

## **WHO CAN STAND?**

### **Revelation 7**

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**I. The key to understanding Revelation 7 is rereading the last verse of chapter 6, which asks a question, “Who can stand?”**

“The great day of the wrath of the Lamb has come; who can stand?” Revelation 7 answers that question. “After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: ‘Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.’ Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, 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, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000. After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne

and worshiped God, saying: ‘Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!’

Then one of the elders asked me, ‘These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?’

I answered, ‘Sir, you know.’

And he said, ‘These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes’”

(Revelation 7:1–17, NIV).

As we approach Revelation 7, we’re at a real fork in the road in the Book of Revelation. There are two distinct interpretations of Revelation 7 that are held by born-again believers.

One interpretation of Revelation 7 says these are two separate multitudes. Another interpretation says these are one seen in two different ways. If you’ll allow me to spend a few moments in interpretation before we get to application it will help us in our application of the Scripture.

## **II. One view has taught us that there are two separate multitudes in Revelation 7.**

The scenario of this viewpoint, which is probably the most familiar viewpoint to you, goes something like this. Before the great tribulation period the church is to be raptured. The Holy Spirit, who’s presently in the church, a restraining influence according to 2 Thessalonians 2:6–7, is withdrawn when the church is raptured. Immediately, however, after the Rapture of the church, one hundred forty-four thousand Jews will acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah according

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to Revelation 7. The Jews, twelve thousand from every tribe, will become evangelists. Their sealing indicates that they will be immune from all attacks so that their ministry will be accompanied by immunity to the Antichrist. In the darkest hours of the world, during the time when antichrist is ruling, these one hundred forty-four thousand witnesses will be incredibly effective. One writer calls them one hundred forty-four thousand Jewish Billy Grahams let loose in the world. Their effectiveness will meet with unprecedented success. The second multitude, which is seen in Revelation 7, is result of their converting efforts that lead to innumerable multitude from all the nations, the tribes, the people, and the languages of the earth being saved. Tribulation is to be marked by a great ingathering of souls. This is essentially the scenario in brief.

This particular version of the end time began to be taught around 1850 by a Plymouth brethren minister named John Darby. His interpretation of prophecy was ultimately taken over by C. I. Scofield. The Scofield Bible is something many of you have. Scofield popularized this view, and it's held devoutly today by many, many believers all over the earth. In fact the viewpoint has become so popular that to even raise a question regarding it is almost to in some circles be labeled as a heretic. Or as being unloyal to the Scripture. But that is a risk I'm going to run a little bit this morning.

I personally hold that this view may be true. But I have grave reservations about this particular view based upon my own reading of Scripture and my perception of biblical doctrine.

I'd like to share with you some problems with this point of view.

One problem is with the text of Revelation itself. For this particular view to hold water it is necessary for several things to have happened in the Book of Revelation. For one thing the church must have been caught up. In Revelation 4:1 when John is told to "come up hither," then

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the church must be included in that. And it must be absent from all the scenes that then follow from chapter 4 on in the Book of Revelation. However, we find that, when John is told to come up into heaven, the text notes immediately that he fell into the Spirit. In other words, his way of getting into heaven was to be in the Spirit. There are four times in the Book of Revelation where John is identified as being in the Spirit. Each of the four times is at the start of a new division of the book of Revelation. In 1:10 he is in the Spirit on the Lord's day. In 4:2 he is in the spirit carried away into heaven. In 17:3 he is carried away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And in 21:10, in the Spirit, he is carried away to a great high mountain. So, if it is true that the church is carried up with John when he is carried in the Spirit, it must also be true that some sort of systematization of the church would likewise be caught up with John wherever he was caught up in the Spirit. Which would mean in the Spirit in four different places in Revelation.

The view, too, of the scenario I've unfolded depends upon the idea of the word "church," a word that specifically is not used from Revelation 4 on until the very end of the book. Therefore the absence of the word "church" means of course the church is not there.

Whenever the term "saints" or "elect" is used according to this viewpoint it does not refer to the church. It refers to the Jewish believers or tribulation saints. However, as we look at the rest of the New Testament, words like "saints" and "elect" are frequently used of believers. In fact, the word "church" does not appear in the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John. But that does not mean the church isn't there.

