

“Religion says
earn your life.
Secular society says
create your life.
Jesus says,
‘My life for your life.’”

Coffee/Question:
How do you respond
to Tim Keller’s quote?



As we press ever deeper into the message of the Revelation, I remind you of the reason for which the visions in this book were given – to inspire within followers of Jesus, “a radical obedience.”

The Revelation was not given to satisfy our curiosity regarding the end times, but to motivate us to love... and to live wholeheartedly... for Jesus.

Since Jesus' return to his Father's home, forty days after his resurrection, humanity has been living in the period of time which the Bible calls **"the last days."** In the last days, things are not as they seem – Jesus rules from heaven over the seen and unseen realms.

He is not simply observing life on earth.

Rather he is directing history to its climax, the moment which the Bible refers to as... **"the last day."**

The opening of the first five seals brought about events upon the earth that take place... **in the last days.**

The events caused by the opening of the sixth seal will take place on... **the last day.**

What was revealed to John when the sixth seal was opened was the impact of the last day upon the creation... and upon humanity... that lives without God.

The last verse of the sixth chapter poses a question – **"who can stand?"**

As we engage with chapter 7, we want to watch for the answer that is provided.

There are two things I need to point out to you that will help us understand this chapter.

First Thing

1. In Revelation 7 we encounter for a third time this unique pattern.



hear and see

Revelation 1:10,12

¹⁰ On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet ...

¹² I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw ...

hear and see

Revelation 5:5-6

⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne...

hear and see

Things are not as they seem.

The glorious Christ is among his churches.

The Lion is a Lamb.

What does this unique pattern teach us?

The believer's perception of life and reality must be informed and shaped by the reality of God.

Second Thing

2. In chapter 7 there are...

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

These two visions belong together because of the “hear and see” pattern. Together these two visions provide heaven’s answer to the question of 6:17 – **“who can stand?”**

7:1.

What did John see?

... four angels.

...four corners of the earth.

...four winds.

Many commentators believe that the winds and the horsemen represent the same reality.

What is the significance of the wind?

The wind like trouble can come upon people unexpectedly and can cause great damage.

This being the case what point is being made by Jesus to his churches?

7:2-3.

Before the winds can blow, before the four horsemen... ride throughout the earth in the last days, it is revealed to John that they are restrained by four angels, until... the servants of God are sealed.

Do we know when this sealing take place?

We know it is after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.... and before the opening of seals 1-5.

Do you see what truth is impressed upon the hearts and minds of Jesus’ followers?

Heaven is in control.

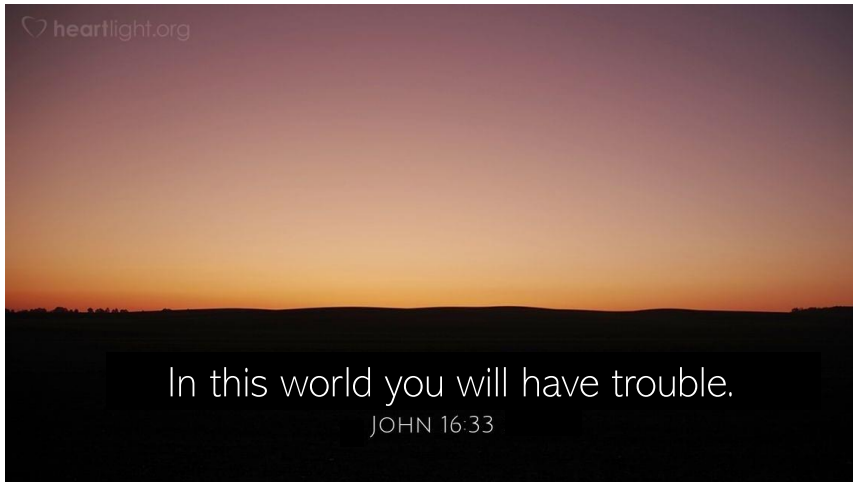
God's directing of history not only determines **what**, but also **when**.

There are two additional questions we need to ask.

