

# The Book of Revelation

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## WHO IS ABLE TO STAND?

*Revelation 7:1-17*

Chapter six concluded with the words, “For *the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?*” Chapter seven answers that question, as John is given a double vision of the protected and triumphant followers of Christ.

### 144,000 Sealed

#### Parallel from the OT

Ezek. 7 and 9

- In these passages we see the Lord giving words to the prophet Ezekiel, calling him to proclaim judgment to idolatrous Israel. Ezekiel lived in Babylon as an exile from the southern kingdom of Judah. God prophetically revealed to him the upcoming destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple.
- The mark on believers is to protect them from the coming wrath, which will be inflicted by the Babylonians, and which unfaithful Israel will suffer.
- Ezek. 9 seems to speak of the physical protection of the righteous remnant within Israel, who have been purged from the unfaithful. The mark appears to serve the same function as the mark of blood over the Hebrews’ doors at Passover (Ex. 12:7; 13:22-28). Revelation 7 picks up this idea as the seal protects believers from the harmful effects of the following trumpet and bowl plagues, which have been modeled on the Exodus plagues.

#### The Sealing of the Spirit

2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; Eph. 4:30

The work of the Spirit in the life of the believer is the evidence that believers belong to Jesus Christ. This is called the sealing of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit seals all believers.

#### The Sealing in Revelation 7

- Revelation 14:1 and 22:4 describe believers as having the names of Jesus and the Father written on their foreheads.
- That the seal includes the idea of authentication and ownership is evident from the fact that John equates it with the name of Christ and God in the above two verses.
- The mark of the beast on the forehead of unbelievers in ch. 13:16-17 is identified as “*the name of the beast*,” and in Rev. 14:9-11, the mark on the beast-worshipper’s forehead is also called “*the mark of his [the beast’s] name*.”

#### A Problem with the Naming of the Tribes of Israel

Why are the tribes of Dan and Ephraim omitted from the list of tribes? This is the only place in Scripture that lists the 12 tribes of Israel this way. It might seem to indicate that we ought not to take this numbering of the tribes literally.

## Who are the 144,000?

### Option #1 – Jewish believers at the time of the end.

- This would be the standard interpretation of Dispensationalism.
- Chronologically the 144,000 would be found right before the second coming during “the great tribulation.”

### Option #2 – The full number of the elect.

- The church is pictured as the restored remnant of true Israel, whose salvation has been guaranteed. They are numbered exactly because God has determined exactly who will receive His redemptive seal. Thus the exalted saints under the altar are told to wait a while longer until the number of their fellow servants who were to be killed should be completed.
- The scene of sealing moves smoothly to one of a vast number gathered from all over the earth. This seems to parallel the scene of chapter 5 where the slain Lamb redeems His people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

## Great Tribulation

*Matt. 24:21*

- This passage of Scripture describes the great distress of the days right before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
- This passage seems to also treat the destruction of Jerusalem as a type of the distress and destruction coming upon the world at the Second Coming.
- Therefore we could say that the tribulation consists of pressures to compromise faith – both from within the church community through seductive teaching and from without through overt oppression.
- The tribulation had begun, even in John’s day (1:9), but will be intensified in its severity at the end of history.

## Into the Presence of God

Jesus gives His suffering children these verses (v. 15- 17) to encourage the saints as the tribulation unfolds and suffering intensifies. They are to know and be assured that they are God’s people and the sheep of His pasture (Psalm 100:3). He knows them by name and leads them in the way, all the time going before them (John 10: 1ff).

This is the foundation of all praise and thanksgiving - the amazing grace through which we have been delivered and washed clean. Grace is our cry (Zechariah 4:7). We offer praise with a loud voice to God and his Son for the great plan of redemption He has purposed and accomplished on the cross by God’s dear Son (Psalm 98).