The most important letter affecting the destiny of the church, the letter to the Romans, the first fifteen chapters of that letter, all the chapters that embrace doctrine, the word "church" is not there. In 2 Timothy the word "church" does not occur. In 1 and 2 Peter the word "church"

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doesn't occur. In 1 and 2 John the word "church" does not occur. All those instances, the lack of occurrence does not mean that the church is not there. It's very much present.

Also there is the assumption of this viewpoint that the one hundred forty-four thousand in Revelation 7 are Jewish evangelists. Yet there is nothing in the texts that tell us they are evangelists. It simply notes that they are sealed, not a word is said about their activity or what they do.

From this point of view, at least, I see some problems in the text of Revelation itself. There are some theological problems I see. The theological problem is this assumption that the greatest growth of the church is going to take place without the presence of the Holy Spirit. I can see how in 1850 the non-charismatic division of the church could understand that the church could have great evangelization without the Holy Spirit. They never were very much concerned about the Holy Spirit at all being that present anyway so it's perfectly possible that the greatest ingathering of the church could occur in a time when the Holy Spirit wasn't present. But here you have a viewpoint that assumes that during the worst seven years in human history the church will start over from scratch and by the end of those seven years become a vast multitude. So vast that no one could number it. And they will do this without the power of the Spirit since the Spirit according to 2 Thessalonians in this viewpoint is caught up from the earth.

With the power of the Spirit in the Book of Acts it took the Early Church twenty years to even begin to realize that it was not a Jewish organization but included Gentiles. If the Holy Spirit is going to function in the Tribulation as He did in the Old Testament, for this would be the viewpoint that the Holy Spirit would somehow get back into the world but it would be like the Old Testament times, then the question might be raised in regard to the one hundred forty-four

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thousand as to how an ethnically closed group can establish an international body of saints, especially when only a few will be endowed with the Spirit.

In fact, does it really make sense to say the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the world only to turn around and say to someone “He’s got to get back in”? The Tribulation church without the Holy Spirit, according to this viewpoint, will actually have greater success than the present church has had with all its the generations with the Spirit. How then does this viewpoint fit into Joel 2 and Acts 2 which say in the last days there will be signs and wonders but also there will be an unprecedented move of the Spirit of God poured out upon all flesh? This is one of the problems with that view.

One other problem is the assumption I’ll just mention of the “second chance” doctrine of salvation which goes something like this on the popular level. “If you miss the Rapture you can still get saved during the Tribulation.” I can remember the frightening moment I was ten and I thought the Lord had come. It was a moment that really brought me to the Lord. “Lord, if You have come and I’m left behind I want to get ready.” But there was still that comforting knowledge that maybe I could get saved in the Tribulation.

But in the first mention in Revelation of Christ’s return to the earth there is no hope carried of a second chance in regard to the blessed home of the church. Revelation 1:7 indicates, “Behold, He is coming with the clouds. And every eye will see Him and every one who pierced Him and all who pierced Him and all the tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him. Even so, amen.” The first reference in Revelation to the coming of the Lord is this very direct word.

Given those reservations does not mean the view I hold that cannot happen. I think as believers we must hold a number of possibilities. In fact, I think as believers we must separate certainties from theories. That’s one of the problems that sometimes happens with those of us who preach.

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We get a particular viewpoint and say this is on a par with the resurrection. What I'm saying to you now, my particular way of looking at this, is absolute truth and nobody better dare disagree with it. The fact remains that there are differences among born again believers on how God is going to close the age. There is no difference at all on the fact that He is going to close the age. That's where our unity is. That's where it will always be.

God has control of human history. God is going to bring down the curtain. All that we do as we look at Scripture is say, "Some of us have differing precepts on how He might do it. But there's no question that He is going to do it."

I personally feel that from the Scripture there is deliberate attempt from Scripture to build for us a dynamic tension through putting before us several alternatives, any one of which may come true. It's like, for example, in the doctrine of the Trinity. The Scriptures teach us that God is one and yet God is three: Father, Son and Spirit. There's a dynamic tension there. You take away one element of that and you have a perversion of the nature of God.

As I look at the doctrine of the Second Coming in regard to the Scripture, I see an emphasis in Scripture on the theme of readiness: "You know not at what hour your Lord will come again. Be ready." Be ready to go now if the Lord should call you at this moment. If the Lord should return from heaven be ready. Scriptures are also saying something to us about the possibility of endurance. "He that endures to the end will be saved" is the word of Jesus.

