant who recognized Jesus as the Messiah. This faithful remnant in the first century was the original core of the entity we now call the church; many Gentile converts have been added to their company since that time. Just prior to the siege of Jerusalem in a.d. 70, the Jewish Christians in that city were warned by a prophetic oracle to flee from the city (echoing Jesus' own warning in Luke 21:20ff). Historian Eusebius (c. 325) wrote:

The whole body, however, of the church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation, given to men of approved piety there before the war, removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella.

The normative view among evangelical preterists is that this 144,000 is a symbolic number representing the full number of Jewish Christians who escaped the doomed city before its destruction. That this group lived in the first century is confirmed in another passage, which calls them the "firstfruits to God" (Rev. 14:4). Since the church age has been one long

harvest of souls (Matt. 9:37f; John 4:35–38), the “firstfruits” must have come in at the beginning of this time (compare James 1:1, 18, which speaks of the Jewish believers as “firstfruits”). If this 144,000 referred to some future group living in the end times (as the futurists believe), one would expect them to be called the “last fruits.”

FUTURIST

During the Great Tribulation, a godly remnant of 144,000 Jewish people will be sealed (v. 4) for protection from the later plagues (cf. 9:4). Gaebelein explains:

How much confusion could have been avoided if expositors and Christians in searching for the meaning of this vision, had not lost sight of two great facts. 1. This chapter can have no application to the Church on earth, nor to the Church in glory, for the simple reason that the Church is already complete and translated to glory. 2. The vision states clearly that the sealed company is “of all the tribes of the children of Israel.” There are today perhaps a score or more of little sects who all claim to be the 144,000.... If the true interpretation of Revelation is seen, that this company is called after the rapture of the Church, these confusing theories will at once be rejected.

That these are physical Israelites (not to be confused with the church, as in the historicist and spiritual approaches) is underscored by the division of the group into twelve tribes. The church is not divided into tribal divisions. Walvoord writes:

It would be rather ridiculous to carry the typology of Israel representing the church to the extent of dividing them up into twelve tribes as was done here, if it was the intent of the writer to describe the church.

The sealing and preservation of these Jews will fulfill those passages that speak of God bringing Israel to repentance in the last days (Zech. 12:10–13; Rom. 11:26–32). The omission of the tribe of Dan from the list is considered by some an indicator that the Antichrist will be of that tribe (cf. Gen. 49:17; Jer. 8:16). Alternatively, it may be that both Dan and Ephraim are omitted because of their involvement in idolatry.

Despite the silence of the text on the nature of their activities, many affirm that this company will be Jewish believers zealously involved in evangelism in the Tribulation period. Gaebelain asserts, “This sealed company also bears a great testimony. They are the preachers of the Gospel of the Kingdom, as a witness to all nations before the end comes (Matt. 24:14).” Hal Lindsey has referred to the company as “144,000 Jewish Billy Grahams.” Ray Stedman speaks of them as “Christ’s Commandos.”

Mounce and Ladd dissent from the above opinion. Not holding to the pretribulation Rapture thesis, they both believe the 144,000 to be symbolic of the church in the Tribulation. They are thus “the last generation church, not a select group, but the full number of faithful believers alive when that event takes place” (Mounce).

SPIRITUAL

This company represents the church as the true and spiritual Israel. Hobbs gives three reasons for not understanding this vision to apply to ethnic Israelites: (1) such a view imposes a canon of literalism upon a passage belonging to a very symbolic book, (2) the Book of Revelation does not elsewhere draw distinctions between the Jewish Christians and their Gentile counterparts, and (3) the sealing of this group, contrasted with the multi-racial multitude in verses 9 through 17 (who are not sealed), would suggest that only Jewish believers, and not other Christians, are sealed by God for protection.

Wilson expresses a further reason and speaks for many expositors:

That ethnic Israel is not in view is confirmed by the irregular listing of the tribes. Judah is placed first as the Messiah’s own tribe, Dan is omitted, Levi is included as an ordinary tribe and Joseph replaces Ephraim.

The number 144,000 is symbolic, derived by multiplying 1,000, the basic military division in the camp of Israel (Num. 31:4–5), by 144 (twelve squared), symbolizing the faithful remnant of the Old Israel and of the New Israel—thus forming the true spiritual Israel, the church. In any age, it is the church that is preserved from God’s judgments upon nations, though this does not mean the church does not suffer at the hands of sinners (6:9).

Revelation 7:9-17

Historicist

Elliott identifies this innumerable throng with the group sealed early in the chapter. In the former vision, they were sealed for preservation; here they are seen in their eternal blessedness. According to Elliott and Barnes, showing these in heaven is intended to encourage the church of its heavenly triumph—a needed message at a time when the church was facing rapid spiritual decline after Constantine.

Adam Clarke writes: “This appears to mean the Church of Christ among the Gentiles, for it was different from that collected from the twelve tribes [described in verses 4–8].” Distinct from the large but measurable number (144,000) of *Jews* saved in the church, the number of Gentiles will be innumerable and of every ethnic category. “God will have a greater harvest of souls among the Gentiles than he had among the Jews. *More are the children of the desolate than of the married woman.* [Isa. 54:1]” (Matthew Henry). Of this company, Henry continues:

They were invested with the robes of justification, holiness and victory, and had palms in their hands, as conquerors used to appear in their triumphs: such a glorious appearance will the faithful servants of God make at last, when they have *fought the good fight of faith and finished their course.*

Preterist

Having shown John the Jewish saints who would escape the Tribulation of a.d. 70, the Lord now shows him the great throng of Gentiles who will be saved as a result of God’s disowning His rebellious wife and children and seeking a new family (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23, and their applications in Rom. 9:24ff and 1 Pet. 2:9f). This is also spoken of in Isaiah 49:20–22. These ones come out (literally, “are coming out”) of the great tribulation (v. 14) in the sense that their inclusion in God’s kingdom resulted from that event, at which time Judaism came to a formal end and the universal gospel was proclaimed to all nations (cf. Matt. 22:7–9).

