

Sealed, Part Two

Revelation 7

Sooke Baptist Church
Sunday, February 7, 2021
9am, Facebook Live Stream, Noon, YouTube

Coffee/Question:
How has the Holy Spirit
changed your life?

REVELATION
7:1-17

At the end of Revelation 6...

“...hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

Revelation 6:16-17

... a plea is made – hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb...

... a fact is stated – For the great day of their wrath has come...

... and a question is asked by humanity who have lived without God – who can stand?”

Revelation 7 provides heaven’s answer to the question – who can stand?

In chapter seven there are two visions – 7:1-8 and 7:9-17.

Two visions
7:1-8 and 7:9-17

Also, in chapter seven, for the third time, a feature unique to the book of Revelation is used - “hear and see.”

“hear and see”

This feature emphasizes one of the major themes of the book of Revelation ...

“hear and see”
“things are not as they seem”

In the first vision of chapter seven...before the four horsemen of chapter six ride upon the earth, similar to the way the wind blows...the servants of God have a seal placed upon their foreheads.

John heard the number of those who were sealed – 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

When you compare the list of tribes given in Revelation 7... with the list in Genesis 49 of Jacob’s sons named according to their birth order... there are significant differences.

<u>Genesis 49</u>	<u>Revelation 7</u>
1. Reuben	1. Judah
2. Simeon	2. Reuben
3. Levi	3. Gad
4. Judah	4. Asher
5. Zebulun	5. Naphtali
6. Issachar	6. Manasseh
7. Dan	7. Simeon
8. Gad	8. Levi
9. Asher	9. Issachar
10. Naphtali	10. Zebulun
11. Joseph	11. Joseph
12. Benjamin	12. Benjamin

In addition to changes in the order of names, the tribe of Dan is removed, and the name of Manasseh is added.

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A theological statement is being made

Darryl Johnson writes about this saying, **“Genealogical lists are very important in the Bible. If something is changed, a theological statement is being made...”** p.184.

Remember what the LORD said to Abraham?

“...all people on earth will be blessed through you.”
Genesis 12:3

Abraham’s family was called by God to be a light to all peoples on the earth.

Dallas Willard writes, **“Israel was to be the community to which God would reveal himself and through which he would lead every people group on earth to purpose, freedom from fear... and flourishing.”**

Sadly, the stiff-necked Israelites struggled, contended, resisted and fought with God as he attempted to accomplish this objective. Their first and ultimate failure stemmed from their refusal to be consistently led by God alone.” Divine Conspiracy Continued, p.44

But what the nation of Israel was unable to do, Jesus the Messiah did.

Darryl Johnson says, “The theological statement being made in Revelation 7 is this: there is a new Israel, a multi-ethnic Israel. The Revelation is not saying that the promises to Israel have been negated, or that Israel has been replaced, but that in Jesus the Messiah all things have been gloriously fulfilled.” p.185

Through Jesus God’s purpose for Israel is being realized.

Galatians 3:29

**If you belong to Christ,
then you are Abraham's seed,
and heirs according to the promise.**

The new covenant made with the blood of Jesus fulfilled all aspects of previous covenants – the Sabbath, the temple, the feasts, the sacrifices, the priesthood... even who the descendants of Abraham now are.

Those things had served as signposts pointing ahead to the Messiah and were superseded by the Christ when he came into the world.

This is the message which is communicated and emphasized in Revelation 7 through the unique and peculiar pattern of “hear and see.”

Remember... Revelation 1 –

John wrote...then I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet....I turned around to see the voice...and I saw...someone like a son of man...among the churches.

Remember...Revelation 5 –

John wrote... Then one of the elders said to me...See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah... Then I saw... a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain...

Revelation 7:4, 9

4 Then I heard the number of those who were sealed:
144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

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.

Before we move out of chapter seven there are three additional questions we need to ask.

1. What is the seal placed on the foreheads of the servants of God?
2. What is the great tribulation that is mentioned in v.14b?
3. What will life be like when Jesus' followers live in the visible presence of God?