But the Scripture also talks to us about the possibility of normalcy that we may have a lifetime to live without a crisis happening and in this event put your talents to work. That's the theme of the parable of the talents. That's not only true in regard to the Lord's coming, that's true in regard to death. I know not at what moment the Lord may call me, so I must always be ready.

On the other hand, the Lord may call me as a believer to walk through great valleys of sorrow. I must be ready to serve Him and be loyal to Him no matter what. Or, the Lord may give me a lifetime of normalcy in which case I must be prepared to live accordingly. When we say, “The Lord is coming after the Tribulation; He couldn’t possibly come before,” what we do is we erode this concept of the Scripture which says, “Be ready. You know not the hour.”

But if we adopt strictly the “coming before the tribulation” point of view, then we rob the saints of this perspective of “If Christ calls you to go through endurance, go through it.” And if we don’t emphasize the fact that God may give you a whole lifetime, what we have are Christians who are like kids on Christmas Eve. Have you ever tried to settle a kid down on Christmas Eve, tried to get them to normalcy at all? You can’t do it on Christmas Eve. Sometimes, maybe we can become Christmas Eve pre-Tribulation saints who are so floating on the idea that the Lord may be coming at any moment that we fail to get on with doing the everyday tasks that God has called us to do. A more permanent and enduring basis.

**III. I’ve kind of briefly shared one point of view in regard to Revelation 7, but now I’d like to share with you the point of view I personally see.**

Here in Revelation 7, we have in the language of the apostle, one multitude seen in two different ways. How could that be? We must remember that we’re dealing with a specialized form of biblical writing and literature of the apocalyptic. Symbolic things happen and there are quick changes in mood and style. For example, I think that what is going on in Revelation 7 is the same thing that went on in Revelation 5:5–6. John is being introduced to the One who is going to walk across the glassy sea and take the scroll of human history from the hand of God. The elder says to him, “Weep not. Lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered.” Notice the Jewish reference and notice the figure of speech—the lion has conquered. He heard this. He

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heard that the lion has conquered. But when he opened his eyes to see he did not see a lion. He saw a lamb. The lion was the lamb. The lion, the Messiah of Jewish history, became the Lamb of Christian suffering. He hears, he sees.

Notice in Revelation 7 what is going on. John never sees the 144,000. He simply hears the 144,000. He hears the number, he hears the tribal divisions, 12,000, 12,000, 12,000... When he turns to look he see the multitude no one could number. That's a way of saying John hears the scriptural image of Israel but when he looks he sees the innumerable hosts and multitude of God's people.

A way of transposing if you will, of surprising us with a figure, a symbol. So we look at these two different perspectives of the one multitude.

The first picture shows us that the people of God are numbered and none are missing. Verses 1–8. There is in verses 1–3 protection given to this people of God, and the protection of the people of God is a very beautiful theme that runs throughout the Old Testament. A number of places we see it. For example, in the suffering in Egypt, God's people are protected from God's wrath. But they're not protected from Pharaoh. In Ezekiel 9, the destruction of Jerusalem is impending.

Before the final slaughter began, the man was instructed with an inkhorn to mark the forehead of those who were faithful so that the avengers could not touch those who were so marked.

Here the same kind of symbolism is going on. Before the hurricane of God's judgment and of the antichrist's reign breaks upon the earth, there is a sealing before it comes upon sea, land, and trees. The specific reason why trees are mentioned here evidently is because you can see the wind blowing when the trees are bending. It's a symbolic form of saying a tremendous wind of adversity is going to come upon the earth. The seal here is a seal of ownership. It is not so much literal as it is spiritual. It indicates, according to Ephesians 1:13–14 which has this same figure of

a seal, that when we are saved the Spirit is given to us as the seal of our conversion. In 2 Timothy 2:19 Paul says “God’s firm foundation stands bearing the seal. The Lord knows those who are His.” That’s His seal. It’s that inward, spiritual regenerating mark upon the heart that marks out His people and says, “I know you.” It is going to be as we see later in Revelation there will be a seal of the Antichrist. Before any sealing of the Antichrist, God’s seal comes first. He marks His people, He owns His people, He protects His people. But He doesn’t necessarily protect them from the adversity that is breaking on the earth. They are sealed before the adversity breaks out. When we turn to the verses 15,16,17 of chapter 7 we see saints who are coming out of this tribulation period who have experienced the need for shelter. They have been hungered. They have been scorched by the sun. They have suffered heat. They have thirsted and they have wept. What therefore have they been sealed from?

