

The Seals

The 144,000

Seeing Jesus in Revelation (and Hearing His Voice)



We mentioned last time we were together that Revelation is basically a tale of two kingdoms. And we will see that again graphically today.

When the sixth seal is first opened we see Jesus' coming and the end of time from the perspective of those who have embraced Satan's Kingdom in some form or another.

It then switches looking at this same event from the perspective of those who have embraced God's Kingdom

Reading Revelation

Then I saw him open the sixth seal. A violent earthquake occurred; the sun turned black like sackcloth made of hair; the entire moon became like blood; the stars of heaven fell to the earth as a fig tree drops its unripe figs when shaken by a high wind; the sky was split apart like a scroll being rolled up; and every mountain and island was moved from its place.

Then the kings of the earth, the nobles, the generals, the rich, the powerful, and every slave and free person hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of their wrath has come! And who is able to stand?"

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, restraining the four winds of the earth so that no wind could blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. Then I saw another angel rising up from the east, who had the seal of the living God. He cried out in a loud voice to the four angels who were allowed to harm the earth and the sea, "Don't harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we seal the servants of our God on their foreheads." And I heard the number of the sealed:

144,000 sealed from every tribe of the Israelites:

*12,000 sealed from the tribe of Judah,
12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,
12,000 from the tribe of Gad,
12,000 from the tribe of Asher,
12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali,
12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,
12,000 from the tribe of Simeon,
12,000 from the tribe of Levi,
12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,
12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,
12,000 from the tribe of Joseph,
12,000 sealed from the tribe of Benjamin.*

After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!

All the angels stood around the throne, and along with the elders and the four living creatures they fell facedown before the throne and worshiped God, saying,

Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen.

Then one of the elders asked me, "Who are these people in white robes, and where did they come from?"

I said to him, "Sir, you know."

Then he told me: These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

For this reason they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple. The one seated on the throne will shelter them: They will no longer hunger; they will no longer thirst; the sun will no longer strike them, nor will any scorching heat. For the Lamb who is at the center of the throne will shepherd them; he will guide them to springs of the waters of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

(Revelation 6:12 – 7:17, CSB)

The Sixth Seal

In **Revelation 6** when the sixth seal is broken, it seems like nature goes crazy

- A violent earthquake occurred
- The sun turned black
- The moon became like blood
- The stars fell to the earth
- The sky was split apart
- Every mountain and island was moved from its place

And we know Jesus showed up – as in the Second Coming – because everyone from the most powerful people to the lowest slaves were trying to hide themselves so they wouldn't have to see His face. They were terrified and in desperation asked this question:

“... *Who is able to stand?*” (**Revelation 6:17**, CSB)

Revelation 7 provides the answer to this question!

It begins with a picture of four angels holding back the four winds, which are destructive forces that will blow on the earth at the very end of it's history. They are instructed to keep holding back the winds until God's people can be sealed in their foreheads.

We'll see later that the *Mark of the Beast* can be received either on the forehead or the hand. You can either really believe it or just embrace it for convenience.

But the *Seal of God* only goes on the forehead. It is something God's people believe with their whole minds and hearts. It doesn't give us any clues here what it is, but it is something that sets God's people apart.

The 144,000

John *heard* the number of people who received the seal and it was 144,000 organized into a unique listing of the 12 tribes of Israel.

We know Israel here represents “Spiritual Israel” or the Christian Church. Both Paul and James, in New Testament times, addresses the Church as the true or new Israel of God (see **James 1:1**, **Gal. 3:29**, **6:16**, **Romans 9:6-8**). Jesus made it clear that the 12 Apostles replaced the twelve tribes of Israel (see **Matt. 19:28**).¹

If the 12 Tribes of Israel are symbolic, then it's likely the number 144,000 is symbolic as well.

The number arrangement represents the way the army of Israel was organized. Each Tribe was organized in units of 1,000 soldiers. During Israel's history, there were more or less units of a thousand from each tribe depending on how big the tribe was.

The symmetry here of 12 Tribes, each Tribe with 12 units of 1,000 represents a perfect or complete army.

We see in this number the Church as an army fighting to share the Gospel of Jesus against all odds, even to the point of many losing their lives.

This is the group providing the answer to the question "Who is able to stand?"

Those who are actively following God will stand through the difficult times leading up to the Second Coming.

The Vast Multitude

So now, John turns to see what this group looks like – he's only heard the description.

And what he sees is astounding.

After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands. (Revelation 7:9, CSB)

What John heard and what he saw didn't match up.

We've seen this before. When they were looking for someone to open the seals, one of the Elder's told John the Lion of the Tribe of Judah could do it, but when he looked to see the Lion, he saw a lamb that had been slain.

The lamb and the lion were the same person, Jesus. But what he saw helped to explain what he heard. So the two parts were critical to understanding the message.

Here we have a similar case. John is seeing the same group of people in different circumstances.

First, in answer to the question of the wicked, "Who is able to stand?" the Church as an army is described as the 144,000. They are ones who received the seal of God because they were committed completely to God, willing to even die for Him if needed – just like a loyal soldier.

