



The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

SESSION 6. WHO CAN STAND? PART II (7:1–17)

I. Between the 6th and 7th Seal... a Pregnant Pause.

A. The six seals.

In chapter 6 the first six seals of the scroll in God's right hand were opened. As the destiny of the world unfolded one seal at a time, there was a growing crescendo of wrath, judgment and catastrophe on the earth:

1. The first four seals released the four horsemen of the apocalypse:
 - The white horse (6:1–2). The imperialistic _____.
 - The red horse (6:3–4). _____ politics.
 - The black horse (6:5–6). Economic _____.
 - The pale horse (6:7–8). _____ and suffering.
2. The 5th seal (6:9–11). _____ of Christians.
3. The 6th seal (6:12–17). _____ calamities and the wrath of the Lamb.

B. Before the 7th seal is opened (8:1), there is an interlude, a pregnant pause.

Remember that this book is written by a pastor concerned for his flock. The question that is begging to be answered is therefore this: what is going to happen to _____ during this coming period of wrath and judgment upon the earth?!

II. Preparing for Tribulation (7:1–17).

Pastor John wants his congregation to _____ two realities as they anticipate the horror about to be unleashed on the world: 1) The need to be _____ (7:1–8), and 2) the _____ of a glorious future (7:9–17).

A. The sealing of the saints (7:1–8).

1. Four angels, four corners, and four winds (v. 1). The 4 destructive winds may be another way of describing the 4 horsemen. The angels are “holding back” the disastrous events about to be unleashed until something of great importance occurs.
2. Another angel explains the reason for the delay (vv. 2–3): “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”
 - God is apparently concerned about the _____ of the planet (earth, sea and trees). The Bible has much to say about creation care.
 - As the scroll is _____ the servants of God are _____. The choice of wording cannot be accidental.
 - See part III for more discussion of this important matter.
3. The number of the sealed (vv. 4–8). The number 144,000 is a “suspiciously tidy sort of number that is much more likely to be a symbol than a statistic”



(Wilcock, p. 80). The number is attained when 12, the number of tribes, is both squared and multiplied by a thousand, a twofold way of emphasizing _____ (Mounce, p. 158). Further underscoring the symbolic nature of the 144,000 number is:

- The list of the 12 tribes (vv. 5–8) is somewhat irregular. Joseph and his son Manasseh are included but his son Ephraim is not. Dan is omitted entirely. Thus it seems the list is meant to indicate “_____ will be saved” (Rom. 11:26). But be careful: defining “Israel” may be harder than you think!
- In the rest of the passage the 144,000 seem to morph into the “great multitude that _____” (7:9).

Conclusion: People have debated the number of those who will be saved for centuries (see Luke 13:23). Though the question is important it is apparently something that God does not intend for us to know... or fret about! Rather, he wants us to simply rest in the fact that “_____ those who are his” (II Tim. 2:19).

C. Salvation belongs to our God! (7:9–17).

It is difficult to determine whether this scene in heaven is in the future or whether it is going on right now. Perhaps the answer is both! God is eternal and not subject to time (an eternal _____), so John’s description of heaven is something we are to simply embrace and experience. Earlier when John had looked into heaven, the focus of his attention was _____ and the Lamb (ch. 4–5). In this vision the throne and the Lamb are still center stage, but his focus is on _____ around the throne.

1. Their *number*. The multitude was vast, innumerable (v. 9).
2. Their *origin*. Those around the throne came from every _____ on earth. These were not just Jews (the 12 tribes) but men and women from every nation, tribe, people, language (v. 9).
3. Their *dress*. John is struck by the _____ the redeemed are wearing.
 - In heaven we will not revert back to an Eden-like paradise where we need no clothing (Gen. 2:25). Even forgiven sin still has consequences. Though the death of the Lamb of God makes us pure, it does not make us _____.
 - The whiteness of the robes is due to the fact that they have been washed (they were dirty once) in _____ (v. 14)! It takes sanctified imagination to understand how red blood can make garments white. But the imagery points to Christ’s atoning work on the cross (_____ by faith).
4. Their *journey*. When asked from where this multitude has come, John is told: “These are the ones coming (present tense) out of the (definite article) great tribulation” (v. 14). The Lamb suffered and those who follow him will likewise experience times of trial and tribulation. NOTE: God’s people are saved _____ tribulation, not _____ it!
5. Their *activity*.
 - Perhaps most startling of all, these people were _____ (v. 9. See 6:17) in the very presence of Almighty and thrice-holy God!

