

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

God's People on Earth

Revelation 7:1-8

INTRODUCTION:

In the last few weeks we have looked at the first six seals as they were opened. These seals gave us a broad picture of what life is like on earth during this period of time between the ascension of Christ and His return. This period of time is referred to in various ways in the Bible and sometimes it brings confusion to us. We often think that it refers to different periods of time so when we read of the last days, it means one thing, and the end times means something else. And the great tribulation refers to a period of time just before Christ comes again. Then there is the thousand year reign. These are different terms that describe what really is the same period of time.

When the first four seals were broken, tribulation was released upon the earth in the form of wars, turmoil, famines and poverty, and even death. The fifth seal showed a scene in heaven where the souls of believers who were crying out saying **“How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”** 11 **And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.**

Then the sixth seal is opened. Christ returns, the blood of the saints is avenged, the world is destroyed, and mankind faces final judgment.

From the first six seals we learn, from God's perspective, why all of these bad things are happening in the world. At the same time we see what is going on in heaven. The people of God are in the presence of the Lord. Not bodily, but their souls. The resurrection has not occurred yet. This is not yet the end of the age; it is during the age. We see the saints in the presence of God, worshipping Him and crying out for justice. Then we see everything finally intensify with the return of the Lord and universal judgment.

When the sixth seal ends we see people facing the wrath of God and crying out, **“Who can stand?”** When we face of God in final judgment, who is going to be able to measure up to God's righteousness and be worthy? After all, didn't Paul say **“There is none righteous, no not one?”**.

Then we come to chapter 7 which is an interlude between the sixth and seventh seals. Before we go to the seventh seal, John is going to answer the question of "WHO CAN STAND?" This interlude is critical to our understanding because it contrasts the panic of the pagan world with the security and salvation of the faithful.

[All Stand and Read Scripture](#)

Revelation 7:1-8 (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:

⁵ from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand *were* sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, ⁶ from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, ⁷ from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, ⁸ from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand *were* sealed.

Prayer

The seals were not allowed to be opened until Christ had died on the cross for our salvation and had left the earth so believers could be sealed with the Holy Spirit. When Christ ascended into heaven, He was given eternal authority, power, and dominion over the entire earth and heaven including reign over the Kingdom of God.

BODY:

I. WHO ARE THE 144,000?

The 144,000. In verses 1-4 you will notice that the 144,000 are on earth. The number of them was cried out. It was 144,000. What do we do with numbers in Revelation? We don't take them **literally**. We look at them **figuratively**. 144 is 12 x 12. We see the number 12 in the Old and New Testaments in the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles. You think that it was by accident that Jesus chose twelve disciples? He is saying something quite profound. 12 times 12 symbolically represents the number of the tribes of Israel (the people of God in the old covenant) multiplied by the twelve apostles (the people of God in the new covenant). Twelve is a number throughout Jewish literature (which our Bible is a part of) that stands for completion, just as the number seven, but it 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 total completeness of the people of God. Then you take that total completeness and multiply it times 1000.

The complete people of God * the complete people of God * a really big number = the absolute complete people of God ON EARTH! John is telling us that definitely, no person of God will be missed or overlooked.

And now we see how our interpretation of the 144,000 makes great sense. It symbolized completeness and the fact that no one who remains faithful to the end will be overlooked. In fact, in verse 9 John sees them gathered in heaven, he makes it very clear that THE

NUMBER IS NOT 144,000, but “...a great multitude that no one could count.” It’s impossible to count the number who will be saved. Only Jesus knows! This is the fulfillment of Genesis where God said the descendants of Abraham would be as the stars in the heavens and as the sand of the seashore.

II. THE CHURCH IS THE NEW ISRAEL.

Here we are told that 144,000 from the tribes of the Sons of Israel are the ones who are to be sealed. So we see 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed, and 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben were sealed, and 12,000 from the tribe of Gad were sealed, and so on.

Twelve tribes...why are they listed? First, the number twelve is a sacred number. It is a number associated with the people of God. There were twelve tribes of Israel. There were twelve apostles. In the New Jerusalem there are twelve gates, which are twelve pearls, with the twelve tribes written on them and there are the twelve foundation stones with the names of the twelve apostles written on them.

These cannot represent 12,000 actual Jews from the twelve sons of Jacob. If these are understood as literal tribes, it would mean that exactly the same number would be saved from each one; and what kind of a straitjacket would that be? It would also have to mean that **no one** will be saved from the tribe of Dan. Thus we are driven to the conclusion that the twelve tribes of Israel are not literal Israel, but the true spiritual Israel, which is the church.

Before the cross, Israel was both a political and a spiritual kingdom in a geographical location. After the cross Israel became God's spiritual kingdom, not a worldly place, with all believers in Christ as citizens.

John 18:36 (NASB)

³⁶ Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.”

God's word teaches us in clear, bold, unmistakable truths, that all believers, **God's children by the new birth, are the true Israel of God**; and that they, and they alone, are God's chosen people upon the earth today and are the present heirs of the promises made to Abraham and his seed in Christ.

Galatians 3:23-29 (NASB)

²³ But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us to Christ*, so that we may be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. ²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.

Time does not permit to go over the many scriptures that indicate that the church today is the true Israel of God. I have an excellent 30 page write-up on the *True Israel of God* that I would be glad to give you if you would like to study it further.

