

The 144,000

Revelation 7:1-17

1. You know, not everyone likes a preacher who, “tells it like it is.”
2. But every now and then . . . a preacher just *has* to.
3. VIDEO – HONEST PREACHER.



VIDEO CLIP

The 144,000

Revelation 7:1-17

4. I'd sure hate to be Dan on the Day of Judgment, wouldn't you?
5. Actually, I'd hate to be anybody found to be in rebellion to the KING.
6. John says they'll be begging the mountains to fall on them . . . to hide them from his wrath . . . and from the wrath of the Lamb.
7. No, not everybody likes that HELLFIRE and BRIMSTONE preaching.
 - a. But listen, it's not just John being JUDGMENTAL.
 - b. And it's not just me being POLITICALLY INCORRECT.
 - c. It's just the way it is, and John wants his readers to know – and I want you to know – so we can all be prepared.
8. The Day of the Lord is near, and you can try to hide UNDER THE MOUNTAINS, or you can be hidden UNDER THE ALTER.
9. The question is . . . WHAT DETERMINES YOUR LOCATION?
10. Or to put it another way . . . WHO CAN STAND?
11. Revelation 6 ends with that dramatic question . . . WHO CAN STAND?
12. Revelation 7 provides a visionary answer . . .

REVELATION 7:1-17

Rev. 7:1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, 3 saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." 4 And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

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Rev. 7:5 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed,
12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,
12,000 from the tribe of Gad,
⁶ 12,000 from the tribe of Asher,
12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali,
12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,
⁷ 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon,
12,000 from the tribe of Levi,
12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,
⁸ 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,
12,000 from the tribe of Joseph,
12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin
were sealed.

REVELATION 7:1-17

Rev. 7:9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,¹² saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

REVELATION 7:1-17

Rev. 7:13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

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Rev. 7:15 “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 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

The 144,000

Revelation 7:1-17

13. John tells us what *he* sees here . . . can I tell you what *I* see?

14. I SEE A GOD WHO IS IN CONTROL OF THE EVENTS OF HISTORY.

- a. Last week we noticed that chapter 6 plays out like a horror flick in which each scene intensifies the terror.
- b. While that's true, it's also true that the entire drama plays out under the direction of the ONE ON THE THRONE and the LAMB.
- c. The KING presents the scroll of destiny.
- d. The LAMB comes forward to break its seals and to execute its plan.
- e. The HEAVENLY HOSTS attending them call forth the horses and the riders.
- f. But don't miss this part . . .
 - 1) The decrees are limited . . . at least in this cycle . . . the horsemen only touch a fourth of the earth-dwellers.
 - 2) Now, that percentage will increase as history progresses toward its end, but for the moment there is MERCY even in the midst of JUDGMENT.
 - 3) And that's the second thing I see . . .

15. I SEE A GOD WHO IS MERCIFUL EVEN AS HIS JUDGMENTS ARE ENACTED.

- a. Chapter 7 begins with a vision of FOUR ANGELS . . . standing at the FOUR CORNERS . . . holding back the FOUR WINDS.

- 1) WINDS are commonly associated with judgment in the Old Testament.
 - 2) But what you might not know is that Zechariah 6 associates the FOUR HORSEMEN with the FOUR WINDS.
 - 3) So what John is seeing here is the vision of chapter 6 . . . the vision of the four horsemen . . . from a different perspective.
 - 4) Before the four horsemen are released to ride, they are RESTRAINED so that God's servants can be SEALED.
- a. In Revelation this is called an INTERLUDE . . . it's a break in the action . . . that offers hope for both the righteous and the wicked.
- 1) Sometimes in these interludes the wicked are given opportunities to REPENT.
 - 2) As it is here the righteous are being SEALED.
- b. In the ancient world SEALING . . . usually by the signet ring of the king . . . communicated two things:
- 1) POSSESSION and PROTECTION.
 - 2) And so it is here.
 - 3) Before God's judgments are unleashed upon a world in REBELLION to him, those who are in RELATIONSHIP with him are SEALED.
 - 4) Now, there's some debate about what kind of seal this is.
 - a) These people are called "***servants of God,***" so it could be like the brands or tattoos that slaves were given to mark them as slaves.
 - b) But I'm inclined to believe that these seals are more like what the Israelite priests wore on their turbans, "***like the engraving of a signet, 'Holy to the LORD'***" (Exodus 28:36).
 - c) But you'd better beware, because those who belong to the ENEMY'S enemy wear a mark, too – THE MARK OF THE BEAST – but we're not there just yet.
 - 5) Now, I want to acknowledge that there is some tension here.
 - a) How can God's servants be SEALED and SLAUGHTERED at the same time?
 - b) Well, it's very simple, this sealing protects God's people from *his* wrath, not the evil empire's.
 - c) This scene answers the question, "***Who can stand?***"
 - d) On the Day of the Lord, the Lord's people will be able to stand.
 - e) But here and now . . . well, Jesus put it like this: "***And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell***" (Matthew 10:28).

13. SO, ONE OTHER THING I SEE HERE IS A GOD WHO KEEPS HIS PROMISES TO KEEP

HIS PEOPLE.

