

The Lamb Who Is Sovereign in Judgement and Salvation

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Preacher: Paul Brennan

[0 : 00] But we're going to turn now to our Bible readings and Paul is taking us back to the series in the early chapters of the Revelation of John.

So that is the very last book of the Bible and after a little gap we've come back and we're going to be reading this morning in Revelation chapter 6 and 7.

So Revelation 6 and 7, if you need a Bible, if you don't have one, there's some around the place, some just outside the doors. One of the stewards will gladly grab you one if you need one and you'll be able to follow along.

So we're going to read beginning at Revelation chapter 6 and verse 1. Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals and I heard one of the living creatures say with a loud voice like thunder, Come! And I looked and behold a white horse and its rider had a bow and a crown was given to him and he came out conquering and to conquer.

When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, Come! And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth so that men should slay one another.

[1 : 21] And he was given a great sword. When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, Come! And I looked and behold a black horse and its rider had a pair of scales in his hands.

And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A quart of wheat for a denarius and three quarts of barley for a denarius. And do not harm the oil and the wine.

When he opened the fourth seal, I heard a voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come! And I looked and behold a pale horse. And its rider was named Death.

And Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth to kill with the sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness that they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, O sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood and those who dwell on the earth?

[2 : 39] And then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete.

Who were to be killed as they themselves had been. When he opened the sixth seal, I looked and behold, there was a great earthquake.

And the sun became black as sackcloth. The moon became like blood and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.

The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up. And every mountain and island was removed from its place. And then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

For the great day of their wrath has come. And who can stand? After this, I saw four angels standing at the four quarters of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth that no wind might blow on the earth or sea or against any tree.

[4 : 07] 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, saying, Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.

And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000 sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel. 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed. 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben. 12,000 from the tribe of Gad. 12,000 from the tribe of Asher. 12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali. 12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh. 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon. 12,000 from the tribe of Levi. 12,000 from the tribe of Isaacar.

12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun. 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph. And 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed. After this, I looked and behold, a great multitude that no one could number.

[5 : 20] 13,000 from the tribe of Israel. On■■■. 13,000 from the tribe of Israel. 15,000 from the tribe of Israel. From all tribes and peoples and languages. 15,000 from the tribe of Israel. CAROL CAMPKE. Standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

Clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands. 17,000 from the tribe. 50,000 and crying out with a loud voice, Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne. And to the Lamb. And all the angels were standing around the throne. Around the elders and the four living creatures. and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God. Saying, Amen, blessing and honor and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and power and might be to our God forever and ever.

Amen. And then one of the elders addressed me saying, Who are these clothed in white robes and from where have they come? I said to him, Sir, you know.

And he said to me, These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They've washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And therefore they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple.

[6 : 38] And he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more. Neither thirst any more. The sun shall not strike them nor the scorching heat.

For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd. He will guide them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Amen.

And may God bless to us his word. Please do have a revelation open in front of you. Those chapters that Willie read for us, chapter six and seven, and the very beginning of chapter eight. Now, the four horsemen of the apocalypse is an evocative phrase. And it's one that's used often in our culture.

[7 : 43] After my grandfather passed away, I was reading the diaries that he left behind. And the four horsemen of the apocalypse were in his diary.

And it was a reference to myself and my three brothers. After we'd gone to visit his quiet cottage in the Wiltshire countryside, very fondly he referred to us as the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

I'm not sure which one I was, but certainly I was one of them. I think my mum, looking after four energetic boys, sympathized with that description. I think it's probably pretty fair.

I can see one or two fathers of four boys in the congregation feeling similar thoughts about their own children. The four horsemen of the apocalypse. Now, we use that phrase in all sorts of ways in our culture.

