

A SERIES THROUGH THE REVELATION

Revelation 7—God’s Divine Seal Of Protection | 5.19.22

I. INTRODUCTION (Revelation 7)

A. At the close of **Revelation 6**, in **Revelation 6:17** the question is asked, “...*who is able to stand?*” And it’s here, in **Revelation 7** that the question is answered just as quick as it’s asked. But this question also isn’t a new question, it’s an ancient question;

1. **Malachi 3:1-3** “Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant. In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like launderers’ soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering of righteousness.”

B. **Revelation 7** primarily serves to give God’s family comfort.

1. Comfort comes from the Latin word, “COM-FORTE.” COM = with and FORTE = strength. To comfort someone, Biblically, means *to give them strength to do something they couldn’t do on their own.*

II. THE 144,000 SEALED BY GOD (Revelation 7:1-8)

A. **Revelation 7:1-3** “After these things I saw four angles standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of living God. And he cried with a loud voice to four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, Do not harm the earth the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”

1. Well, it’s here, (“*After these things*”) in this divine pause between the sixth seal, and the seventh seal (**Revelation 7**) that John see’s these four angels holding back four winds
2. These four winds are referred to as the “*four winds of destruction.*” The idea is that is that they encompass the whole earth, from every place to every space. Winds throughout the scriptures often speak of judgment and destruction (**Zech. 6:5; Dan. 7:2; 8:8; 11:4; Ex. 10:13, 19; 14:21; Jer. 49:36**).
3. But look, again, who’s in control here of these destructive winds? Satan? Demons? Evil leaders? No, it’s God. It’s being “...*granted...*” to them to harm.
4. But now in view is a fifth angel having the seal of the living God along with instructions about not harming anything until the servants of God have been sealed.
 - a. Having The Seal Of The Living God—Most people believe this to be the kings signet ring, which was used to seal documents. It was common in the days of old that slaves were marked on their foreheads to make clear whom they belonged to. This is a seal of authority, ownership, and protection leading to salvation (**Ex. 12; Ezek. 9; Jn. 6:27; 2nd Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30**).
 - b. Do Not Harm The Earth, The Sea, Or The Trees Till We Have Sealed The Servants Of God On Their Foreheads—We are told that this is a seal of protection, but protection from what? Robert Thomas says, “*We aren’t protected from THEM (ill treatment from satan and earth dwellers), but we are protected from HIM.*” Robert Thomas, Revelation 1-7. Pg. 472
 1. Grant Osborne rightly says, “*The saints are protected from the wrath of God, but not the wrath of the beast. They are protected from the seals, trumpets, and bowls, but they will suffer persecution from the earth dwellers.*” Grant Osborne, The Revelation, Pg. 302

2. We are touched by the collateral impact of God's judgments in the earth, but we aren't the subjects of God's judgments (**Rev. 2:10-11; 6:9-11; 13:7; Dan. 7:21**). It's true, God protects our soul, but He also at the same time allows intense suffering to come the way of those that follow Jesus.
3. Those being sealed are the DOULOUS of God, the bond-slaves of God, those that have made Christ the Lord/King/Master of their lives (**Deut. 15**).

B. Revelation 7:4-8 "And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: of the tribe of Judah... Reuben... Gad... Asher... Naphtali... Manasseh... Simeon... Levi... Issachar... Zebulun... Joseph... Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed."

1. Well, here's a slightly sticky part of the Revelation. Most of the commentators are divided as to who these people are. I believe them to be a select group of ethnically Jewish believers. This number (144,000) doesn't represent the fullness of Jews that will be saved, or used by God, but a special group that God has singled out for a specific purpose of witnessing to the nations.
2. Among the Old Testament there are around 18 lists of the sons of Jacob/Israel, and different tribes are omitted at different times, but all lists include 12 tribes. This is the 19th appearance of their names and this ones different from all the rest (**Gen. 29:32-35; 35:22-26; 46:8-25; 49:3-27; Ex. 1:2-5; Num. 1:5-15; 2:3-31; 13:4-15; 26:4-51; 34:19-28; Deut. 27:12-13; 33:6-25; Josh. 13:7-22, 34; Judg. 5:12-18; 1st Chron.2:1-8:40; 12:24-37; 27:16-22; Ezek. 48:1-7, 23-28, 31-34**).
3. Here's a few reasons why I think it's a real number, of Jewish believers:
 - a. John said that he heard the number of them, which is the opposite of what he says in **Revelation 7:9**, "...I looked, and behold, a great multitude which nobody could number..."
 - b. In **1st Kings 19:18** God said that He reserved for Himself, 7,000 in Israel who hadn't bowed their knees.
 - c. Although the 12 tribes were broken up in the diaspora, man might not know who they are, but God does.
 - d. **Romans 9-11** make clear, that God's purposes for ethnic Israel aren't finished, and there are chapters/verses in the Bible (NT) that speak directly to ethnic Israel.