Today, we will consider the first question and then next week the second and the third.

First Question: what is the seal placed on the foreheads of God's servants?

Why does this question matter?

Because it is key to understanding how the follower of Jesus lives in the last days.

Read v.2-4.

There is an important Bible study principle –

**interpret Scripture
with Scripture**

– that we need to draw upon in order to clarify what, or better said, who the seal is.

Look at 2 Corinthians 1.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22

²¹ Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us,

²² **set his seal of ownership on us,** and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Look at Ephesians 1.

Ephesians 1:13-14

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,** ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

God has placed a seal on those who belong to him.
And that seal...is what?

It is the person of God the Spirit.

Using Scripture to interpret Scripture, what then is the point being made in Revelation 7 about the seal being placed on the forehead, when other passages of Scripture speak of the Spirit being put into the heart of those who believe in Jesus Christ.

Just as a seal on the forehead would be visible and seen by all...



...so is the presence of God's Spirit who marks the life of every follower of Jesus.

Throughout the last days the gospel will be proclaimed, and its power and veracity (genuineness) will be seen where?

Within the lives of Jesus' followers.

Philippians 2:15-16

... that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.”

Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life.

The presence of the Spirit within our lives will shine out of us similar to how the stars shine on a dark night.

Is there anything else regarding this sealing we need to consider?

The seal of the Holy Spirit is a testimony to the world.

But the sealing also is a testimony to the believer.

Of what?

Look again at Ephesians 1.

Ephesians 1:13-14

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, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

The sealing of the follower of Jesus with the presence of the Holy Spirit is the proof that one has been included...in Christ.

What an incredible reality!

When you hear the word “included” what do you think of?



...ie of Chateau Laurier in Ottawa.



...being invited into a conversation.

When we believe in and receive Jesus...

- I am crucified with Christ. **Galatians 2:20**
- I no longer live. **Galatians 2:20**
- God made us alive in Christ. **Ephesians 2:5**
- Christ lives in me. **Galatians 2:20**
- In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith. **Romans 1:17**

When we believe in and receive Jesus... this is what we are included in:

- **His crucifixion is ours** – I am crucified with Christ. Galatians 2:20
- **His death becomes our death** – I no longer live. Galatians 2:20
- **His resurrection becomes our resurrection** – God made us alive in Christ. Ephesians 2:5
- **His life becomes our life** – Christ lives in me. Galatians 2:20
- **The goodness of Jesus is credited to us by faith** – In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith. Romans 1:17

The emphasis of Revelation 7 is this - on the last day, the wrath of God will not harm those who by grace through faith have been... included in Christ.

Is there anything else?

Romans 8:16-17

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit
that we are God's children.

¹⁷ Now if we are children,
then we are heirs
—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ...

Let's linger on this astonishing truth.

Regarding the future...we will share in what is of God's.

Why? Because in Christ we are God's heirs.

But what about right now?

Do you remember the prayer of Jesus in John 17?

John 17:15

My prayer is not that you take them out
of the world but that you **protect them**
from the evil one.

How is this protection of the Father realized?

1 John 4 explains.

1 John 4:4

You, dear children, are from God
and have overcome them because
the One who is in you is greater
than the one who is in the world.

Who is the One who is in us?

It is the Holy Spirit with whom we are sealed.
He is greater than the evil one.
Through him the prayer of Jesus is answered.
He is also the means by which the promise made by Jesus in John 10 is fulfilled.
The Holy Spirit is the means by which every believer is held in the hand of the Father and the Son.

At the last meal he shared with his followers before his death Jesus promised...



John 14:18
I will not leave you
as orphans.
I will come to you.

In the last days the followers of Jesus are not left on their own to somehow survive the time when the four horsemen ride.