Alternately, they are Christian *martyrs*, slain by certain Roman emperors after the fall of Jerusalem (the view of Adams, David S. Clark, and others). Adams writes that: the vast Gentile multitude, coming out of the portending Roman persecution, is also introduced at this point.... Note the heavy emphasis upon the glorious gains and blessings of faithful martyrdom in verses 9, 15, 16, and 17.

Clark writes that:

it has been thought by some that the terms used to describe this multitude are too inclusive or universal to fit the Historicist view of these chapters. In answer it may be said that the terms used to describe the multitudes that were in Jerusalem at Pentecost

were almost as universal; for it is said that there were Jews from every nation under heaven.

Futurist

According to the dispensational view, in addition to the salvation of the Jewish remnant (the 144,000), an even greater number of Gentiles will be brought to Christ by their testimony during the Tribulation. The palm-bearing company is identified with that multitude of Gentiles who come to faith in Christ and often must endure martyrdom for the stand they take.

The mention of the great tribulation (v. 14), when compared to Matthew 24:21, helps to identify the Historicist period to which this company belongs. Some writers (e.g., Walvoord) point out that this group is distinct from the 24 elders (who represent the church, already raptured in 4:1) in that one of the elders (v. 13) speaks here with John about the group in question, but is himself not one of them. The distinction between the church (raptured at Rev. 4:1) and all other saved people in Revelation is an important one to the dispensationalist. Both the 144,000 Jews and this great company of Gentiles are distinct from the church and did not respond to the gospel of grace, which was preached until the Rapture. Having missed the Rapture, they have responded to the Gospel of the Kingdom. They will enter the millennium, but will forever have an inferior status to that of the church. Seiss refers to them as being “not first class saints.”

Here they are seen, as most understand it, in heaven, having come out of the Great Tribulation. Some, including Jennings and Gaebelein, do not believe this scene is in heaven. This vision, according to Gaebelein, applies:

to saved Gentiles on earth.... This great company therefore does not stand before a heavenly throne, but before the millennial throne on earth.... The temple mentioned is the millennial temple (Ezek. 40–44). And then there is a description of the millennial blessings for these redeemed nations.

Not all *futurists* are dispensationalists, however, and some understand this palm-bearing company to be “the church after the tribulation is over, saved in the Kingdom of God, presumed martyred” (Ladd), and representing the “eternal blessedness of all believers when in the presence of God they realize the rewards of faithful endurance” (Mounce). Seiss refers to “an otherwise creditable writer” known to him, who argued “upon the authority of the vision now before us, that there is no such thing as a rapture of the Church before the great tribulation.” This writer, says Seiss, “is sadly mistaken.”

Spiritual

The scene now shifts from earth to heaven. As the 144,000 represent the church as sealed by God on earth, the innumerable host is the church finally glorified in heaven. The church is here revealed to be made up of many nations, whereas the vision of the 144,000 used imagery that identified the church as the spiritual *Israel*. It is sometimes said that the 144,000 symbolize the “church militant” while on earth, whereas the innumerable multitude represent the “church triumphant” in heaven. Lenski writes of the two parts of this chapter that they provide “*the revelation of the church. Sealed—Glorified!*”

This great multitude appears with white robes (v. 9) and palm branches (v. 9), symbolic of purity and victory, respectively. Their earthly trials are over. Their robes are washed (v. 14) white (like those of the martyrs in 6:11), referring, in this case, to the imputed righteousness of God, through faith in the blood of Christ.

The symbolism of the passage is underscored by the mention of washing the robes and making them white in the blood (v. 14), since blood is not usually thought of as a whitening agent. Lenski writes: “This blood and nothing else in the universe whitens us so that we may stand before God.”

Through death, these believers “are coming” (as it reads literally) out of the great tribulation (v. 14). The mention of great tribulation may refer to the “intensification of troublesome times as the Age comes to an end” (Morey).

Wilson argues that, since this picture is of Christians at any time in history, the Tribulation must be taking place throughout the church age:

Here “the great tribulation” does not refer to any particular time of suffering, but includes all the afflictions through which the saints have passed on their way to glory.

A medley of images from Isaiah are employed to convey the blessed state attained by the glorified saints. The expression that God will dwell among them (v. 15) is more literally “will spread his tabernacle over them.” This tabernacle protects the people of God from hunger, thirst, sun, and heat (v. 16). This alludes to Isaiah 4:6—“And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain,” and Isaiah 49:10—“They shall neither hunger nor thirst, neither heat nor sun shall strike them.”

The redeemed are forever in the care of the Lamb, who, like a shepherd, will lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (v. 17). This takes up the imagery from Isaiah 49:10—“for He who has mercy on them will lead them, even by the springs of water He will guide them,” and Isaiah 25:8—“the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.”¹

¹ Steve Gregg, [*Revelation, Four Views: A Parallel Commentary*](#) (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 1997)