III. AN INNUMERABLE MULTITUDE (Revelation 7:9-17)

A. Revelation 7:9-11 "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

1. Well, it's clear, the scene has changed from only 144,000 to a group of people that John's unable to number. Previously it was a specific number, from specific tribes, but here it's people from every place in the world, out of all four classes (*all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues*), including both Jewish and Gentiles believers.
2. The idea is that the room is so vast, and people are still coming in as John is looking, so there's no way to number them. It's the fulfillment of God's promises to our forefathers that their descendants would be more than the sand on the seashore and the stars in heaven (**Gen. 13:16; 15:5; 32:12; Hos 1:10; Heb 11:12**).
3. I believe that this is taking place in heaven, not in the millennial kingdom, or in the New Jerusalem, but in heaven as both the four living creatures and the 24 elders are mentioned, just like the previous chapters in **Revelation 4, 5**.

4. They also aren't standing before the Lion, but before the Lamb. These are ones who've laid down their lives unto death, and are being joined with the One whom they are following, living as He lived, and also conquering through their own suffering and death.

a. Clothed With White Robes—These are robes of purity, holiness, and right living before God. Their life from this age is being rewarded in the age to come (**Rev. 3:4-5; 6:11; 19:7-8, 14**).

1. *"We desire to be happy in this age, and holy in the age to come, but God desires us to be holy in this age, and happy in the age to come."* -David Pawson, Matthew 5

b. Palm Branches—These palm branches represent a victorious people, coming up from trouble, having overcome. They have endured, persisted, and have persevered, and this is their reward, eternally!

c. Crying Out With A Loud Voice Saying Salvation Belongs To Our God Who Sits On The Throne, And To The Lamb—The idea is that they keep crying out, again and again. They never stop. The strong voice reflects their gratitude towards God's deliverance of their lives, not just out of tribulation, but into eternity.

B. Revelation 7:11-12 *"All the angels stood around the throne, and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying, Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."*

1. It's here that we see the height of heavenly worship. It's a buildup that's been happening throughout **Revelation 4-5**. In **Revelation 4** we've seen the four living creatures, and the 24 elders. And then in **Revelation 5** we see again the 4 living creatures, the 24 elders, but also 100,000,000 x thousands of thousands of angels, along with all that was in heaven, on earth and under the earth worshipping God.

2. But here in **Revelation 7** it's gone even further; it's the four living creatures, the 24 elders, ALL THE ANGELS, and the saints worshipping God, together, forever!

a. Glory—This glory refers to the majesty of God revealed in His final victory over His enemies. All the glory of the Bible, and of this moment has been pointing to one thing; when His plan of salvation is actualized, when it's experienced by His family and the nations.

b. Wisdom—This is the wisdom that shaped the world, and now has given it its final redemption. This is the wisdom of God. The Cross, the death of the saints, the meekness, the humility, the patience, the delay, God using weak humans. It's the wisdom of God realized and experienced. It's felt, it's seen.

1. **1st Timothy 1:17** *"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise..."*

c. Thanksgiving—This is a similar word to praise. This is the natural response to praise, to return with thanksgiving for how God's plan was played out among us. God has brought about the final victory, just as He said, therefore, we give Him thanks.

1. *Beloved, this is not just true THEN, it's true NOW. Today. He's worthy of thanksgiving, now!*

d. Honor—In light of His deliverance, He's worthy of honor, to be honored, to receive glory from the Church.

e. Power and Might—The idea is that God's omnipotence brought about this victory, which no human could comprehend, no devil could bring about, no angel could bring to pass. It was God's power and strength/might. It's God's effective power against all opposition.

f. Be To Our God Forever And Ever! Amen—All throughout eternity, this song will be sung. This is the great, historic, big picture dealings of God with humanity and Satan. It's not a seasonal song, it's the song of a lifetime, it's the song of creation to redemption. It's everyone's song, it's the larger storyline, the bigger gear, the larger, 30,000 ft purposes of God coming to pass.

1. This is the so-be-it-of God. It's the true, it's the Amen, the final word about God, His character, His nature, His acts, His love, His wisdom! It's all true.

C. **Revelation 7:13-14** *“Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from? And I said to him, sir you know. So he said to me, these are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.”*

1. The angel asks a question, to a question that John never asked (though he/us was/are thinking it). It's implied that John has no idea who this massive, innumerable multitude is.

a. These Are The Ones Who Come Out Of The Great Tribulation—The idea is that they are still coming out of the Great Tribulation. This is the Greek word EK, which is also used in **John 17:15**, and is in the same line of thought as **Revelation 3:10**. The idea isn't to keep them from, but to keep them through.

