Revelation 7

The Sealed and the Multitude: Who Is Able to Stand?

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."

Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Before the storm breaks, God marks His own and holds back the wind until they are safe. And on the other side of the great tribulation stands a crowd too big to count, washed in the Lamb's blood, with every tear wiped away. Who can stand? Those the Lamb has washed.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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00 The Text

REVELATION 7 (KJV), MARKED

▲ Gold God — His character & actions
Green Command / instruction
⇄ Sky Key repeated word
⚠ Rose Sin / warning
★ Violet Promise / blessing
◷ Amber Time / place / contrast

1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the ◷ four winds of the earth, ◷ that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east , ▲ having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have ⇄ sealed ★ the servants of our God in their foreheads.

4 And I heard the number of them which were ⇄ sealed: and there were ⇄ sealed ⇄ an hundred and forty and four thousand of ◷ all the tribes of the children of Israel.

5 Of the tribe of Juda were ⇄ sealed ⇄ twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were ⇄ sealed ⇄ twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were ⇄ sealed ⇄ twelve thousand.

6 Of the tribe of Aser were ⇄ sealed ⇄ twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nepthalim were ⇄ sealed ⇄ twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were ⇄ sealed ⇄ twelve thousand.

7 Of the tribe of Simeon were ⇄ sealed ⇄ twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were ⇄ sealed ⇄ twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were ⇄ sealed ⇄ twelve thousand.

8 Of the tribe of Zabulon were ⇄ sealed ⇄ twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were ⇄ sealed ⇄ twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were ⇄ sealed ⇄ twelve thousand.

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, ★ a great multitude, which no man could number , ◷ of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the ⇄ throne, and before ▲ the Lamb, clothed with ⇄ white robes, and ★ palms in their hands;

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the ⇄ throne, and unto ▲ the Lamb.

11 And all the angels stood round about the ⇄ throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the ⇄ throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

12 Saying, Amen: ▲ Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in ⇄ white robes? and ◷ whence came they?

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which ⚠ came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of ▲ the Lamb.

15 Therefore are they before the ⇄ throne of God, and Green serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the ⇄ throne shall dwell among them.

16 ★ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

17 For ▲ the Lamb which is in the midst of the ⇄ throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto ★ living fountains of waters: and ★ God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Marked in the text

- **v1** ◷ four winds of the earth
- **v1** ◷ that the wind should not blow on the earth
- **v2** ▲ having the seal of the living God
- **v3** ▮▮ Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees
- **v3** ⇄ sealed *(every occurrence)*
- **v3** ★ the servants of our God in their foreheads
- **v4** ⇄ an hundred and forty and four thousand
- **v4** ◷ all the tribes of the children of Israel
- **v5** ⇄ twelve thousand *(every occurrence)*
- **v9** ★ a great multitude, which no man could number
- **v9** ◷ of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues
- **v9** ▲ the Lamb *(every occurrence)*
- **v9** ⇄ throne *(every occurrence)*
- **v9** ⇄ white robes *(every occurrence)*
- **v9** ★ palms in their hands
- **v10** ▲ Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb
- **v11** ▮▮ fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God
- **v12** ▲ Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might
- **v13** ◷ whence came they
- **v14** ▮▮ Sir, thou knowest
- **v14** ⚠ came out of great tribulation
- **v14** ★ washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb
- **v15** ▮▮ serve him day and night in his temple
- **v15** ★ he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them
- **v16** ★ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more
- **v17** ▲ the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them
- **v17** ★ living fountains of waters
- **v17** ★ God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 7:9 (KJV)

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, ★ a great multitude, which no man could number, ◷ of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the ⇄ throne, and before ▲ the Lamb, clothed with ⇄ white robes, and ★ palms in their hands;

Setting

Six seals have been broken (ch. 6), and the sixth ended with the whole earth hiding from "the wrath of the Lamb" and asking who is able to stand (6:16–17). Before the seventh seal is opened, John is shown a pause. Chapter 7 is the answer to that question: two groups who belong to God — one sealed on earth, one standing before the throne in heaven.

Structure

- vv1–3 — **the winds held back:** four angels stand "at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth" (v1). Another angel comes "from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God" (v2) and cries, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads" (v3).
- vv4–8 — **the 144,000 sealed:** John hears the number — "one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel" (v4). Twelve thousand from each of twelve tribes, listed by name (vv5–8). Judah comes first; Dan is missing; Joseph stands in for Ephraim.
- vv9–12 — **the great multitude:** John looks and sees "a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues," standing before the throne and the Lamb, "clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands" (v9). They cry, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (v10). The angels, elders and living creatures fall "on their faces before the throne and worshiped God" (v11) with a sevenfold blessing (v12).
- vv13–17 — **who they are and what they receive:** an elder asks John, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" (v13). John answers, "My lord, you know." "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (v14). They "serve Him day and night in His temple," and He "will spread His tabernacle over them" (v15). No more hunger, thirst or scorching heat (v16); "the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd," He "will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes" (v17).