- a. The number of the sealed is an interesting number . . . 144,000.
- b. Is it LITERAL or SYMBOLIC, and if it's symbolic, what does it symbolize?
- c. I believe I can say with confidence that the number is not meant to be taken literally. If it is, then we have to take literally everything that Revelation says about it . . . namely, that it is comprised only of VIRGIN MALE ISRAELITES (Revelation 14:1ff.).
- d. Now, those things things are significant, but I don't think they're to be taken literally.
- e. I want you to notice a couple of things about the number:
 - 1) First, it is 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel.
 - a) It looks like the censuses taken at the beginning and the end of the book of Numbers.
 - b) So many men . . . from each tribe . . . of a certain age . . . preparing for battle . . . before which one must not have touched a woman for so long.
 - c) As God's people are being sealed, they are also being drafted for battle.
 - d) John HEARS God's people being drafted for battle . . . that's the first thing I want you to notice.
 - 2) The second thing is this, John turns around and SEES . . . not 144,000 chaste male Israelites being prepared for battle, but . . .
READ HIGHLIGHTED TEXT ON NEXT SLIDE.

REVELATION 7:1-17

Rev. 7:9 After this I looked, and behold, *a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,*¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,¹² saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

- 3) This is not the first time this has happened to John . . . where he HEARS one thing, but then SEES something totally different.
- 4) Remember when he HEARD about the LION of the tribe of Judah, but turned around to see the LAMB standing as though it had been slain?
- 5) He HEARS about God's people being SEALED . . . being DRAFTED and PREPARED for the battle.
- 6) When he turns to SEE it . . . he SEES that they've already WON it.
- 7) 144,000 is a SYMBOLIC NUMBER.
 - a) 12 represents GOD'S PEOPLE.
 - b) 1,000 represents COMPLETENESS.
 - c) 12x12x1000 *represents, signifies, stands for* the COMPLETE NUMBER OF GOD'S PEOPLE.
 - d) That COMPLETE number is NUMBERLESS.
 - e) It is comprised of people from every nation, tribe, people, and language under heaven.
 - f) Not one of them has SLIPPED THROUGH THE CRACKS. . . not one of them has been OVERLOOKED . . . not one of them has been MISSED . . . not one of them has been

FORGOTTEN . . . GOD has SIGNED, SEALED, and DELIVERED THEM ALL.

g) And notice . . . THEY ARE STANDING and THEY ARE SHELTERED!

f. Who can stand? THESE CAN STAND!

- 1) They are given white robes and palm branches signifying VICTORY.
- 2) Because they did not COMPROMISE their allegiance to the KING, even in the midst of the GREAT TRIBULATION.
 - a) Ohhh . . . THE GREAT TRIBULATION!
 - b) There's a lot of scholarly debate about what this great tribulation is.
 - c) I've got news for you, you're living it.
 - d) It's what we described last week as as the hell unleashed by the riders and their horses – the lust for conquest, the war that follows, the famine and inflation that follows, and death and the grave that mop up the whole enterprise.
 - e) These did not compromise . . . they did not play the games.
- 3) They followed the SLAUGHTERED LAMB into battle . . . his strategy became their strategy . . . his power became their power . . . and his victory became their victory.
- 4) And now they REST IN PEACE just like the prophets promised . . .

ISAIAH 49:10

. . . they shall not hunger or thirst,
neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them,
for he who has pity on them will lead them,
and by springs of water will guide them.

17. Sometimes when you, “tell it like it is,” people don’t *like* you.
18. But sometimes when you, “tell it like it is,” people don’t *believe* you.
19. And I understand, who’d believe . . .
 - a. A number that is numberless?
 - b. Blood that stains white as snow?
 - c. A Lamb who is a shepherd?
 - d. And an army that conquers by being killed?
20. But that’s the way it is.
21. Revelation 7 is an answer to the questions raised in chapter 6.
22. Not just the WHO CAND STAND question, but the question of those under the alter who want to know HOW LONG until God avenges them.
23. Revelation 7 answers and offers a different perspective.
24. A perspective of controlled and directed vengeance.
25. A perspective of judgement full of mercy.
26. A perspective of God protecting and keeping his people . . . come HIGH WATER or HELL.
27. Now listen, God can keep his people, but . . .
28. But his people must keep their allegiance.
29. There’s one more thing I see here that you might have missed . . . I know I did for

a long time.

30. In the listing of the tribes, one tribe is missing . . . “It’s DAN.”
31. What happened to DAN?
32. Or, as our honest preacher put it, “Dan, what is your deal?”
33. Was Dan not sealed?
34. Could God not protect Dan?
35. Why is Dan missing?
36. Scholars debate it . . . They’re just not sure.
37. But the most reasonable explanation is that Dan was excluded from Israel because of his IDOLATRY.
38. Dan, early on, developed a reputation for accommodation and compromise with the people in the land of Canaan. . . **Judges and Jeroboam I.**
39. And Dan’s reputation was so bad that later Christian tradition said that the ANTICHRIST would come from the tribe of Dan.
40. Don’t think that your HERITAGE or your NAME or your PAST can KEEP you and PROTECT you.
41. Only God can do that.
42. Have you been SEALED?
 - a. Paul says that when we are baptized we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit that acts as a SEAL (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30).
 - b. That is also the means by which we come in contact with the blood of the Lamb that washes white as snow.
 - c. If you’ve not been sealed, what are you waiting for?
43. Have you kept your ALLEGIANCE.
 - a. Dan, if you’re out there, come home.
 - b. This is an INTERLUDE.
 - c. Don’t miss this opportunity.