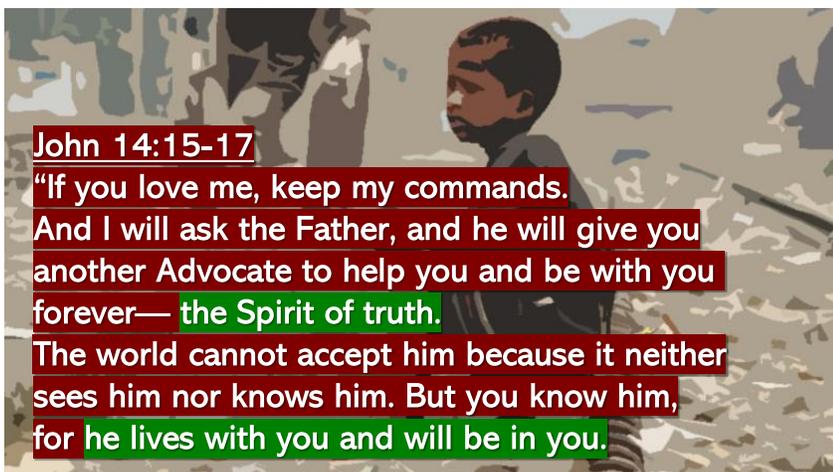
Jesus does not abandon those who are his.

What did he say?

“I will come to you.”

How does he come?

Look back a few verses...



John 14:15-17
“If you love me, keep my commands.
And I will ask the Father, and he will give you
another Advocate to help you and be with you
forever— the Spirit of truth.
The world cannot accept him because it neither
sees him nor knows him. But you know him,
for he lives with you and will be in you.

The sealing with the Holy Spirit.... is the means by which Jesus is with us... now and forever.

Who can stand on the last day?

Those who have been sealed – those in whom God the Spirit resides.

Three points of connection.

1. The sealing with the Spirit is **the assurance** that you belong to God and that he will keep you until the day of Jesus Christ.... which is....the last day.

The Holy Spirit is the guarantee that God will finish in you what he began.

Philippians 1:4-6

⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that **he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.**

2. The sealing with the Holy Spirit is the source of **your confidence**. Included in Christ, not only will you survive the last days, you will thrive... you will overcome.

Ephesians 3:16-17

¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may **strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,** ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

The sealing with the Holy Spirit mediates power from heaven that not only protects you from the evil one ...but enables you, in the words of Hebrews 12, to run with perseverance the race marked out for you; to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus... so that you not grow weary and lose heart.

Is this not incredible?!

To be strengthened by God!

To be fully persuaded that Christ lives in you.

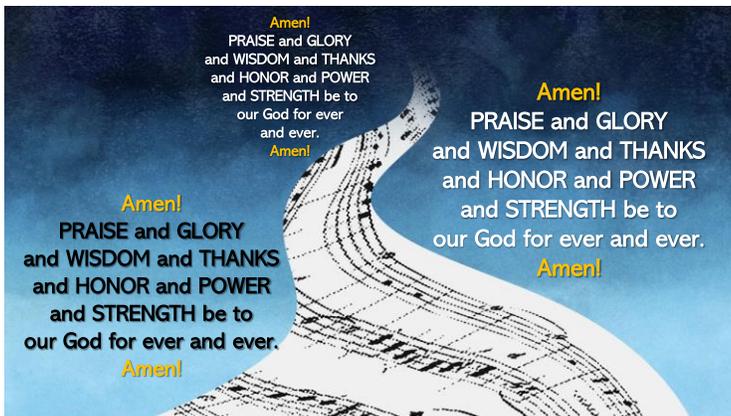
This glorious reality is yours because of the sealing of the Spirit!