1. The Great Tribulation is the time period for the final 3.5 years of human history. Jesus was the One who coined the phrase **Matthew 24:21**, and He limited this time to the 3.5 years of Daniels 70th week (**Matthew 24:15-22; Mark 13:14-20; Daniel 9:27**). Beloved, our lives are to be tribulation proof, but not tribulation free.

i. When Jesus Returns—David Pawson | The Church and The Tribulation—Gundry | The Blessed Hope—Ladd | Not Afraid of the Antichrist—Michel Brown

ii. <https://www.legacychurchnw.org/media/vtr752/revelation-session-6-the-church-of-philadelphia-rev-3-7-13> (this also includes sermon notes)

b. They Washed Their Robes And Made Them White In The Blood Of The Lamb—It's paradoxical to think that you could wash robes in blood and make them white. But this is exactly what's happened. Like the Prophet Isaiah said in **Isaiah 1:18**, though are sins are scarlet red, He can make them white as snow.

1. The idea is that they have vigorously plugged their garments (lives) into the blood of the Lamb, both for imputed righteousness, and sanctification (*Greek word in the Strong's 4150*).

D. **Revelation 7:15-17** *“Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of them shall shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”*

1. Therefore, They Are Before The Throne Of God—The idea is that they have been made ready to be joined together with God, not for a moment, but for eternity. In this age we are seated with Christ, but in the age to come, we are standing before His throne (**Eph. 2:6; Col. 3**).

2. They Serve Him Day And Night—This is speaking about priestly service to God. It's an active, restful response to God. They aren't just there idly standing, they are there serving Him, ministering to Him (**Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6**). It's a night and day reality, a continuous life of worship, both in this age, and in the age to come.

3. And He Who Sits On The Thone Will Dwell Among Them—God will once again set up His tent (dwell) among His people. It's the glory of God, and God's people, back in union together, no longer separated.

- a. This is what Jesus was saying in **John 1:14** that He tabernacled among us, He came and dwelt among us.
- 4. They Shall Neither Hunger Anymore Nor Thirst Anymore—This is the double assurance that our bodies will never suffer again in the age to come. Hunger and thirst, though real, aren't solely about food and water, it's also about everything else we need from God. All that comes from God (**Deut. 8:3; Isa. 55:1, 3; Matt. 5:6; John 4**).
- a. Beloved, we might have hungered in this age, we might have gone without, we might have struggled, we might have lived below the poverty line, we might have looked like the scum of the earth, but hear me clearly, in the age to come, we will live as children of the uncreated God. It will be wealth, resources, food, and opulence that we could never imagine in this age.
 - 1. **Matthew 5:6** *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."*
- 5. The Sun Shall Not Strike Them—Not only will our spiritual, and physical needs be met, but we will also never have physical deprivation, ever again. The sun is often used as a sign of judgment, the burning heat (**Revelation 16:8-9**). *Life in this age is as close as a believer will ever get to hell, and life in this age is as close as a non-believer will ever get to heaven.*
- 6. For The Lamb Who Is In The Midst Of The Throne Will Shepherd Them And Lead Them To Living Fountains of Waters—God is described throughout the whole of the Old Testament as a Shepherd of Israel, as the Shepherd of God's people. As Shepherd He goes before His flock (**Ps. 68:7**), guides the flock (**Ps. 23:2**), leads it to pasture (**Jer. 50:19**), and springs of water (**Ps. 23:2; Isa. 40:11**), protects the flock with His staff (**Ps. 23:4**), and He gathers the dispersed (**Zech. 10:8**). Not to mention so many other NT passages about His shepherding (**Jn. 10:3, 11, 14; Matt. 15:24; 10:6; 1st Pet. 2:25; Heb. 13:20**).
- a. Beloved, the idea is that Christ as Shepherd in the age to come, is the SAME shepherd to His Church in this age. This is the point. He's the God who changes not. He's trustworthy now because He's trustworthy in the age to come. *He's not just a Shepherd then, He's a Shepherd now.*
- 7. And God Will Wipe Away Every Tear From Their Eyes—The wiping away of tears is not sadness, it's not the terrible mistakes we've made both outside of Christ and with Christ, it's about our suffering in this age. God is committed to doing away with suffering, forever. This also appears again in **Revelation 21:4**. The idea here isn't wiping away tears with a tissue, it's the destruction of tears, it's to destroy the tears, it's to obliterate them.

IV. WHO IS ABLE TO STAND?

- A. **Revelation 7** is desiring to comfort us, to put strength and courage in us, to do something we could never do on our own. It's strength to persevere, to persist, to endure whatever comes our way, because there's a great pay off in the age to come. This is the pattern of overcoming that we've been given from our forefathers.
- B. Beloved, those that overcome, are bondslaves, sealed with the seal of the living God on their foreheads. They are those that have made Christ the Lord of their lives, who are allowing Him to Shepherd them now, to lead them to springs of living waters, not just in the age to come, but right here and now.
- C. Those that are able to stand are those who are plunging their robes into the blood of the Lamb, today, not just in the big things, but in all things.