They have been sealed from the ownership of the enemy. They have been sealed and marked and set apart for God.

The number sealed is 144,000, 12,000 from each tribe. In Scripture there’s this great understanding of completeness or solidarity. When one is missing it is incomplete. The number of 12 in the New Testament, for example, is so important. When Jesus chose 12 apostles He intended that to be a complete number. But in Acts 1 we see that one lost his place of apostleship. He fell and the church needed to replace him. James, who later died, was not replaced. Why? Because he never gave up his faith. There’s a certain sense of completeness and solidarity. Twelve expresses it. You take a perfect square—12 times 12 and then you multiply that by 1,000 to come to 144,000. You have a perfect picture of completeness. “Twelve times twelve a thousand times over” is the vernacular way of saying it. It’s a symbolic figure, I think, of the fact that the Lamb has 7 eyes and 7 horns. No one would press that figure literally. We get

to heaven and we're going to look for 7 horns coming out of the head of Jesus and 7 eyes that are circulating around His body. We clearly understand the apocalyptic imagery. Symbolism. The writer of John does that same thing with numbers. Here 144,000. What's the idea of this?

**IV. It expresses the fact that God knows completely who His people are and before anything happens He's secure about His people.**

In our California culture where so many people are migrant and on the move all the time it's rough to say this is everybody. Because everybody's always coming in and going out. But here's God through the figure of 144,000 saying, "I don't lose track of one of My people. I see them as all complete and all present." God doesn't lose anyone.

There may be some objection raised that we're saying here that the 144,000 are the great multitude which no man can number. Yet there are those who hold another point of view who will say it can't be because this is talking about Israel, not the church. We should distinguish between Israel and the church. Again I feel that this point of view is missing the symbolism of Revelation. For example, it's missing the symbolism of what's going on in chapter 5 of hearing something and seeing something else. It's missing the symbolism of Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 which call non-believing Jews a synagogue of Satan. In Galatians 6:16 the church, the body of Christ, is called the Israel of God. The church is called Israel. In Romans 2:28,29, Paul says, "He is not a real Jew who is one outwardly nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He is a real Jew who is one inwardly. And real circumcision is the matter of the heart." Spiritual and not literal. Paul again says in Philippians 3:3, "We are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit and glory in Christ Jesus." Using symbolism already established in the New Testament where the church is called the Israel of God and the true Jew is called one who is one

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inwardly, we recognize the possibility that this can mean something other than literal Israel, that it can be referring here to spiritual Israel.

But you say if that's the case why are the tribes enumerated: 12,000 and 12,000 and 12,000.

Again, one has to go to the imagery that is being cast by the writer of Scripture and recognize as we turn to another part of Scripture that there is one other writer of the New Testament who calls the church of Jesus Christ 12 tribes. It's James writing to the church, composed of both Jews and Gentiles. He says to them as he begins his letter, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion." What's he talking about here? Twelve tribes of Israel? No. The people of God who are scattered again like ancient Israel. Ancient Israel's dispersion was because of unbelief, but the new Israel, the church of the living God, is scattered out of belief in the Lord.

I had a fascinating experience this week. I went through all the Old Testament lists of the tribes that I could find. I located about sixteen different tribal lists in the Old Testament and compared them to the list of Revelation and I came to some very fascinating conclusions. There were three in particular, which to me contribute to the symbolism John is trying to derive here as this vision comes to us.

One is from the twelve tribes. Each of them is enumerated. There is one tribe that is missing. I think you recognize that there were always thirteen tribes so to speak. Joseph's tribe got divided into Ephraim and Manasseh in order to take Levi's place who didn't inherit land. Levi became kind of the thirteenth tribe. So you're always working with the figure of thirteen when you look at the tribes. But twelve is the number of solidarity. The number in which the land was apportioned.

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One of the twelve tribes, Dan, is omitted from the list in Revelation 7. Why is Dan omitted?