The physical nation of Israel in the land of Palestine today, is not God's chosen people or nation after the flesh. The nation will not go through a so-called 1000 years of earthly prosperity with Christ sitting upon an earthly throne in Jerusalem. No, the Scriptures plainly teach that the nation of Israel was set aside at Calvary and that God's dealing with them now is the same as His dealings with the Gentiles: "For there is no respect of persons with God: there is no difference between Jew and Gentile for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God".

This precious truth of true believers being the true Israel of God has been lost among the rubble and trash of the false teaching of the past 150 years which says that God will yet deal with Israel as a nation, His chosen nation, and that the Jew will again arise as the chosen people of God in a so-called 1000 year reign of Christ upon this earth.

As a child of God, we are an heir of Abraham and recipients of the promises made to him in Christ as his seed.

III. HOW ARE WE SEALED?

It is very obvious here that we really want to be sealed!

So the question is: **What is the seal and how do we receive it?**

It does not mean that God goes around and writes His name on our forehead with a sharpie. The seal is not a physical thing. The seal is God's claim of ownership upon the faithful as well as His pledge of commitment to preserve them. That is what it means to be sealed by God, to be owned by Him and to be kept by Him.

What does it mean to be preserved? As we go through Revelation we do not see a church that is kept safe, do we? We don't see a picture of a church that is protected by the dragon, the beast, or the false prophet. But what we see is a church that is constantly being pursued and persecuted. So obviously this does not mean that He will keep us physically safe. It does not have to do with our physical safety, but instead it has to do with our spiritual safety. God will protect and will preserve His people spiritually in such a way as to insure that their faith will not be taken away amidst all of the trials, tribulations, and deception of this age.

Jesus even talks about this in...

Matthew 24:9-14 (NASB)

⁹ "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. ¹⁰ At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹ Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. ¹² Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. ¹⁴ This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Christ will not allow the enemy of His people to ultimately win and overcome us, even though they may kill the body!

Our seal is what is **symbolized** in baptism and **realized** when we receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is why Paul tells us in...

Ephesians 1:13-14 (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, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

What Paul is telling us is that the Holy Spirit within us marks us as God's people and it guarantees that we will be spiritually protected. That is what it means to be sealed of the Holy Spirit. It is God's identification mark on you. It is not a mark of a sharpie on your forehead, it is the Holy Spirit within you.

IV. WHO IS ABLE TO STAND?

John tells us that IF we are God's people and are sealed we will be able to stand!

So what are the **earmarks** for a person of God?

Revelation 12:11 (NASB)

¹¹ And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

You were saved when you believed that Jesus was the Son of God, repented of your sins, and was immersed in baptism to be washed of your sins by the blood of the Lamb (Who is Christ). At that time you received the Holy Spirit in your life.

This is how we are sealed. It is only through Christ that we can be saved. We were purchased by His blood. Christ owns us and we are no longer our own.

However, this only begins our walk with the Lord. You will notice that verse 11 doesn't stop at being washed by the blood of the Lamb. It also says that we are a person of God **IF** we are willing to share the Gospel with others and to live for Christ even if it leads to physical death.

It is important to understand that we are **not** saved by our works! We are saved by the blood of Christ on the cross. Our works and testimony are a result of our gratitude for God's grace (His free gift of salvation despite our sin) and in response to His command to deny ourselves and serve Him. Faith without works is dead!

ILLUSTRATION:

There is a person here today who recently purchased a "Y'all Need Jesus" tee shirt and started wearing it. **Way to go!** Our testimony tells God and the world that we are not ashamed of the Gospel. Our testimony is a vital part of our Christian walk with God.

Romans 1:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

The gospel is the power of God for salvation. SALVATION is a VERY BIG DEAL! And John tells us that we are saved because of the blood of Christ on the cross and our TESTIMONY to the world. Do not allow yourself to become complacent about your salvation by getting

up on Sunday morning, going to church, singing songs of worship to God, hearing some prayers, listening to a message from the Bible, and thinking you have fulfilled your responsibility to God for the week.

The number one goal for every Child of God should be to **solemnly try** to live every moment of our lives for Him. To **TRY** to live a righteous or sinless life. It is not totally possible because we are living in a sinful world, but our lives should reflect that effort at all times. And when you stumble, which all of us will, be quick to ask God, through prayer, for forgiveness. When you do, it will strengthen your resolve to not repeat that sin again.

Christ spoke to a crowd of just ordinary folks and said to them, "**You are the light of the world.**" And today, you are the light of the world. That's how God intends to get his work done on earth today: **through you!**

It's not just pastors and missionaries who are the light; it's everybody who loves the Lord.

God takes an ordinary person and uses them to share His message to people who need Him. When we live according to God's word we become a living testimony to the world, we spread His light.

Note that Jesus describes us as the light of the **world, not** the light of the church. That means we have to go beyond the church walls and take the light out to where it is dark.

CONCLUSION:

You were saved to shine! Don't hide your testimony or be ashamed to carry your Bible with you. Don't be afraid to pray over your lunch at the restaurant or at school. Let others know that you love the Lord Jesus. Tell them about your Sunday school classes and the church service. Do the right thing in front of others instead of going along with the crowd. They will see your morals and integrity and wish they had your values.

How can we shine for God? Jesus says that we are to let our lights shine before men in such a way that they will see our good works and glorify God. That's how we do it. We live for God.

We have to surrender our lives to Him completely. In other words, when you get right with God and are filled with the Holy Spirit and are sealed, He will simply shine through you. You can't help it; light just pours forth. That is a part of our testimony.

Mark 8:38 (NASB)

38 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Who is able to stand? Those who are sealed by the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 12:11 (NASB)

11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

He is Lord!