And it's usually in connection with something or someone that brings about significant destruction, like we and my brothers did to my grandfather's house. I think if you were to refer to the forward line of the Scottish rugby team, you'd be quite pleased if they were known as the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

[8 : 52] It would bring about fear in the opposition. But this is where that reference comes from. Revelation chapter 6. The four horsemen that we read about here is the source of that phrase, the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

And we're going to be thinking this morning about what that really is. This reference, not just the four horsemen, but all of chapter 6 and 7, the very beginning of chapter 8, they come as one unit in the book of Revelation.

And what we see here is the opening of seven seals. And we'll think about that in a few moments, about what that is. But the message of this chapter, or these two chapters, is a sober one.

And it's a message that calls for a response from all of us. Because what we are reading in these chapters is the work of God throughout history.

And at the very end of history, this is the unveiling of what is happening throughout history from Christ's first appearance, his death, resurrection, and ascension, and his coming return.

[10:05] It is about the unfolding of history between those two key events. And it's about his judgment upon a sinful world. A judgment which none will escape.

But it's also about his salvation. This is about the God who is sovereign in judgment and salvation. And as we'll see, there is one refuge, and only one refuge, from the coming judgment.

And it's in God's salvation. So that was the essential message of these chapters. But let us bring us up to speed. It's been some weeks since we were in Revelation.

It was a couple months ago we were in chapters 4 and 5. And jumping in here to chapter 6, we can feel a bit lost. What's going on? It's all a bit odd. These seals being opened. What's going on? Well, the book of Revelation is essentially, it is an apocalypse.

It is a revelation. It's an unveiling. The word revelation comes from the Latin, to pull back the veil. The Greek equivalent is apocalypse.

[11:15] So revelation, apocalypse, they mean the same thing. And it is an unveiling. It is God pulling back the curtain. On the scene world that we see around us, it's an unveiling to show us what's really going on.

It's showing us the big picture of what is happening through history. And in chapters 4 and 5, we saw an unveiling, and we saw the heavenly throne room itself.

And we saw the one who sits on the throne. God himself, the creator and sustainer of all things. And we saw there in his right hand was a scroll.

And it was a scroll with seven seals. Imagine wax seals. It had seven seals in it. And that's what he held in his right hand.

And this scroll contains within its pages the plans and purposes of God for all of history. Greg Beal writes that this scroll is best understood as God's plan of judgment and redemption.

[12:24] A plan that has been set in motion by Christ's death and resurrection, but is yet to be completed. It is the scroll of human destiny.

It is the scroll of human history. The scroll contains within it the very plans and purposes of God for all of history.

But who is able to open the scroll? It's sealed. Who's going to open it?

That's the question that John asks in chapter 5, verse 2. Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals? And the answer is that there is only one.

Only one can open the scroll. And as we see in chapters 4 and 5, it's the lamb who was slain. It's the lion king. Jesus himself.

[13:25] He is the only one who is able. Look at verse 5 of chapter 5. Weep no more. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered. So that he can open the scroll.

And it's seven seals. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only one who can open the scroll. He is the only one that can put into effect God's great promises for the cosmos.

Promises of a new creation, a new heavens, and a new earth. Promises of his people ruling over the whole earth. And that is what the remainder of Revelation sets out for us.

How do things unfold in history and at the very end of history? So that at the end, Christ is reigning with his people gathered around his throne. How do we get there?

Well, Revelation tells us. And it's therefore not a book to scare God's people.

[14:26] This is a book to bring real reassurance to those who are God's. If you're his people, this is a book to reassure, not to frighten.

We're not to fear. Just notice the response from those in the throne room as they witness Jesus taking this scroll. Look at chapter 5, verses 9 and 10.

Verse 10.

So as we read about what happens as the scroll is opened.

As we read about the unsealing of all these seals. As we read about what is happening in history and what will happen in the future. We, as God's people, are not to fear. It is very sobering.

[15 : 47] These words do make us tremble. But ultimately, we are not to fear because we belong to God.

And we are his forever. However, if you're not yet a Christian here this morning.