3. A particular emphasis of Revelation 7 is that those who are sealed with the Spirit, are those who sing.

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



v.10



v.12

“Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

Isaiah 25:9



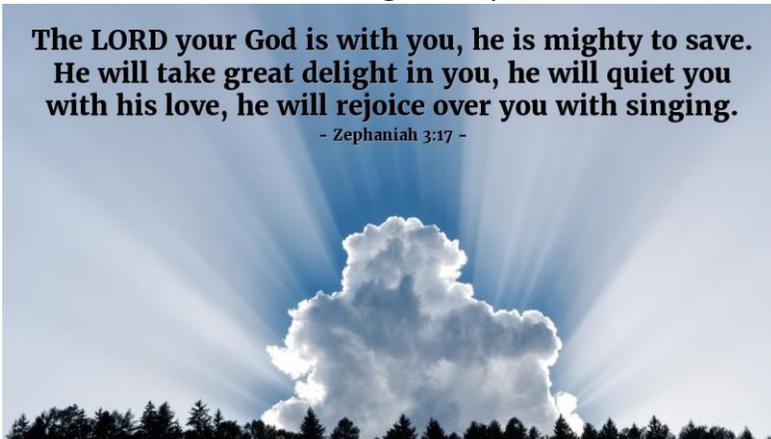
John Piper says, “The realities of God and Christ, creation and salvation, heaven and hell are so great that when they are truly known and felt, they demand more than discussion, analysis and description – they demand poetry and song and music.”

desiringgod.org/messages/singing-and-making-melody-to-the-lord

Those who are sealed sing in response to the Lord who sings over us.

**The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save.
He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you
with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.**

- Zephaniah 3:17 -



Those who are sealed are those who sing:

**... in the evening
... in the morning
... in every season
... in every circumstance
... in the dark night of the soul
... in the sweet moments of victory
... in the sorrow
... in the dancing**

See “Your Grace Finds Me,” by Matt Redman

Those who are sealed sing to express their gratitude.

Those who are sealed sing to declare what they believe by faith.

Those who are sealed sing because they have been redeemed!

Those who are sealed sing because they love the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

God's sealing of a person with the presence of the Holy Spirit... is the means by which the resources of heaven are mediated to the believer... in the last days.

The sealing which includes us in Christ ... is how God provides us with everything we need... for life and godliness.

It is grace superabounds in us... meaning it is more than sufficient... it is more than enough for what is needed to live our lives here on the earth... in the last days.

And there is more.

Second Question – what is the great tribulation that is mentioned in v.14b?

The word tribulation is the Greek word thlipsis.

It literally means "crushing pressure."

What the Bible describes with the word thlipsis is the pressure that occurs when the kingdom of God collides with the kingdoms of humanity in rebellion against God.

DJ, p.181.

Who is it that experiences this crushing pressure?

What does our text say?

v.13 – one of the elders asked John about the great multitude that no one could count.

"These in white robes – who are they, and where do they come from?"

John answered the elder's question – "Sir, you know."

To which the elder said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation."

When did the great tribulation begin?

When did this crushing pressure start?

It began the night Jesus was born.

It manifested when the soldiers of Herod rode into Bethlehem.

But it intensified when Jesus, beginning his public ministry, announced, Mark 1:15...
The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near.

Jesus experienced thlipsis throughout his 3 ½ years of ministry.

In John 12 as the hour of his suffering drew near, Jesus said, v.27, “my soul is troubled.”

Jesus experienced thlipsis in the garden of Gethsemane.

Luke 22:44 says he was in anguish.

After his return to heaven Jesus’ followers have experienced thlipsis.

This was the teaching emphasis of Paul and Barnabus.

Acts 14:22 – “We must go through many hardships (thlipsis) to enter the kingdom of God.”

This was the experience of John on the island of Patmos.

Revelation 1:9 – I, John, your brother and compassion in the suffering (thlipsis) and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Thlipsis will intensify as the last day draws near.

And though only God knows the date of the last day, Jesus taught that there would be signs that would indicate it was drawing near.

Matthew 24:32-33.

Since the resurrection of Jesus, since his ascension, since the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the time we have been living in, is described by the Bible as the last days, or another way to describe it would be “the great tribulation.”

The last days are days when the kingdom of God collides with the kingdoms of humanity in rebellion against God, and crushing pressure occurs, thlipsis, that spills over and touches the lives of God’s people.