1. For what purpose are the servants of God sealed?

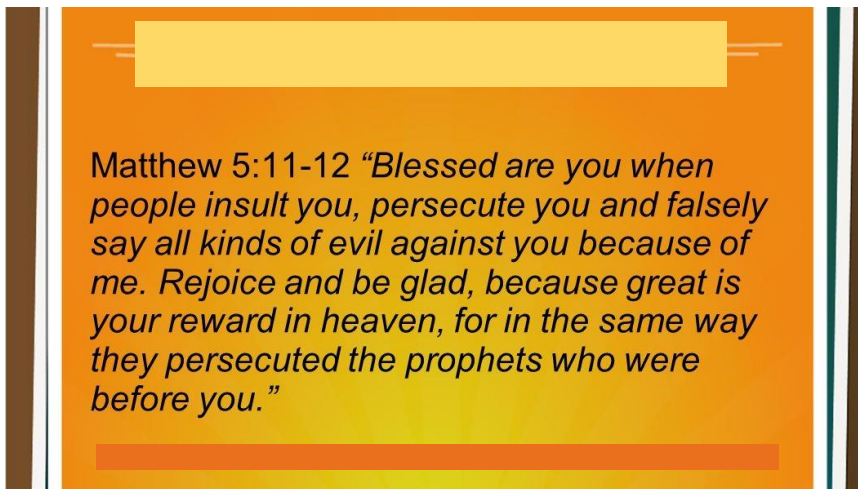
Is it to provide protection from harm?

Jesus told his followers...



Is it to provide protection from persecution?

Jesus told his followers...



Remember what Jesus told the seven churches of Asia, 2:10...

Do not be afraid
of what you are about to suffer...

Revelation 2:10

Jesus urged and encouraged them... to be...

Do not be afraid
of what you are about to suffer...
Be faithful, even to the point of death,
and I will give you life
as your victor's crown.

Revelation 2:10

Remember the fifth seal - in the last days there many followers of Jesus will be martyred.

So, I ask again – for what purpose are the servants of God sealed?

Remember the very first Passover, celebrated in Egypt?

God through Moses told the Hebrew people to place some of the blood of a lamb without defect in a basin.



They were then to dip a branch of hyssop into the blood and smear it on the top and on both sides of the doorframe that led into their home. See Exodus 12.

The blood protected the inhabitants of each home from the final plague that came upon Egypt – the death of all firstborns.

In a similar way, the seal placed on the foreheads of God’s servants protects them from the wrath of the Lamb and the One who is on the throne.

Remember what the Spirit said through the prophet Isaiah...

Isaiah 53

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering...

He was pierced for our transgression, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him, the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53

He was oppressed and afflicted...

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth...

Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer...

On the last day the wrath of God does not come upon his servants, because the Lamb has already borne it for them.

7:4.

Remember the “hear and see” pattern of the book of Revelation.

John **heard** ... the number of those who were sealed.

The number was 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

Before we attempt to understand the number, we need to carefully look at the list of the twelve tribes in Revelation 7 and compare it to the list of Jacob's 12 sons in their birth order.

Genesis 49

1. Reuben
2. Simeon
3. Levi
4. Judah
5. Zebulun
6. Issachar
7. Dan
8. Gad
9. Asher
10. Naphtali
11. Joseph
12. Benjamin

Revelation 7

1. Judah
2. Reuben
3. Gad
4. Asher
5. Naphtali
6. Manasseh
7. Simeon
8. Levi
9. Issachar
10. Zebulun
11. Joseph
12. Benjamin

Darryl Johnson writes, **“Genealogical lists are very important in the Bible. If there is a change, a theological statement is being made.”** p.184

- The first thing to take note of is that the order of the names was rearranged.
 - Reuben shifts from #1 to #2
 - Simeon shifts from #2 to #7.
 - Levi shifts from #3 to #8.
 - Zebulun shifts from #5 to #10
 - Issachar shifts from #6 to #9.
 - Gad shifts from #8 to #3.
 - Asher shifts from #9 to #4.
 - Naphtali shifts from #10 to #5.
 - Joseph and Benjamin stay the same.

What theological statement is being made?

The coming of the Messiah changed everything – the Sabbath, the temple, the feasts, the sacrifices, the priesthood... and yes, even the tribes of Israel.

Most importantly, why did Judah become the first tribe named?

Because it was from Judah that the Messiah, the Ruler came – see Genesis 49:19.