If you've not yet repented for your sins. Then fear is the right response. These words are a real warning.

They're a gracious warning. They're a warning that must lead to repentance. Because there is a judgment coming. And there's a repentance that will lead to great joy.

And it's a joy that comes from knowing Jesus as your Savior and Lord. Well, that's where we've got to. We're awaiting end of chapter 5 and 6.

[16 : 48] What's going to happen as the scroll is open? As the seals are broken? As history unfolds? What happens? What do we see? Well, that's what we begin to see with these chapters now.

This whole middle section of Revelation is about the unfolding of history. How do things play out in this world? Well, let's look at this chapter.

We're going to look at the first four seals together. The four horsemen. Then we'll look at chapter 4.

The fifth seal. Then the sixth seal. And we'll consider who can stand. Chapter 7.

Okay, so that's where we're going. So firstly, these four horsemen of the apocalypse. Chapter 6, verses 1 to 8. And we see in these verses. God's restrained judgment in history.

God's restrained judgment in history. Now these four horsemen seem to come as a sort of unit. Not only are there four horses, four riders.

[17 : 51] But there's a similar pattern to each. The opening of each seal is followed by one of the four creatures around the throne. Saying, come. And then the rider rides forth. And we see what happens.

That happens four times. So they come as a bit of a unit. And they have their roots in the scriptures. These four horsemen. Just a few Sundays ago, we were in Ezekiel 14.

Where these same four judgments in history are mentioned. We see it again in Matthew 24. The Lord Jesus, in his earthly ministry, warns of these four judgments.

And there is a progressive nature to the judgments. As we'll see, these events depicted with the four horsemen, they're not referring to a distinct set of events at a discernible time in history.

But rather, these events, these judgments that we read about here, they are what we see time and time again throughout history. You read all sorts of things about Revelation.

[18 : 54] People try to discern these particular events at a distinct time in the past in history. It's a sort of one-off set of events. You can tell yourself they're not. I think these are ongoing, repeated events.

You see the same pattern over and over and over again. And we'll continue to see it until Christ returns. And as we unpack what is happening here, you'll see, of course. We see these things at this very moment.

We've seen it in the past at many points. So let's notice some details here. And the first horse. And John says, I looked.

And behold, a white horse. And its rider had a bow and a crown was given to him. And he came out conquering and to conquer. This first horse and its rider is the horse of conquest.

It is a picture of human greed and ambition. And it seems right that this is the first horse.

[20 : 00] Because where this horseman leads, the others seem to follow. Where there is the desire for conquest and power and rule, what follows is what the other horsemen bring.

Warfare. Famine. Death. It is referring to that innate desire within the human heart for conquest and power and rule.

Our children are studying World War II in school at the moment. And my eldest, she loves history.

And we're reading a really excellent book aimed at her age group. And it's about World War II. And we see those things so clearly reading that together. About Hitler's desire.

His thirst for power and land. His conquest of Europe. And what followed that desire? Well, war.

[21 : 07] Famine. Unimaginable levels of death and destruction. As one author put it. The expansionist aspirations of rulers precipitate military conflict.

Scarcity of resources like food and medicine. Leading to malnutrition, starvation, epidemic and death. That's true today, isn't it?

Willie was praying earlier. For these very things that we see going on in our world now. It was true in the 1930s and 1940s.

It is true in every generation. As you look back through history. Human desire for conquest. It does not lead to good things, does it?

And the first is what the second horse brings. Out came another horse. Bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace. From the earth.

[22 : 13] Verse 4. So that people should slay one another. And he was given a great sword. You see, war follows the desire for conquest.

And as we see with all the horsemen. But especially here. We do see the sovereignty of God in these judgments. Notice that its rider was permitted.

To take peace. Verse 4. Who is doing the permitting? This wasn't the initiative of this rider.

Who does the permitting? Well, notice all these four horses do not emerge of their own accord. No, they are summoned. In each case. One of the four creatures around the throne.