But, the event of the sixth seal is the Second Coming. So when John turned to look at them, he saw them at the moment when they entered Heaven. No longer warriors, or pilgrims, but coming home.

We see the joy in Heaven, the Angels rejoicing, worshiping God, and welcoming them home.

And notice this explanation of this large group:

These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:14, CSB)

You'll notice here this is stated in the present tense, not the past tense. It is being described as if it is happening as we watch. It is like they transitioned from earth to Heaven as John turned to see them.

And then it tells us how they will be treated in Heaven:

For this reason they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple. The one seated on the throne will shelter^(m) them: They will no longer hunger; they will no longer thirst; the sun will no longer strike them, nor will any scorching heat. For the Lamb who is at the center of the throne will shepherd them; he will guide them to springs of the waters of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (Revelation 7:15-17, CSB)

What a beautiful picture this is!

God will take them to live in His home. Not just anywhere in Heaven, but in the Royal Palace. They will eat at His table. They will be cared for by Jesus, Himself. And, in a tender picture from Isaiah (see [Isaiah 25:8](#)) and one repeated at the end of Revelation (see [Revelation 21:4](#)), He will personally dry the tears from their eyes!

This will not be limiting or restricting in any way. It will be freeing and empowering.

Living in the Palace as a special friend of God will open endless possibilities.

The passage also implies they will be worship specialists, perhaps helping to lead and direct worship there in the Temple as well as throughout inhabited worlds all around the Universe.

All the while, they will bask in the perfect love and care of Jesus and the Father.

You and I are invited to be a part of this group.

The conditions are rather simple. The secret of their spiritual success is summed up in one cryptic sentence:

They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:14, CSB)

This means they trusted in the sacrifice Jesus made on their behalf for their salvation – by dying on the cross – and committed their lives to following him.

It's pretty simple, really.

It begins by coming to God with the same attitude David expressed in **Psalm 139**:

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

(**Psalm 139:23-24**, NLT)

Ask God to poke around in your life and let you know what He finds there that stands in the way of a relationship with Him. And then follow Him as He leads you in a way that will deal with those issues.

And then live by the advice found in **Proverbs 3**:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (**Proverbs 3:5-6**, NIV)

Decide to trust God enough that you will submit to Him as He shows you His plan for your life, both in big things and in the “little” everyday choices.

This is what sets the 144,000 apart that allows them to become the vast multitude made up of “every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number.”

This is what will prepare you to join them!

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1. *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Ranko Stefanovic, Andrews University Press, © 2009, Commentary on Revelation 7:4-8

Assignment

Next Sabbath we will continue our series on the book of Revelation titled *Finding Jesus in Revelation (and Hearing His Voice)* with a message titled *Silence*, based on **Revelation 8:1**.

- This week spend some time with **Revelation 8:1**, along with **Psalms 37:7**, **Psalms 46:10**, **Isaiah 30:15**, & **Isaiah 65:24**. Read these through several times, maybe even in a couple different translations.
- What do you find comforting in these verses?
- Is there anything about these verses that make you uncomfortable? Why do you think that is?
- What happens when the seventh seal is opened? Does this seem good or troubling?
- How is our relationship with God impacted by times of quiet contemplation?
- What was King Jehoshaphat's experience of waiting before the Lord? (See **2 Chronicles 20**.)
- What is the most important message you see in these verses?
- How will this affect the way you live your life? Why?

Notes

Text you find in **this color** is a link to more information. It may take you to the Bible verse in context and/or in several different translations utilizing **BibleGateway.com**. In some cases, it may take you to a website where there is additional information. And, it may take you to a PDF copy of previous sermons in this series.

Resource Books

Revelation, Sigve K. Tonstad, Baker Academic, © 2019. To purchase a paper copy go to [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). For an iBook, [click here](#). For a Kindle version, [click here](#). For a Nook Book, [click here](#).

Revelation of Jesus Christ, Commentary on the Book of Revelation, 2nd Edition, Ranko Stefanovic, Andrews University Press, © 2009. To purchase a paper copy go to [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). For an iBook, [click here](#). For a Kindle version, [click here](#).

Revelation, the Fifth Gospel, Elizabeth Talbot, Pacific Press Publishing Association, © 2014. To purchase a paper copy go to the [ABC](https://www.abc-clc.com) or to [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). For an iBook, [click here](#). For a Kindle version, [click here](#). Or, for a Nook Book, [click here](#).

What We Believe: Prophecies of Revelation for Teens, Seth Pierce, Pacific Press Publishing Association, © 2013. To purchase a paper copy go to the [ABC](https://www.abc-clc.com) or to [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). For an iBook, [click here](#). For a Kindle version, [click here](#). Or, for a Nook Book, [click here](#).