Because of this tribe's long evident association with idolatry. The fact that when the kingdom split after Solomon one of the golden calves of worship was set up in Dan. The early Christians from the second century on believed that just as Christ had been born from the tribe of Judah so the Antichrist would be born from the tribe of Dan. What the writer of Revelation is saying is you will not find Dan's tribe in the Israel of God. You will not find apostasy there. Joseph's name has been substituted for that of his son, Ephraim, who was likewise known for his idolatry. But then there is one other strange thing that is happening. Judah is at the front of the list. Judah by logic should not be at the front. He is not the oldest son. He's the fourth born son. And in all the Old Testament the only time that Judah is even in front in the tribal list are four times in the Book of Numbers. In the Book of Numbers the Israel of God is always in the wilderness. So whenever Judah comes first in a tribal list it's Israel in the wilderness. Between the deliverance and the Promised Land. That's precisely where the people of God are right now. They are between salvation at the cross and the deliverance of the coming age. And who is it that is heading up the people of God? The tribe of Judah, the lion of Judah, the son of Judah, Jesus Christ. Who leads the people of God through the wilderness? Many times in the Book of Revelation we see this figure of speech of the people of God as being described as being in the wilderness. It's an apt description for life between salvation and the Lord's return.

The second image of the people of God is the imagery of the people of God as unnumbered and yet all are there. They're numbered and no one is missing. Now they're unnumbered but all are there.

Revelation 7:9 speaks of their origin. They are from every nation, from every tribe of peoples and tongues standing before the throne. Thus far in the Book of Revelation everything around the

throne has been countable. One God, the Lamb, twenty-four elders, four living ones, ten thousand times ten thousand angels, thousands and thousands of angels, everything was either specifically counted or estimated. Ten thousand times ten thousand, myriads and myriads but now for the first time in Revelation there is a crowd so big that no one can number it. And no one will even give a ballpark guess as to how big it is. They could ballpark guess the angels. A hundred million approximately, give or take a few. But they can't give a ballpark guess on the size of the crowd that is around the throne, saved by the blood of the lamb. It's incredible!

I think that when we sometimes look at the church we do not realize how vast the cross is and how truly far it has reached into every tribe and country and language. I grew up in small churches. I remember a time as a teenager when I came to Central Assembly of God in Springfield, Missouri, where there were about a hundred teenagers, most all of whom were Christians. I came from a youth group that had one or two—me and somebody else generally not my age—so to be around a hundred Christian young people was an incredible experience. The church seemed so vast and huge. It's a great feeling.

Here are the scattered people of God who are being reminded of a moment when they are united from all centuries, tribes, nations, and areas around the throne, a number which no man can count.

They appear before the throne in white robes, which stand for festal joy, for victory, for purity. And palm branches which bring to mind the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. They're claiming him as king. The faithful that stand before the throne of God are victorious. They're not weird or battered or worn. On earth, they were very much these things. But now they're in triumph, a picture of our coming joy. Their worship in heaven in verses 10–12 is simply to praise the Lamb for salvation. Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and unto the

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Lamb. The confession in heaven is the confession the saints had borne on earth. We think of the words of Ephesians 2:8–9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. This is not your own doing it is the gift of God. Not of works lest anyone should boast.” It’s the same kind of thing stated here in Revelation 7, salvation belongs to God. The saints on earth and the saints in heaven both recognize we did not get there by our own ability. We got there through the gift of God in Christ Jesus. Praise to Him! Worship before the throne.

In Luke 15:10, we find Jesus saying there is much joy among the angels in heaven over one sinner who repents. If that is the case over one sinner, think of the joy of heaven when all the sinners are there. That’s the scene you get here.

The identity of these before the throne is given in verses 13–14. They’re identified as those who came out of “the great tribulation” (NIV). Our instinct, as we read this then, is to immediately look at this and say the Great Tribulation—this hasn’t happened yet so this cannot include us. However we must again fall back upon the fact of what John’s audience, the first-century audience, is hearing and what John is intending to communicate as the Spirit instructs him to write. John is writing with a sense of immanence. These things are soon, he is saying to the believers. He starts his book by saying, “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place...the time is near.” The challenge to each of the churches is to conquer. It is John’s continual way of saying to the church of the living God, “You may be shortly passing through this. But if you must pass through this, here is the outcome before the throne.”