We saw that in chapters 4 and 5. There are four creatures around the throne. And in each case. One of these four creatures. Says. Come.

[23 : 18] And a horseman comes. You see, it's one of these angelic beings around the throne.

That is issuing the command. Now these four creatures are not of themselves sovereign, are they?

They are not sovereign beings. But they are worshipping under the greater sovereignty. And rule of Almighty God. Who sits on the throne. The picture is clear, isn't it?

This is not God losing control. No, his plan is not being circumvented or curtailed by the judgments we see happening here with these four horsemen.

This is the very plan of God. These horses ride out at his command. He permits, verse 4, these things to take place.

And you see, without God's restraining grace, these things will be happening far more than they actually do.

[24 : 19] It's hard for us to grasp, isn't it? But it's just what the Apostle Paul speaks of in Romans. What does God do? He hands men over to their own sinful desires.

He pulls back his restraining hand. He allows evil to flourish. It's part of his judgments upon us.

And whilst that's a hard truth, we know, deep down, that it's what humanity deserves. It's only by God's grace that things are not worse than they are.

How awful it would be if God totally let go and allowed humanity total free reign to follow their desires.

How devastating that would be. How devastating that would be for me. If God was to let me run free with my desires, that would be disaster for my family, the church, for everyone around me.

[25 : 22] God restrains all the time in his grace. But wherever we do see these things happening, wherever we do see man's conquest and warfare, we know that God is lifting his restraining hands.

He is allowing it to take place. It is part, in his wisdom, of his judgments. He hands men over to the sinful desires of their hearts.

Well, the second horse brings warfare. The third. I looked. And behold, a black horse, verse 5. And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand.

And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A quart of wheat for a denarius and three quarts of barley for a denarius. And do not harm the oil and the wine.

Again, there's a natural progression here. It begins with conquest, the desire for rule. War often follows.

[26 : 37] And what follows war? Well, economic hardship usually follows war. It's the poorest who suffer most. People flee their homes.

And what we have here is a picture of devastating inflation. You see, a denarius is the equivalent of a day's wages. And a quart of wheat is just about enough to feed you for a day.

So a whole day's wages are going on the very basics needed for survival. It's a picture of major economic hardship.

Barely able to cover the most basic food. 20 pounds for a pint of milk. That's the kind of thing we're seeing here. 15 pounds for a loaf of bread.

Crushing. Economic depravity. And that often follows, doesn't it? Wherever warfare goes, you see this sort of thing.

[27 : 44] People suffering. Barely able to live. The fourth horse. I looked. And beholds a pale horse. Verse 8.

And its rider's name was Death. And Hades followed him. And he was given authority over a fourth of the earth. To kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence.

And by wild beasts of the earth. Death. The culmination of these four horsemen is death itself. Again, note the progression.

It begins with conquest. A desire for conquest. But war follows. Famine follows. And death follows. Inevitably. But note, it is limited.

It is limited. These four horsemen do not represent final judgment. That is to come, as we'll see. But this is limited.

[28 : 49] Notice verse 8. He was given authority over a fourth of the earth. We're not to read that too rigidly. We're not to carve the world's geographic space into quarters.

No, but we're seeing that it's limited. It's making the point that God in his sovereignty is allowing these things, but it's limited. These four horsemen do not have total free reign.

No, it's control. There's a limit to it. Because judgment is not yet complete. These four horsemen, they are agents of God's judgment upon a rebellious world.

These are the very same four judgments that God promised against his own people in Ezekiel 14. We read this two Sundays ago.

He says, And Ezekiel is just reiterating what had been said generations before in Leviticus.

[30 : 07] The very judgments that God was going to bring upon his own rebellious people, we see here in Revelation extended to all the nations of the earth. God will judge the nations for their wickedness.

God will judge the nations for their sins.