- They are _____ God day and night (v. 15). The Greek word *latreuo* refers to works of various kinds that are done out of devotion to God.
- But primarily they are _____ God... loudly, enthusiastically, with palm branches and songs of praise (vv. 9–12) Two songs are mentioned:

*Salvation belongs to our God
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb! (10).¹*

*Amen!² Blessing and glory and wisdom
and thanksgiving and honor and power and might
be to our God forever and ever! Amen! (12).*

6. Their *blessed state*. Heaven is described as a place of _____ (v. 15) from the judgments and punishments ravaging the earth as the seals are being opened. The Lamb will _____ his sheep (v. 17). Note the reversal of roles! But especially, heaven is described as a place where certain realities are absent: no hunger, no thirst, no scorching heat, no tears... no unmet desire, no danger.

- D. Does being heavenly minded mean that we are of no earthly good?

Many pretend that Christians believe in _____ and thus have no concerns about life here below. But John believes just the opposite. It is the hope of heaven that enables his congregation to be of service here, now, in this world.

1. Only when we know the destination does our _____ make sense!
2. Only when we know the destination do we have a real reason to take care of the _____! Christians care about Babylon and seek her well-being (Jer. 29:7). (Illustration: the road to nowhere).
3. Hope for tomorrow makes it possible to live in _____ today.
4. We are saved _____... and hope that is seen is not hope! (Rom. 8:18–25).

III. The Sealing of the Saints.

To be able to “stand” when tribulation comes, we must first be sealed (7:1–4).

- A. The *nature* of the sealing.

In the ancient world a seal was a mark or a visible sign that was placed on an object (letter, will, bill of sale, etc.) or a person (a servant or slave) to denote _____. When it involved a person, the seal was often put on the _____ (Rev. 7:3; cf. 14:1) which meant it was sometimes more evident to others than to yourself! Satan loves to _____ God’s work. He too has a form of marking and sealing those who belong to him! (See Rev. 13:16–18). NOTE: Our eternal destiny will be determined by whose seal marks us; to whom do we belong?

- B. The *background* for understanding the sealing.

- Exodus 28:36–38. The gold plate on Aaron’s forehead: “_____.”

¹This is a song that only the redeemed can sing! Because angels have not experienced redemption, they are not singing this hymn. But they will join wholeheartedly in the next song of worship (vv. 11-12).

²Jesus often began his words with “Amen, Amen, I say unto you...” The word means to affirm that which is certain and reliable, that which can be trusted. Thus it can begin a prayer as well as end it!

- Ezekiel 9:1–6. Killer angels mark with a “taw” the foreheads of those who _____. These only will be spared. Begin at the sanctuary!

C. The *purpose* of the sealing. This sealing is intended to do two things:

1. Designate those who belong to him and make them _____.
2. _____ them from judgment and wrath... but not from tribulations. They will be saved _____ trials, not from them. Charles Spurgeon said it well:

It is impossible that any ill should happen to the man who is beloved of the Lord. Ill to him is no ill, but only good in a mysterious form. Losses enrich him, sickness is his medicine, reproach is his honor, death is his gain. (quoted in Wilcox, p. 83).

D. *How* can I be sealed?

1. Come to _____ and let his blood forgive your sins and purify your heart (white robes). The verb tense of Rev. 7:14 (aorist) means that this is a _____ action.
2. Be _____ with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit _____ God’s seal on our lives; the mark of his ownership, the _____ of his protection and provision.

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee (down payment) of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13–14).

TABLE TALK

1. This study claims that Christians are saved through tribulation not from it. Describe your reaction to this statement. Does this fit your experience.? your theology?
2. How do you envision heaven? Does your vision of heaven make you want to go?
3. Have you known any Christians who were so heavenly minded they were no earthly good? What about you? Do your thoughts of heaven make you less concerned for the physical needs of those around you or more concerned? Explain.
4. How do you understand the “sealing” of the Holy Spirit? Has this lesson changed your thinking or confirmed it?
5. Do you have assurance of your standing before God?

Bibliography

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