- In this genealogy Dan is omitted and Manasseh is added.

What theological statement is being made?
What is this communicating?
Not just the tribe order, but Israel itself has changed.
In what way?
Through the Messiah the purpose of Israel is being realized.

Remember what the Lord said to Abraham?

“...all people on earth will be blessed through you.”

Genesis 12:3

The nation of Israel was called by God to be a light to all peoples on the earth. In the Messiah and through his kingdom that calling is being fulfilled.

*Darryl Johnson, p.184-185.

What are we to make of the number 144,000?
Let's utilize Scripture to understand Scripture.

Revelation 21:12-14

¹² [The new Jerusalem] had a great, high wall with **twelve gates**...

On the gates were written the names of the **twelve tribes** of Israel....

¹⁴ The wall of the city had **twelve foundations**, and on them were the names of the **twelve apostles** of the Lamb.

I believe the same thing is true of Revelation 4:4.

Surrounding the throne of God are 24 thrones on which are seated 24 elders – 12 representing the tribes of Israel, 12 representing the apostles.

12 x 12 x 10 x 10 x 10

This number is meant to communicate the complete number of God's people, which are now comprised of Jews and Gentiles. DJ, p.185.

Remember the hear and see pattern.

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.

hear and see

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 but that they have been gloriously fulfilled."** p.185

Consider this one example.

God said to the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai....

Exodus 19:4–6 (ESV)

⁴ ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

Now look at Revelation 1:5-6.

Revelation 1:5-6

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and **made us to be a kingdom and priests** to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Who does Jesus make to be a kingdom and priests?

These two verses don’t say.

Look at Revelation 5:9-10,

Revelation 5:9-10

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying:
“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God **persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.**”

Who does Jesus purchase for God with his blood?

And.... what does Jesus do with these people from every tribe, language, people and nation whom he has purchased?

Revelation 5:9-10

**⁹ And they sang a new song, saying:
“You are worthy to take the scroll and to
open its seals, because you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased for
God persons from every tribe and
language and people and nation.**

**¹⁰ You have made them to be a
kingdom and priests to serve our
God, and they will reign on the earth.”**

The promise of Exodus 19 is gloriously fulfilled in the church of Jesus, comprised of men and women from every tribe, language, people and nation.

The Messiah changed... the Sabbath, the temple, the feasts, the sacrifices, the priesthood... and yes, even who the descendants of Abraham are.

Galatians 3:29

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

Craig Koester says:

Just as references to the Lion and the Lamb enable readers to consider the same person (Christ) from two different perspectives, the references to the 144,000 and to the great multitude allow readers to see the same community (Christ's followers) from two different perspectives.

The community of faith encompasses people from many tribes, nations and languages, yet this same community represents the fulfillment of God's promises concerning the preservation of Israel. **If the promises concerning 'the Lion of Judah' are not negated but fulfilled through the blood of the Lamb, the promises concerning 'the tribe of Judah' and the other tribes are not negated but fulfilled through the multitudes that are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.**

DJ, p.186

Chapter seven impresses upon the followers of Jesus who they are... because of the grace of God.... which has brought them into... fellowship with the Father and with the Son and with the Spirit.

In Revelation 4 & 5 the reader heard the theme of heaven's praise in this present time. In Revelation 7 the reader is given a sneak preview of worship in the time of the new heaven and the new earth.

The redeemed will sing this song....

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



As the angels, the elders and the four living creatures encircle the throne, enveloping the great multitude of the redeemed that no one can count, who stand before the throne, in awe of God all fall on their faces and worship him lives forever, saying....

Amen!

PRAISE and

GLORY and

WISDOM and

THANKS and

HONOR and

POWER and

STRENGTH

be to our God for ever and ever.

Amen!

The triune God is worthy.

It is significant that seven declarations are made.

He is worthy of praise.

He is worthy of glory.

He is worthy of wisdom.

He is worthy of thanks.

He is worthy of honor.

He is worthy of power.

He is worthy of strength.

Seven is the number of perfection!