God will judge the nations for their sins. And we should not, in the face of such things, panic or be unduly fearful. Because God remains in control.

We are his. And these convulsions that we see in the world will not last forever. And we need to have that perspective solidly in our minds.

Because as we look around the world today, there is so much of what we see in these opening verses. There is so much of that around us. The Middle East, Eastern Europe.

[31 : 27] India. There are so many places around the world where these things are happening. And whenever we do see them, it's a reminder that we must repent.

These are part of God's judgment on our world. And his purpose is to move us to turn to him again. Well, that's the first section.

These four horsemen. And these teachers of God's restrained judgment in this world. There is a great judgment coming.

But we do see this in history. Let's look on to the next seal, which is a very sobering paragraph. Verses 9 to 11. And we see here that God's people will suffer throughout history.

God's people will suffer throughout history. These words set out for us the sober reality that God's people will suffer.

[32 : 34] And that some will be killed for their faith. In this present age. As we live in these last days between Christ's first and second comings.

There will be, as we've seen, general suffering and hardship. From which Christians will not be exempt. What we just read in verses 1 to 8.

We live in this world. We will be caught up in these things. But in addition to that, there will be specific targeted suffering for Christians. Some will be killed for their faith.

That's what we see in this paragraph. Note the reason for their murder. Verse 9. They have been slain for the word of God. And for the witness that they had borne.

It will remind us the basic meaning of the Greek word martyr is witness. These souls died because of their testimony to Jesus.

[33 : 37] And as a testimony to him. In this vital sense, Martha describes not merely those who die for the gospel, but all Christians.

Since we are saved by holding to the gospel and are called to witness to the gospel. You see, bearing testimony to the Lord Jesus. Witnessing to him.

It virtually guarantees some sort of suffering in this world. Revelation 12 describes all of Christ's people as those who have conquered by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.

For they love not their lives, even unto death. Have we grasped that? I wonder. If you're perhaps new to church and Christianity.

Perhaps you very recently started following Jesus. You do need to know. That whilst it's a great joy. The greatest joy you could possibly know to follow Jesus. It's also a call to follow his example.

[34 : 50] And to be prepared to suffer. And these words beg the question. What are we willing to die for?

What are we willing to die for? Is there anything that we're prepared to die for? Our immediate family, perhaps. Our very best friends, but Jesus.

Are we prepared to die for him? Will we be prepared to be in this number? In verses 9 to 11. Again, the suffering is limited, isn't it?

There is a number, not yet complete, who will be killed for their faith. And when that number is complete, God will execute judgment.

That's their plea, isn't it? In verse 10. Those who've been murdered for their faith, they cry out with a loud voice. Sovereign Lord, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?

[35 : 53] When will you bring justice, Lord? Well, end of verse 11. When that number is complete.

Might you be one of that number? Might I be one of that number? Brothers and sisters around the globe are killed every week for their faith.

Our Christmas offering is going to some who have lost people they know. Pastors killed for their faith. And that will continue to happen until Christ returns.

The scriptures time and time again speak of the suffering we can expect. The Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3 writes that indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted.

It's always been the way for God's people. Just read through Hebrews 11. But it is a suffering with real hope for the future, a real rest to come.

[37 : 08] Here again the words of Jesus from Luke chapter 9. Whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

That's the perspective we must have as we face suffering in this world. And it's suffering that will go all the way up to the point of death.

It may not be that we're called to lay down our lives for our faith. But we will face that small amounts of suffering. Maybe opposition in different ways.

Things we have to give up. Because we've witnessed Jesus. Are we prepared for that? Are we prepared to suffer for him? Because that is what it's going to be like.

This is how things go through history. With this fifth seal. There will be suffering for God's people until the end. Well let's look on to the sixth seal.

[38 : 13] Chapter 6 verses 12 to 16. And this is a vision of God's certain judgment at the end of history. God's certain judgment at the end.

