

The Book of Revelation

Lesson 7: The Sealed of God and the Great Multitude -- Revelation 7:1-17

The sixth seal has just been broken, and the sky has rolled back like a scroll. Kings and slaves alike are running for the caves, screaming for the rocks to fall on them, crying out the terrible question that hangs over the whole human race: "The great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (6:17). And then, right when you brace yourself for the seventh seal and the final blow, the action stops. The camera pulls back. John shows us four angels holding back the four winds, and an angel rising from the east with the seal of the living God, and a voice that says, in effect, "Wait. Not yet. There are people down there who belong to God, and they have to be marked before the storm is allowed to break." Chapter 7 is a pause for breath. It is heaven answering the question "who can stand?" with a tender, thunderous reply: the sealed of God can stand.

Notice what God does first. Before the winds of judgment blow, before the trumpets sound, before history's worst is unleashed, God reaches down and puts His mark on His servants' foreheads. The forehead is the place of identity and allegiance, the most visible part of who you are, and God claims it. This is not a magic charm that exempts the sealed from suffering. These same people will be described as those who "have come out of the great tribulation." They go through the storm, not around it. But they go through it owned, named, sealed, kept. In a world that wanted to brand Christians as traitors to Caesar and to wash them out of the book of the living, God says, "They are Mine, and I have written My name where everyone can see."

Then John hears a number: a hundred and forty-four thousand, twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. It is the kind of number that has launched a thousand charts and end-times fevers, with people doing arithmetic to decide who's in and who's locked out. But watch carefully what happens next. John hears a number, and then he turns and looks, and what he sees is "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne" (7:9). The sealed company he heard counted is the countless company he sees. Twelve times twelve times a thousand is not a quota. It is a symbol of completeness piled on completeness, the whole people of God, the entire redeemed family, with not one of them missing.

And where does the vision land? Not on a battlefield but on a homecoming. White robes. Palm branches. A roar of praise: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" These are the ones who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and now "they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night." The Lamb at the center of the throne becomes their Shepherd. He leads them to springs of living water. And God Himself bends down and "will wipe away every tear from their eyes." If you have ever wondered whether faithfulness is worth it when the winds are howling, chapter 7 is God's letter to you. He sees you. He has sealed you. And He is keeping you for a country where the crying finally stops.

Group Discussion: When life's hardest storms hit, many people quietly assume that real faith should have spared them the pain. How does chapter 7's picture of the sealed servants who are kept through the great tribulation, rather than exempted from it, reshape what we should expect from following the Lamb?

Personal Reflection: Where in your life right now are you tempted to doubt that you belong to God because of how hard things have become? What would change in the next week if you truly believed the seal of God is already on you?

Read Revelation 7:1-17

Study Questions

1. The sealing scene opens with four angels holding back "the four winds of the earth" until God's servants are "sealed... on their foreheads" (7:1-3). In the language of Revelation, what does it mean that God seals His people, and what does the forehead, the place of identity and allegiance, tell us about whose they are?
2. God marks His own before the winds are allowed to blow. Where do you most need to rest this week in the assurance that you have already been claimed and owned by God, before the next storm rather than after you have proven yourself in it?
3. The sealing offers spiritual security, not bodily exemption, since these same people are later said to have "come out of the great tribulation" (7:14). How does Scripture distinguish being kept by God from being spared all suffering, and why does that distinction matter for honest faith (see John 16:33; Romans 8:35-39)?

4. Think of a specific trial you have walked through or are walking through now. Looking back, can you name a way God kept your soul even while He did not remove the hardship? How does naming that steady your trust?

5. John hears the number “a hundred and forty-four thousand” sealed “from every tribe of the sons of Israel” (7:4), an ordered, military-style census of twelve thousand from twelve tribes. What clues in the way the number is built (twelve tribes times twelve thousand) signal that John intends a symbol of the complete people of God rather than a literal headcount?

6. If God’s people really are a complete and numbered company in which not one is lost, how does belonging to that vast, secure family change the way you carry yourself among fellow believers, especially toward the ones who feel forgotten or overlooked?

7. John hears a number and then turns and sees “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation” (7:9). How does the relationship between what he hears and what he sees help us understand that the 144,000 and the countless multitude are the same redeemed people viewed from two angles?

8. The redeemed multitude is drawn “from all tribes and peoples and languages” (7:9), the whole world over. In what concrete way is God asking you to widen your heart, your prayers, or your welcome toward people unlike you, so that your life matches the breadth of the throng before the throne?

9. Some teach that the 144,000 is a literal, limited number of ethnic Jews, or a spiritual elite ranked above ordinary believers. Working from the text itself, build the case that the 144,000 is symbolic of the whole sealed people of God, the complete number of the redeemed in the new-covenant Israel, and show why the literal-Jews and special-elite readings collapse when John “looks” and sees the uncountable multitude.

10. Look back across the whole chapter, the sealing, the symbolic 144,000, the countless multitude, the washed robes, the Shepherd-Lamb, and the God who wipes away every tear. Name one specific way the Lord is using this vision to form you right now: to steady your endurance, deepen your worship, or strengthen your hope of home.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Ezekiel 9:4–6, the mark set on the foreheads of those who grieve over sin, spared in judgment; Ephesians 1:13–14, believers sealed with the promised Holy Spirit as the guarantee of their inheritance; Galatians 3:26–29, all who are baptized into Christ are Abraham’s offspring and heirs, the true Israel; John 10:27–29, the Shepherd’s sheep whom no one can snatch from His hand; Revelation 21:3–4, God dwelling with His people and wiping away every tear.