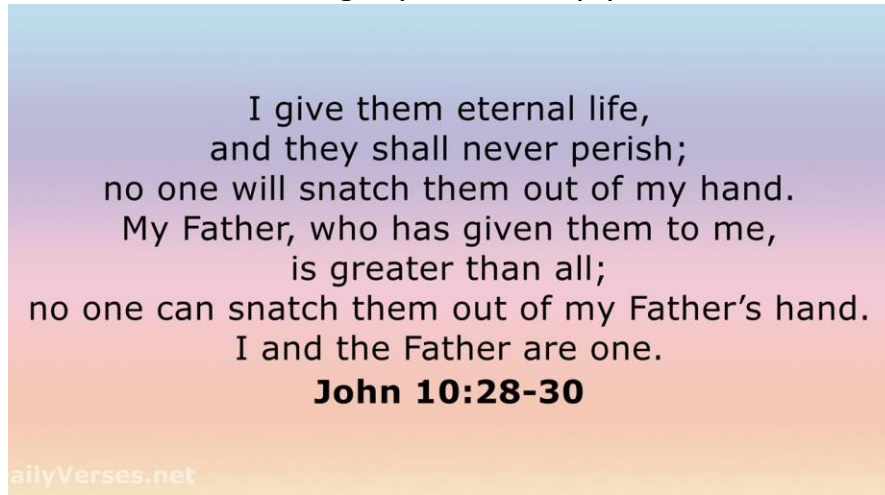
In the time of the new heaven and the new earth, the triune God will be perfectly worshiped by all his creatures.

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How vast is his mercy!
Out of the wreckage of humanity's fall he is gloriously rescuing will make all things new.

Let me remind you briefly of three connections this passage makes to our lives.

1. As a follower of Jesus, you belong to God.

You are not your own.
You have been bought at a price.
The One who has bought you will keep you; he will sustain you.



He will hold you fast.
No one will be able to snatch you from his hand.

2. Who you are is defined by the One to whom you belong!

Remember – you are his servant.
Remember - he is your Lord.

3. The story of the Bible – Old Testament and New Testament is one story.

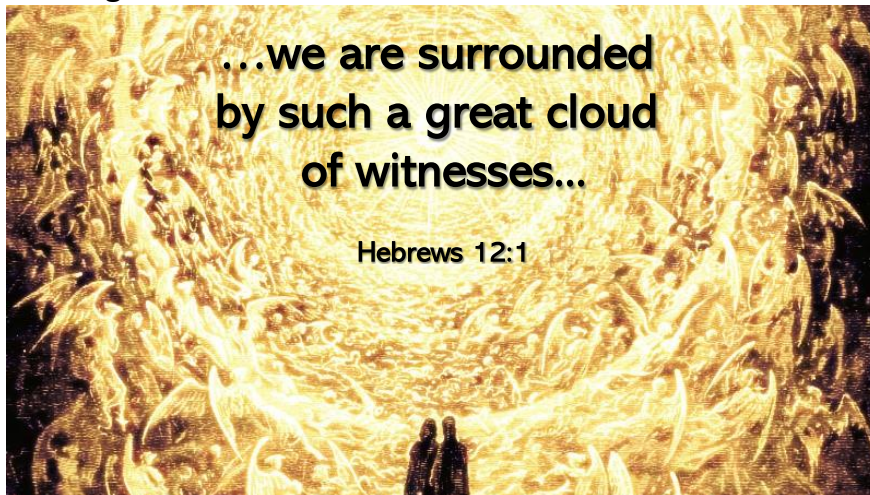
Two summers ago, I went back to Ontario when my dad was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

In what was his last week of life here on earth we had many conversations with him about his family – my ancestors.

Several weeks after he passed into the presence of Jesus, Barb and I, along with my sister and her husband, went down to Lancaster, Pennsylvania to explore our roots. We wanted to know about the family we came from.

We walked through a 300-year-old house which one of our family had lived in, and in turn his family after him. Doing so profoundly impacted all of us.

The story of the Bible, particularly that of the OT, for those of who are not Jewish, is our story – these are the people we come from; the people we belong to..... they are a part of the great cloud of witnesses which surround us as Hebrews 12 says.



To the One who has saved us we say....

Amen!
PRAISE and
GLORY and
WISDOM and
THANKS and
HONOR and
POWER and
STRENGTH
be to our God for ever and ever.
Amen!

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.