Previous Messages in this Series (click on the title to download a PDF copy of it)

- Jan. 9, 2021 – *Present* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Jan. 23, 2021 – *Alpha + Omega* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Jan. 30, 2021 – *Available* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Feb. 6, 2021 – *Snapshot* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Feb. 13, 2021 – *Salvation* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Feb. 20, 2021 – *History, Part 1* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Mar. 6, 2021 – *History, Part 2* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)

- Mar. 27, 2021 – *Beginning, Part 1* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Apr. 17, 2021 – *Beginning, Part 2* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Apr. 24, 2021 – *Beginning, Part 3* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- May 1, 2021 – *Thrones* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- July 17, 2021 – *The Lamb* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- July 24, 2021 – *The Seals, The 4 Horsemen* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Aug. 7, 2021 – *The Seals, How Long* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)

Scripture References

Psalm 139:23-24 (NLT): *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.* ²⁴ *Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.* (Psalm 139:23-24, NLT)

Proverbs 3:5-12 (NLT): *Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.* ⁶ *Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.*

⁷ *Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the LORD and turn away from evil.*

⁸ *Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones.*

⁹ *Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce.* ¹⁰ *Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine.*

¹¹ *My child, don't reject the LORD's discipline, and don't be upset when he corrects you.* ¹² *For the LORD corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights.*

(Proverbs 3:5-12, NLT)

Isaiah 41:10-13 (CEV): *Don't be afraid. I am with you. Don't tremble with fear. I am your God. I will make you strong, as I protect you with my arm and give you victories.* ¹¹ *Everyone who hates you will be terribly disgraced; those who attack will vanish into thin air.* ¹² *You will look around for those brutal enemies, but you won't find them because they will be gone.*

¹³ *I am the LORD your God. I am holding your hand, so don't be afraid. I am here to help you.*

(Isaiah 41:10-13, CEV)

Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT): *Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30, NLT)*

Matthew 28:18-20 (NLT): *Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20, NLT)*

John 3:14-17 (NLT): *And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.*

¹⁶ *“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:14-17, NLT)*

Romans 8:26-28 (NLT): *And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. ²⁷ And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will. ²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. (Romans 8:26-28, NLT)*

Revelation 1:1-31 (CSB): *The revelation of Jesus Christ that God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, whatever he saw. ³ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep what is written in it, because the time is near. (Revelation 1:1-3, CSB)*

Revelation 6:1 – 8:1 (CSB): *Then I saw the Lamb open one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, “Come!” ² I looked, and there was a white horse. Its rider held a bow; a crown was given to him, and he went out as a conqueror in order to conquer.*

The Second Seal

³ *When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” ⁴ Then another horse went out, a fiery red one, and its rider was allowed to take peace from the earth, so that people would slaughter one another. And a large sword was given to him.*

The Third Seal

⁵ When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and there was a black horse. Its rider held a set of scales in his hand. ⁶ Then I heard something like a voice among the four living creatures say, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, but do not harm the oil and the wine."

The Fourth Seal

⁷ When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" ⁸ And I looked, and there was a pale green horse. Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following after him. They were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill by the sword, by famine, by plague, and by the wild animals of the earth.

The Fifth Seal

⁹ When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered because of the word of God and the testimony they had given. ¹⁰ They cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, the one who is holy and true, how long until you judge those who live on the earth and avenge our blood?" ¹¹ So they were each given a white robe, and they were told to rest a little while longer until the number would be completed of their fellow servants and their brothers and sisters, who were going to be killed just as they had been.

The Sixth Seal

¹² Then I saw him open the sixth seal. A violent earthquake occurred; the sun turned black like sackcloth made of hair; the entire moon became like blood; ¹³ the stars of heaven fell to the earth as a fig tree drops its unripe figs when shaken by a high wind; ¹⁴ the sky was split apart like a scroll being rolled up; and every mountain and island was moved from its place.

¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth, the nobles, the generals, the rich, the powerful, and every slave and free person hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶ And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷ because the great day of their wrath has come! And who is able to stand?"

The Sealed of Israel

7 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, restraining the four winds of the earth so that no wind could blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. ² Then I saw another angel rising up from the east, who had the seal of the living God. He cried out in a loud voice to the four angels who were allowed to harm the earth and the sea, ³ "Don't harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we seal the servants of our God on their foreheads." ⁴ And I heard the number of the sealed:

144,000 sealed from every tribe of the Israelites:

⁵ 12,000 sealed from the tribe of Judah,
12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,
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⁶ 12,000 from the tribe of Asher,
12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali,
12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,
⁷ 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon,
12,000 from the tribe of Levi,
12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,
⁸ 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,
12,000 from the tribe of Joseph,
12,000 sealed from the tribe of Benjamin.

A Multitude from the Great Tribulation

⁹ After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:

Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!

¹¹ All the angels stood around the throne, and along with the elders and the four living creatures they fell facedown before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying,

Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen.

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, “Who are these people in white robes, and where did they come from?”

¹⁴ I said to him, “Sir, you know.”

Then he told me: These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵ For this reason they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple. The one seated on the throne will shelter them: ¹⁶ They will no longer hunger; they will no longer thirst; the sun will no longer strike them, nor will any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb who is at the center of the throne will shepherd them; he will guide them to springs of the waters of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

The Seventh Seal

8 When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

(Revelation 6:1 – 8:1, CSB)

Revelation 21:1-4 (CSB): Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.

³ Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away. (Revelation 21:1-4, CSB)