And what's described here in these verses is cataclysmic. The first five seals were sobering enough. But this is on another level.

There's a great earthquake. The sun became black. The moon like blood. The stars fell to the earth like a fig tree shedding its fruit in a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll being rolled up.

The mountains and islands disappear. In the background of these words is Isaiah 34 which speaks very clearly.

It describes universal judgments in which creation itself is dissolved. This is a glimpse of the great day of wrath that Jesus promised will come.

[39 : 15] It's a day of reckoning. A day of judgment. A day when every single person will have to stand before the judgment seat of God. And give account for their lives.

This is the day that those martyred for their faith in verse 10 are crying out for. The day of justice. And it's truly terrifying.

Notice the response in verse 15. Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful and everyone slave and free hid themselves in the caves.

And among the rocks of the mountains calling to the mountains of the rocks. Fall on us. Hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of the wrath has come.

Who can stand? Everyone is terrified. No one is immune. The very rich and powerful slaves and free everyone.

[40 : 26] King Charles III. President Biden. Jeff Bezos. Elon Musk. Rishi Sunak. Tim Cook. Vladimir Putin.

The chief executive of Glasgow City Council. Your boss. Your neighbor. Your colleagues. The binmen. Everyone. And notice what they do. Notice what people will do on that day. They will hide themselves. And that's always the response of sinful man in the sight of a holy God. It was Adam and Eve's first response in the Garden of Eden, wasn't it? They disobeyed God. They heard him walking in the garden. What do they do? They hid themselves.

As if we can actually hide ourselves from the omnipotent, all-powerful God. But it's the same instinct here, isn't it? Verse 15, at the end of it. People hide themselves in the rocks and the caves.

[41 : 29] And what do they say? Fall on us. Hide us from the face of him who's seated on the throne. It's terrifying. It will be terrifying on that day. And there'll be no mistaking the day of judgment.

Everyone will know what's happening. Nobody will be in any doubt on that day what is happening. Everyone will know this is the day of judgment.

Everyone will know who it is who sits on the throne. And everyone will know who it is. And everyone will know who it is. And everyone will know who it is. Because everyone will know who it is. Everyone's sin will be exposed for what it is.

You see, God's judgment is truly inclusive. There's no escape. Who can stand?

Who can withstand his fierce anger? The prophets asked over and over again. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. As an unrepentant, unbelieving, careless, self-righteous sinner.

[42 : 38] And so chapter 6 ends with these words. Who can stand? If this great God is there on his throne.

And people are crying out. To the mountains to crush them. Rather than face God on his throne. Who can stand?

Who can stand before God on that day? Can you? Can I? Well, chapter 7 shows us who can. Who can stand? Well, chapter 7 shows us that the ones who can stand. Are those who have been sealed. Those who have been set aside.

Those who have been marked. Just like the blood on the doorposts. And the door frames in Pharaoh's day. They would indicate to the avenger of judgment. Pass by.

[43 : 39] Because blood marks out these ones. These will not be judged. It is those and only those.

Who have been washed. Clean in the blood of the Lamb. Who can stand on that day. Notice verse 3 of chapter 7. 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 have been given power. To harm the earth.

And saying. Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees. Until. We have sealed the servants of our God. On their foreheads. Do not harm the earth.

Until. Those who have been sealed. Have been put the mark on their heads. See this is the very heart.

[44 : 35] Of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. This chapter is why we are even here this morning. This is why Jesus people have hope. This is why Jesus people need not fear.

The coming day of wrath. And it's not because we are deserving. Or because we are somehow morally superior. No. It is because in God's grace.

Before the dawn of time. He sealed his people. He put a mark. On the foreheads of his people. You see salvation belongs to our God.

That's the glorious cry that goes up in verse 10. Salvation. Belongs to our God. Who sits on the throne. And to the lamb. See despite man's sinfulness.

Despite man's rebellion. God is gracious. He delights to save. And those who are sealed. Are secure.

