

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Who are the 144,000 Sealed?

Revelation 7:1-4

INTRODUCTION:

Last week we looked at the seven seals and saw how much of God's judgment is already underway in history. We learned that there is still much more to come, and with increasing intensity. In the sixth seal, Christ has finally arrived and ushered in the final judgment!

All of the people of earth (the unbelievers), who were indicated by the seven groups of men (Kings of the Earth, The Great Men, The Commanders, The Rich, The Strong, Every Slave, and Every Free Man) were wanting the mountains and rocks to fall on them in order to hide them from the **presence and wrath** of the Lamb.

Then the last verse of chapter 6, in view of all of the turmoil, asks the question "**Who can stand?**"

The answer to "**Who can stand?**" is found in chapter 7. There are three groups.

1. Verses 1 - 8. The bond-servants on earth that are sealed of God.
2. Verses 9 - 10 and 13-17. The multitude in heaven in white robes.
3. Verses 11-12. The angels that did not fall with Satan are found **STANDING** around the throne.

It is critical for us to understand the contrast between the panic of the pagan world with the security and salvation of the faithful. And most importantly, what we need to do to be found standing in one of those faithful groups when Christ returns to pass final judgment on all mankind.

In the presence of God, who is able to stand, to measure up and be worthy? Who will be able to be found righteous before Him? After all, didn't Paul say "**There is none righteous, no not one?**"

All Stand and Read Scripture

Revelation 7:1-4 (NASB)

7 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. 2 And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, 3 saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads."

4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

Prayer

Father – we realize once again how imperfect and unworthy we are. Thank You for providing a path to salvation for us through Your Son on the cross. Help us as we strive to live a faithful life for you. We thank you for the spiritual protection that we are promised when we are sealed by Your Spirit. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear your Word. Help us to understand from Your Word how we can be sealed and have assurance of salvation.

In Christ's Name we pray. Amen.

BODY:

In the first three verses, John introduces us to four angels holding back the four winds of the earth. The scene relays to us the authority and power of our Creator.

I. THE POWER OF CHRIST.

Revelation 7:1-2 (NASB)

7 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. 2 And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,

The four angels mentioned here by John most likely refers back to the first four seals in chapter 6 where white, red, black, and pale green horses were sent out to bring war, violence, famine, and death upon the earth.

It also points to four horse-drawn chariots prophesied in Zechariah.

Zechariah 6:1-5 (NASB)

6 Now I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming forth from between the two mountains; and the mountains *were* bronze mountains. 2 With the first chariot *were* red horses, with the second chariot black horses, 3 with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot strong dappled horses. 4 Then I spoke and said to the angel who was speaking with me, "What are these, my lord?" 5 The angel replied to me, "These are the four spirits of heaven, going forth after standing before the Lord of all the earth,

John says the four angels were holding back the four winds of the earth. The number **4** points to earth and emphasizes totality and possibly derives from the image of the four points of a compass. (North, East, South, and West).

In the Old Testament **WIND** often denotes judgment from God. To have wind blowing from all four directions shows that God's judgment will be complete and come to the entire earth.

Here we see that God is holding back the winds of destructive judgment. The Jews believed that every act of nature was directly from God. So the readers knew that John was saying that God held back the winds and delayed the breaking of the first four seals releasing the horses of judgment until the time was right for them to be released.

Isn't it amazing? The earth, the sea, the trees are all standing still at the command of Jesus Christ! The Lord who stilled the storms and calmed the seas, also held back the breaking of the first four seals which brought destruction and tribulation upon the whole world.

WHY? Because Christ wanted to prevent the four angels from starting their destructive activity on earth until believers were given spiritual protection against losing their faith.

The 4 winds cannot blow and vent their rage as they like. They can only reek their havoc when they are told to serve the will of God in His timing.. Not one moment of your life, or the life of this earth, passes outside His control.

II. THE SEAL OF CHRIST.

Revelation 7:3 (NASB)

3 saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have **sealed** the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads."

So how are we spiritually protected? By being a sealed bond-servant of God.

THE SEAL IS THE MARK OF GOD'S OWNERSHIP; it marks a person as a possession of God. Once again, John's vision comes from the prophets. The people of Judah had turned their backs on God. In a vision Ezekiel saw a man dressed in linen with pen and inkwell in his hand, who was told,

Ezekiel 9:4 (NASB)

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 committed in its midst."

Everyone, except those who had the mark on their foreheads, was slaughtered. As Paul later wrote to Timothy...

2 Timothy 2:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."

He puts His stamp upon them. It assures the believer of the protection of the all powerful, living God. So when the four horsemen finally ride forth, when the winds are released, the believers are spiritually protected; they are secure.