Repeated words

four (vv1, 2, 11); harm (vv2, 3); sealed / seal (vv2, 3, 4, 5, 8); twelve thousand (vv5–8); throne (vv9, 10, 11, 15, 17); the Lamb (vv9, 10, 14, 17); white (vv9, 13, 14); loud voice (vv2, 10); robes (vv9, 13, 14).

Contrasts

the earth hiding from the Lamb's wrath (6:16) ⟷ a multitude standing before the Lamb (v9). The winds held back (v1) ⟷ judgment about to blow (8:1–7). A number John *hears* (v4) ⟷ a multitude no one could count that John *sees* (v9). The tribes of Israel (vv4–8) ⟷ every nation, tribe, people and tongue (v9). Robes washed in blood ⟷ made white (v14). Hunger, thirst, heat and tears (vv16–17) ⟷ the Shepherd, living water and God's own hand (v17).

Chapter theme (my words)

Before the storm breaks, God marks His own and holds back the wind until they are safe. And on the other side of the great tribulation stands a crowd too big to count, washed in the Lamb's blood, with every tear wiped away. Who can stand? Those the Lamb has washed.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 7:17 (KJV)

17 For ▲ the Lamb which is in the midst of the ⇄ throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto ★ living fountains of waters: and ★ God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

A pause between seals

Chapter 6 ends with the sixth seal and the question of who is able to stand. The seventh seal does not open until 8:1. Chapter 7 is an interlude — a look behind the curtain at God's people before the trumpet judgments fall. The "four corners of the earth" is not a flat-earth map; Guzik reads it as the four points of the compass — the whole earth. The winds are instruments of judgment (Hos 13:15; Jer 49:36), and he suggests a link to the four horsemen, since in Zechariah's vision the four chariots are the four "spirits" or winds of heaven (Zech 6:1–8; Hebrew *ruach* can mean either).

The seal on the forehead (vv2–3)

A seal marked ownership and protection. Ezekiel saw a mark put on the foreheads of those who grieved over Jerusalem's sin, and they were spared (Ezek 9:4–6). Here God's name is the mark (14:1) — the opposite of the beast's mark that comes later (13:16–17). Guzik notes that this sealing is a special one for this group, but every believer is also sealed by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 1:21–22; Eph 1:13; 4:30; 2 Tim 2:19). The judgment cannot start until God's servants are safe.

Who are the 144,000? (vv4–8)

Christians read this differently:

- **Jewish believers in the tribulation** — Guzik's view (futurist, pre-tribulation). They are literally "of every tribe of the sons of Israel," 12,000 from each, sealed for protection through the coming judgments. He argues that the New Testament never calls the church "Israel," and that 14:1–5 describes them as a distinct firstfruits group. They are the beginning of Israel's turning to her Messiah (Rom 11:26; Matt 23:39). Seiss, in Guzik: "They are not a part of the Church proper; for their repentance comes too late for that."
- **The whole people of God, symbolically** — many amillennial and idealist interpreters see 144,000 (12 × 12 × 1,000) as the complete church, the true Israel (Gal 6:16). They note that John *hears* 144,000 and then *sees* a countless multitude, just as he *heard* of a Lion and *saw* a Lamb (5:5–6) — two pictures of one people.

Guzik also mentions groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses that have claimed the number for themselves — which neither view supports.

The missing tribe

Dan is left out and Ephraim is named only through Joseph. Some have connected Dan to the Antichrist (Gen 49:17; Jer 8:16); Guzik calls that uncertain. What is certain is Dan's history of idolatry — the

Danites set up a carved image for themselves (Judg 18:30), and Jeroboam put a golden calf in Dan (1 Kgs 12:29–30); Ephraim too was "joined to idols" (Hos 4:17). Yet grace still has the last word: Dan is named first in Ezekiel's portioning of the land (Ezek 48:1). Guzik also points out that the Old Testament has at least twenty different tribal lists, so a varied list does not by itself prove the number is symbolic.

The great multitude (vv9–12)

Here is the Great Commission finished (Matt 24:14; 28:19). Every nation, tribe, people and tongue — distinct, not erased. Spurgeon, in Guzik: "There will be in heaven not a company of persons, all struck off alike so that you cannot tell who is who." White robes speak of righteousness given and priestly purity; palm branches recall the crowd that met Jesus at Jerusalem (John 12:13). Spurgeon: "The palm, the ensign of triumph, indicates most certainly a conflict and conquest." Their song credits no one but God: "Salvation to our God … and to the Lamb" (v10). Salvation is received, not achieved. The angels answer "Amen" with a sevenfold blessing (v12) — the creatures who never needed saving worship more deeply when they see sinners saved.