The context of Revelation 7 confirms this.

Who can stand in the great day of God’s wrath?

Those who have been sealed with the Spirit of God.
Who are those who are sealed? 7:4-8.

144,000

12 x 12 x 10 x 10 x 10

This number impresses upon the reader that those who are sealed are the complete number of God's people. DJ, p.185.

The Lord knows those who are his. 2 Timothy 2:19.

The perspective of 7:9 impresses upon the reader that those who are sealed are...

Revelation 7:9

...a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.



...comprised of Jews and Gentiles.

This brings us to our third question

3. What will life be like when Jesus' followers live in the visible presence of God?

Look at Revelation 20:15.

They are sealed, they are marked as belonging to God because... their names are written in the book of life.

This sealing is in contrast to the sealing done by the beast, who in mocking imitation of God, puts his seal of ownership on those who align themselves with him.

Look at 14:9-11.

We know from John 17:20...

John 17:20

I pray also for those who will believe in me

through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

...that in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed for all who would follow him... for those not yet believers... for those not yet born... for you and me. He knew us.

Jesus said in John 10, that the One who seals, also sustains and keeps us.

I give them eternal life,
and they shall never perish;
no one will snatch them out of my hand.
My Father, who has given them to me,
is greater than all;
no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.
I and the Father are one.

John 10:28-30

dailyVerses.net

How great are the ways of God... how good is the wisdom and the sovereignty of the One who is on the throne and the Lamb!

In Revelation 6:16, on the last day, those who have lived without God attempt to hide from God; they are terrified of the face of the One on the throne and of the wrath of the Lamb.

But it is different for those who have trusted in Jesus.
Look at 7:9 – they stand before the throne and in front of the Lamb.

How is that possible?

How can they stand in the brilliant majesty of God’s person?

The answer has already been given in Revelation 5:9 and it is repeated in 7:14b.

Revelation 5:9

They sang a new song, saying, “You are worthy... because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God person from every tribe and Language and people and nation.”

Revelation 7:14b

...they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

We need to press into this truth.



On the day of Passover... Jesus was condemned to death by Pilate.

On the day of Passover... Jesus was nailed to a Roman cross.

On that day, unseen to those who watched, as he hung on that cross, the Father placed on Jesus the sin of the world.

As the Father turned his face away, Jesus called out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Shortly thereafter, knowing that all was now completed, Jesus called out again in a loud voice, “It is finished,” and gave up his spirit.

This was when... this was how the Lamb purchased for God people from every tribe, language, people and nation.

The testimony of Scripture is that the sacrifice of Jesus' life...
...purchased our freedom from sin...

Revelation 1:5

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood...

... purifies the believer from the stain and corruption of their sin...

Revelation 1:5

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood...

1 John 1:7

...the blood of Jesus...purifies us from all sin.

... restores fellowship with God....

Revelation 1:5

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood...

1 John 1:7

...the blood of Jesus...purifies us from all sin.

1 John 1:3

...our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

The question was asked in Revelation 6:17 – who can stand?

The answer given in Revelation 7 is... only those who have been purchased by the blood of the Lamb.

But there is more to the answer.

The placing of a seal upon the foreheads of God's servants is connected to the question ... who can stand before God?

What is the seal that is placed upon the foreheads of God's servants?

Look again at Revelation 7:14.

What does it mean... “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb?”

Gerhard Krodel writes, “The gift of redemption received must be ratified with one’s life.” p.186-187.

The apostle John in his first epistle said it this way, 2:6...
Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

Those who stand before God... have not only received grace...they have laid hold of God’s grace and Jesus’ righteousness.

Those who stand before God... were born of the Holy Spirit...and during their life on the earth... they cooperated with the Spirit in his transformation of them.

Those who stand before God... with the Spirit’s enabling... put off habits of sin and learned new habits of godliness.

Those who stand before God... in the power of the Spirit.... stood their ground in spite of opposition and tribulation... many of them stood their ground...even to the point of death.