

sermon study summary

Revelation Part 12 – Sealed and Secure

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In Revelation 6 at the 6th seal, the apostle John saw a great earthquake remove every mountain and island from its place. Some take the details literally. Others believe John spoke figuratively. People cried, “The great day of God’s wrath has come; who can withstand it?”

Revelation 7 responds to this question, focusing on the security of God’s people. Yes, God’s judgments are unleashed, but those who know God have been sealed by Him and are shielded from judgment. The seal of God doesn’t shield you from trials, but it guarantees that you will persevere amidst the trials. Trials and tribulations are part and parcel of the Christian life, but they increase in intensity as we draw closer to the end of the age.

Vision 1. 144,000 from the 12 tribes of Israel.

FUTURISTS believe the church has been raptured before this. They see the 144,000 literally as Jews who come to faith in Christ during the great tribulation and become evangelists who preach the gospel to the rest of the world, resulting in multitudes coming to faith.

IDEALISTS see $12 \times 12 \times 1000 = 144,000$ as symbolic numbers signifying all of God’s people, all through history, who are sealed by God. IDEALISTS say the first 12 stands for the 12 tribes of Israel; the second 12 stands for the 12 apostles; and 1000, the number of completion, includes all of God’s people, both Jewish and Gentile believers spanning both Old and New Testaments. The 144,000 are the church on earth functioning as the army of God fighting against the forces of darkness.

Some scholars don’t see the two visions in Revelation 7 as distinct. They see both the 144,000 in the first vision and the multitudes that cannot be counted in the second vision as the same people viewed from different vantage points.

Vision 2. Multitudes from every tribe and tongue that cannot be counted.

All agree the multitudes who cannot be counted are the church triumphant in heaven. The main point is God’s people are secure in Christ and shielded from His judgments. The widespread judgments that the rest of humanity face will not affect those who are sealed by God. They are secure!

Being sealed on the forehead is a mark of ownership (Ephesians 1:13). The seal of the Spirit is a mark that sets apart God’s people, distinguishing them from the rest of the world. While God pours out His wrath on an unbelieving world, those who belong to Him are secure. Believers will not be shielded from trials. But no matter what they face in this life, God’s people will emerge victorious. God’s seal serves as a contrast to the mark of the beast. Those who have that mark belong to Satan.

The second vision is glorious. We see here the church—those who have battled through this age and are now in heaven—triumphant and victorious. They did not win in their own strength. That’s why they are praising God, giving Him all the glory. The cry of the redeemed is “Salvation belongs to our God.” The multitudes are wearing white robes (representing purity) and holding palm branches, a sign of victory!

Incredible promises are given to those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb.

- God will shelter them with His Presence (v.15).
- They will never hunger, thirst or experience scorching heat (v.16).
- The Lamb (Jesus) will be their Shepherd (v.17).
- God will wipe away all their tears (v.17). God says, “I know what you have been through. I know your struggles, your toil, your heartbreaks and your pain.”

THE WORD (NIV)

Revelation 7: 1-17 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. ² 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: ³ “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.” ⁴ Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

⁵ From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, ⁶ from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, ⁷ from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000,

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sermon study guide

IN – PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. Have you ever known someone who, after becoming a Christian, had a more difficult life? Can you describe what their life looked like before and after conversion?
2. When has your life felt as if “Everything is topsy-turvy!”?

UP – PURSUE GOD

3. Read Revelation 7:3-4. What does it mean to be sealed by God? According to Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30, with whom are we sealed? If we are sealed, what does this mean for us?
4. In Revelation 7:9,13-17, who does the “great multitude” represent? (Be gracious with others’ views.) What do the white robe and palm branches symbolize? What are the promises mentioned, and how can these promises give us strength today?

OUT – PURSUE MISSION

5. Since we have been sealed by God, what confidence does that give you to go and tell people of the hope we have in knowing Jesus and of the promises God made to us of what is to come?
6. How could we encourage others with the “comfort” (lit., with strength) found in Revelation 7?

For Personal Reflection / Prayer:

What is your greatest tribulation? How did God help you get through it and give you comfort? In what way can you encourage others who are going through similar trials?

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⁸ from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000,
from the tribe of Joseph 12,000,
from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.

⁹ 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 before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

¹¹ 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, ¹² saying:

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!”

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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 shelter them with his presence.

¹⁶ ‘Never again will they hunger;
never again will they thirst.

The sun will not beat down on them,
nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷ 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.’”

Ephesians 1:13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

This week’s writers: Elsa Henderson, David McMillin, Mark Eckstein, and Jorel Quemuel