"The great tribulation" (vv13–14)

The elder has to prompt John, and John humbly answers, "My lord, you know." In Greek the article is emphatic — *the* tribulation, the great one. Guzik, consistent with his pre-tribulation view, sees these as people saved during the tribulation itself, many of them martyrs (6:9–11), perhaps reached through the witness of the 144,000. Others read "the great tribulation" more broadly as the suffering of the church across the whole age (John 16:33; Acts 14:22). Either way the main point is the same: they did not wash their robes in their own suffering or martyrdom. Spurgeon: "They washed their robes nowhere but in the blood of the Lamb." Only blood makes a robe white (Isa 1:18; 1 John 1:7).

What they receive (vv15–17)

Heaven is not idleness: they "serve Him day and night." Walvoord, in Guzik: "Heaven is not only a place of rest from earthly toil but also a place of privileged service." God will "spread His tabernacle over them" — the word is *skēnoō*, the same John used for the Word who "dwelt" among us (John 1:14). The promises echo Isaiah 49:10 and 25:8. And notice the paradox: the Lamb becomes the Shepherd. Guzik says the tears wiped away are tears of earthly suffering and sorrow. Spurgeon on how the saints can be at peace in heaven: "Perfect acquiescence in the divine will is probably the secret of it."

Word study (Greek)

- **winds — *anemos* (G417):** wind; in prophecy, a picture of judgment sweeping the earth.
- **harm — *adikeō* (G91):** to injure, do wrong, damage.
- **seal — *sphragis* (G4973):** a seal, signet — a mark of ownership and security.
- **sealed — *sphragizō* (G4972):** to set a seal on, to mark as one's own and protect.
- **forehead — *metōpon* (G3359):** the forehead; the place of the beast's mark, and of God's name.
- **bond-servants — *doulos* (G1401):** a slave, one owned by a master.
- **tribe — *phylē* (G5443):** a tribe, clan, people group.
- **multitude — *ochlos* (G3793):** a crowd, throng.
- **tongues — *glōssa* (G1100):** tongue, language.

- **robes — *stolē* (G4749):** a long flowing robe, garment of honor.
- **palm branches — *phoinix* (G5404):** the date palm; a sign of victory and festival.
- **salvation — *sōtēria* (G4991):** deliverance, rescue, salvation.
- **tribulation — *thlipsis* (G2347):** pressure, affliction, crushing distress.
- **washed — *plynō* (G4150):** to wash, especially garments.
- **serve — *latreuō* (G3000):** to render priestly, worshipful service.
- **spread His tabernacle — *skēnoō* (G4637):** to pitch a tent, to dwell — John 1:14.
- **be their shepherd — *poimainō* (G4165):** to tend, feed and guide as a shepherd.
- **wipe — *exaleiphō* (G1813):** to wipe out, erase completely.

Cross-references

Gen 49:17; Judg 18:30; Ps 23:1–2; Isa 1:18; Isa 25:8; Isa 49:10; Ezek 9:4–6; Ezek 48:1–7; Hos 4:17; Zech 6:1–8; Matt 24:14; John 1:14; John 10:11; John 12:13; Rom 11:26; 2 Cor 1:21–22; Eph 1:13; Eph 4:30; Rev 5:5–6, 9; Rev 6:9–11, 16–17; Rev 14:1–5; Rev 21:4.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 7:3 (KJV)

3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

Command to obey — be a bond-servant who is sealed

The seal goes on "the bond-servants of our God" (v3). I am not my own; I belong to Him, and His Spirit is the seal (Eph 1:13). Today I'll live like a man who is owned — with His name on my forehead, out in the open, not hidden.

Sin to confess — idolatry that leaves a tribe off the list

Dan's and Ephraim's names are missing, and their history is idolatry. I can't build my life around a golden calf and expect my name to stay in the story. The men I walk with know what this looks like — the bottle, the pipe, the old life — but so do I: comfort, approval, my own work. I name my idols and turn from them.

Warning to heed — the wind is only held back

The angels hold back the four winds "until" the servants are sealed (v3). The pause is mercy, not cancellation. Judgment is coming, and this quiet moment is the time to be ready and to help others get ready.

Promise to trust — "God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

Not tears dried by time, but wiped away by His own hand (v17). The Lamb will be their Shepherd and lead them to springs of living water. For the man in a cell who thinks his story is too dark, for the man

in recovery who has cried more tears than he can count — this is where the story ends for those washed in the Lamb's blood.

Example to follow — "My lord, you know."

John didn't pretend to understand what he didn't understand. He let the elder teach him (v14). When I study Revelation — and every hard passage — I want that humility: ask, listen, and let God explain.

Worship

"Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (v10). Every nation, every tongue, a crowd no one can number — and not one of them saved by their own effort. I join their song and the angels' sevenfold Amen.

Prayer

Lamb of God, thank You for washing my robe white in Your blood when I could never clean it myself. Seal me as Yours and keep me through every storm. Make me humble enough to say, "You know," and faithful enough to serve You day and night. Use me to bring men from every place into that great multitude. Shepherd me to living water, and one day wipe away my tears. Amen.