

Who Can Stand?

Long Beach Alliance Church • April 14th, 2013 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?
~Revelation 6: 17 (ESV)**

1) A Judgment Interlude (Whew!)

- A) The opening of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12) reveals such an intense and dramatic scene of judgment, the obvious question is stated (6:17), “who is able to stand?”
- B) The answer is quick in coming, launching us into a new “lens” of Revelation (see illustration). Revelation 7 represents a short explanation of events which are critical for our understanding, but have no specific chronological attachment to the seal judgments of Revelation 6.
- C) Remember, Revelation is NOT very concerned with the chronology of events. Revelation IS concerned with larger themes (glory of God, worship of the Lamb, judgment of mankind, punishment of sin, justice of the martyrs, etc.).
- D) The events of Revelation 7 are probably located (on a timeline) toward the very beginning of the seal judgments (probably somewhere near Revelation 6:1).

2) Restraint Of Judgment (Whew!)

- A) The answer to the question (6:17), “who is able to stand?” seems to be obvious. **NO ONE CAN STAND!** However, God includes Revelation 7 as a gracious illustration of never allowing His wrath to wipe out His grace. This is mankind’s only hope! God’s Gospel saves us from God’s wrath!

- B) At the end of Revelation 6, the whole universe is quaking under God's judgment. Even in this modern day, this is how the world feels about God! But judgment is NOT the full story about God! There is grace, there is Gospel, there is hope, because there is Jesus!
- C) Winds/forces from the "four corners of earth" (7:1) are temporarily restrained (four horsemen of Revelation 6?) so some of God's chosen people (7:4) may be "sealed" (i.e. royal seal, 7:3) from God's wrath (a type of protection).
- D) The "sealed" (7:4-8) are described as from 'every tribe of Israel's sons,' a distinctively Jewish reference to the sons of Jacob/Israel (Genesis 49). While these elect followers of Christ are known in Heaven, there is no indication they are known in any manner on earth, by themselves or others.

3) A Celebration In Heaven (Whew!)

- A) The scene then shifts from a focus on the earthly restraint of judgment (Revelation 7:1-8) to a heavenly scene of response to God for His amazing grace (7:9ff).
- B) At first, the scene which John (the author) records is difficult to locate (7:9-12). It seems that the scene might be simultaneous to the beginning of the chapter (an immediate response), or a scene of the very end of the Apocalypse story, a kind of "final celebration."
- C) Because of this, it is important to read Revelation 7:13-14 first, in order to provide us with our context. The scene which we are observing is actually one of believers (lots of them) who die **DURING** the "great tribulation" (7:13-14).
- D) In other words, the celebration of the Lamb of God for Salvation (7:9-11) is a direct result of God's sealing of the 144,000 on the earth (7:1-8). This is the result! This is how an innumerable multitude respond! The Gospel wins!
- E) All of God's people have the promise of an eternal future with Jesus as our Shepherd, living in perfect peace, and in an eternal adventure serving God (7:15-17).

“Lenses” of the Scenes in Revelation