If Satan, during the Great Tribulation, can hurl everything at the church and an innumerable company remain loyal to the Lamb how much more can the church be triumphant now? I think we must have a concept of the fact that saints go through tribulation now. The difference

between the tribulation believers experience now and the Tribulation that is coming is that tribulation now is every bit as intensive on a personal level. Then it will be more extensive throughout all the earth.

The Tribulation will be different in that it will be extensive. More and more people will be suffering. But I find it hard to believe as I look at the Scripture that somehow, as I look at Revelation 7 that in one way or another, we're not all around the throne. We're all around the cross. It's true that only the first-century Christians were there at the cross, but all of us, through the years, join the scene at the cross. In effect as we look at Revelation, all of us are being joined together around the throne of God. The church, which has come through great tribulation, praises God that salvation belongs to Him and are certain as well that our sins have been washed away by the blood of the Lamb and we have life.

When we end chapter 7, we can't help but note the imagery that is involved. Striking imagery. The Lamb becomes our shepherd. There are many things that are said there. Now the saints are seen around the throne of God, that's the safest place of protection, the sanctuary. All around them stretches the glassy sea. No enemy can get to them. They serve. They're sheltered by God's presence. They experience care of the Lamb. Now all tears are gone. The text specifically says God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. It's striking that there would be, when the saints first get to heaven, tears on their eyes, when you think not only the Great Tribulation but when you think of the tribulation and the sorrow that comes when we in tears lay someone to rest.

When we see pain from that moment of pain we are caught up into heaven around the throne of God and the tear is still in our eyes, so freshly have we arrived from our sorrow on earth.

It is very much akin to the picture of a child who has had a great moment of pain and tears are flowing out of the eyes but then Mommy or Daddy comes into the room with some expression

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that immediately causes the child to have their countenance change and for laughing and joy to break out upon their face. All of a sudden there is a smile and hope on the face but there are still tears in the eyes, for the pain has been so recent and still so evident. So the Lamb as the shepherd takes the last reminders of pain and wipes them away so that there are no more tears.

I am unashamed of preaching gospel that embraces eternal life. I think in the church today if we have a sin of emphasis it is perhaps we place so much emphasis upon this life that we forget that we are pilgrims and strangers. If in this life only we have hope we are of all people most miserable. But, in fact, Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead and we have life forever. He'll wipe away all tears.

This question that we began with today from Revelation 6:17, "Who can stand?" is a question we must ask ourselves. When we face Jesus can we stand? The message of Revelation 6 is there will be many who will not be able to stand who would prefer the mountains and the rocks to come crashing upon them. But there are those who can stand in His presence. These are those who are sealed. Who have come to Jesus in new birth and have the breath of the Spirit of God placed in them, sealing them for that day in which they will finally stand before God. They are marked and owned by Jesus Christ through life and those who can stand are those who have washed their robes of sin in the Lamb's blood and have made them white.

In a time of sorrow, in a time of grief there is a hiding place where we find sweet relief.

### **Closing Prayer**

We praise You that we are never alone. We praise You for the promise of Your presence which carries us through the most difficult of moments and times. No matter how great our pains are that we might be experiencing in life, we realize that somewhere on earth, someone for You may be paying greater costs. We do not ask, Lord, that all of our questions be answered in the here

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and now. For You have given us the Scriptures which tell us that there is coming a day when every tear will be wiped away and all the answers will be evident and complete. Deliver us, Lord, from cheap grace and easy discipleship which says when the going gets tough You will simply remove us. At the same time Lord keep us sensitive to the fact that it is Your right and privilege as the king to summon us into Your presence whensoever You desire by whatever means You desire. Let us not shirk from the call to the cross, the call to suffering, simply because it is the cross or suffering. Let us only shirk from that suffering which is not of You or that suffering which would be from the enemy for our ruin. Let us follow You. Let us say, Lord, with fresh conviction in our life that all that we have in personality, in talent, in occupation, in home, in finances, that all that we have is really Yours. We have come from You and to You we are returning. Lord, with all of our heart we want to be one of that complete number of one hundred forty-four thousand and at the same time one of those innumerable thousands, millions that stand before Your throne. We are hastening to that day, Lord. Teach us to number our days that we might apply our hearts to wisdom. Give us power to live for You, Lord Jesus. Amen.