III. WHO ARE THE 144,000 THAT ARE SEALED?

4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

The next thing we encounter is another controversial issue. John wrote that 144,000 were sealed.

When you look at the first three verses in Chapter 7 you see four angels standing at the four corners of the earth. In verse 2, you see angels who had been granted to harm the earth and the sea. Verse 3 says **“Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.”**

Where are the servants of our God? ON EARTH!

What do we do with the numbers in Revelation? We don't take them literally, we see them symbolically. 144 is the product of 12 times 12.

Where are some of the major references to the number twelve in the Bible?

The twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. We saw the 24 elders in chapter 4 around the throne. They represented all the people of God, both old covenant (the twelve tribes) and new covenant (the twelve apostles).

We will look at the significance of the twelve tribes of Israel mentioned here in verses 5 - 8 next time.

Twelve is a number throughout Jewish literature, of which our Bible is a part, that generally stands for completion, just as in the number **seven**. But the number **12** is usually attached to the people of God. The complete number for the people of God.

What we have here in the 144,000 is this. **Twelve** tribes with 12,000 in each of them. **Twelve** (the complete number of the people of God) times **twelve** (the complete number of the people of God) stands for the absolutely, complete, number of all the people of God **times 1,000!**

Do you think that should include everyone?

1,000 is a symbol for a really big number.

Throughout Scripture it does not suggest a literal 1,000, but rather fulfillment and completion. For example...

Psalm 50:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ “For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills.

Does that mean that cows found on the 1,001st hill and all hills following are not His? Of course not! He owns them all! What he is saying is that God is the owner of ALL of the cattle on ALL of the hills!

The number **144,000** is telling us this, **“Who can stand?” God's people on earth!** Which for John's audience would be the sealed faithful living in his day. Today it stands for the sealed faithful among us.

IV. APPLYING THIS VISION TO OUR LIVES.

So how can we apply this plan of Christ to our own lives?

When we understand Revelation in this way, we see where we fit into the plan. We are part of the 144,000! WE ARE SEALED! It is a sign and seal from God. We belong to Him.

But doesn't John's vision state the 144,000 are Jews from the tribes of Israel?

Listen to the Apostle Paul's instruction...

Romans 2:28-29 (NASB)

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. 29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

During the Old Testament times, before Christ came to earth to accomplish a salvation plan for us, Jews (God's chosen people) were Jews because they were born in the lineage of Abraham and the males were marked by physical circumcision. Now the "Jew" (person of God) is marked by the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. When we are saved, we become part of the "body of Christ" and Christ is our connection to the lineage of David.

Has your heart been changed by Jesus? You are sealed! Paul says that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:13 (NASB)

13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were **sealed** in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

Ephesians 4:30-32 (NASB)

30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

It is interesting to note that the Greek word used in both of these verses for sealed (sphragizo - **sfrä-geē'-zōh** - to mark with a seal) is the same word that is used in Revelation 7 verses 3, 4, 5, and 8. It denotes ownership. If we are sealed we are children of God.

As we just saw in Ephesians, we become sealed in Christ by the Holy Spirit when you hear the gospel and believe. So the question becomes, "How do I receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?"

Acts 2:38 (NASB)

38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

It is critical during our lifetime on earth we receive the Holy Spirit within us. This IS the sign that we have been sealed and belong to God.

How important is it that we have the Holy Spirit indwelling in us? We are told that if we do not have the Holy Spirit within us, then we are not sealed.

Romans 8:5-9 (NASB)

⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

The Bible makes it very clear that we are either for God or against Him. There is no in between. The side we represent is dictated by our heart.

Matthew 6:19-21, 24 (NASB)

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, **there your heart will be also.**

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

You will notice that the difference between serving God or serving Satan is determined by your heart. The key word is **master**. If the **things of earth or money** is your master, your heart will be filled with greed and your primary goal will be to seek earthly possessions and accumulate more money. But if the **Lord** becomes your master, your primary goal will be to live righteously and use the money, that God provides to you, as a tool for serving Him. These two masters are mutually exclusive. You cannot ride the fence. "**You cannot serve God and mammon**".

If the Lord blesses a believer with wealth, the responses He is looking for, are gratitude and generosity. Wealth is not a gift to be squandered, it is a gift to be used for God's glory.

CONCLUSION:

By God's amazing power and grace, His seal WILL PROTECT US during these last days. It will keep us secure through even the worst which is yet to come. We will not necessarily be physically protected, but we will be spiritually protected. As with the Passover event in Egypt, those having the seal of God will not suffer the ultimate devastation of the final judgment of God.

Only you know your spiritual condition. If you have never given your life to Him or if you know that your heart is not seeking God, let Him seal you!. If you're struggling with life, about to drown under the weight of your circumstances, God is still patiently waiting for you to put your faith in Him.

He is Lord!