[45 : 39] From judgments. And we have two descriptions. Of those who are sealed. The 144,000 in verses 4 to 8.

And the great multitude. In verse 9 onwards. John hears the number of the seals. And he sees. The seals. The number he hears.

Is 144,000. And what he sees. Is a great multitude. The sealed are a great multitude. Which no one could number. And yet we're told. The 144,000.

So which is it? Well we're not meant to read the 144,000. As a literal number. Some do. But that's not how we're to read it.

Because we're told in the very next verse. That it's a number that cannot be counted. Both these things are pointed to the same reality. Namely.

[46 : 39] The church. This is the church. God's people. In its totality. There were 144,000 in the way it's described. 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel.

It's a symbolic picture isn't it? Of the complete people of God. This is God's people. The church. All the new covenant. Before the coming day of judgment. The sealing takes place.

Before the harming of the earth and the sea. This is. God's people on earth. The complete number. And the great multitude in verse 9 onwards. Is the church gathered around the throne. This is a flash forward in time. To the aftermath of the great day of wrath.

The ones who have come out. From the great tribulation. Verse 14. These are the ones who've had. Their robes washed. Made white in the blood of the lamb.

[47 : 42] In other words. These are Christians. Christians. All those who down through the ages. Have repented for their sin. And trusted in Christ.

For the givenness of their sins. This is the total. People of God. Verses 4 to 8.

This is the church on earth. And verse 9. Following is the church triumphant. Reigning with Christ. Gathering around his throne. Two pictures of the same reality.

And it begs the question. Will you be in that number? Will you stand. On the day of judgment. And if you do know. And love.

And follow. And serve Jesus. Then this is your certain future. This is your glorious future. And seeing this glorious future. It will enable us.

[48 : 38] To stand in the presence. Knowing that this is your destiny. It will help you today. Because as we've seen. Life is not easy.

In this world. This world is full of hardship. And suffering. And it will be. Until Christ returns. And so we need to have this glorious future.

Firmly imprinted in our heads. In our hearts. So that we will keep going. And as we close. I'm just going to read. The concluding verses of chapter 7.

Just listen. And take it in. And know. That this is your future. If you're not yet a Christian. If you don't yet follow Jesus.

Then this can be your future. Hear the word of God. And notice his protection. His provision. His presence in these words. Verse 13.

[49 : 41] Then. One of the elders addressed me. Saying. Who are these? Clothed in whites. Robes. And from wherever they come. 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. 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. They shall hunger no more. Neither thirst. Any more. The sun shall not strike them.

Nor any scorching heat. For the lamb. Is in the midst of the throne. He will be their shepherd. And he will guide them. To springs of living water. And God will wipe.

[50 : 40] Every tear. From their eyes. Jesus will appear. At the end of the age. And you will see him.

You will see him. The question is. How will you look upon him. Then. How will you look upon him today.

Because how you look upon him today. Will determine. How you look upon him. On that day. If it's with disdain.

Indifference. Rebellion. Rebellion. Today. Then it will be a vision. Of such fear. And dread. On that day. But if.

You would look on him. Today. With humility. And patience. And trust. And love. Then on that day. There will be a sight.

[51 : 38] That no eye. Has ever seen. No heart. Can even imagine. Because he will draw near.
And he will say to you. Come with me. Let me wipe away every tear.

How will you look upon him today. Let me pray. Father. Father. Thank you for these sobering.
Words. Which. Reveal to us. The world as it really is. And how it will be. And so Lord.
Help us. All of us. To be a repentant people. Lord. You know. The depths of our hearts. You know.
The desires. Are only ever. For conquest.

Forgive us. And help us. To humble ourselves. Before you. Today. So that we might. Know you. On
that day. And praise your name.

[52 : 44] And thank you. Because salvation. Belongs to you. Help us. Father. To respond in faith.
And not fear. We ask it in Jesus name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.