

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

INTERLUDE: Who Can Stand the Day of Their Wrath? (7.1-17)



** Note: there will be no study on May 1 (if you come, see Rev 8.1)*

Review From Last Week (Revelation 6.10-17)

1. Revelation from 40 000 feet (literary patterns, interludes, etc.)
2. The cry of the witnesses for justice: “how long?”
3. The answer
 - a. “they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer” (6.11)
 - b. “the great day of wrath” (6.12-17)
4. Biblical imagery for judgment (cosmic cataclysm: Isaiah 13.9-13; 24.1-6, 19-23; 34.4; Ezekiel 32.6-8; Joel 2.10, 30-32a; Joel 3.15-16; Habakkuk 3.6-11; 2 Samuel 22.8-16)

Revelation 6.12-17: When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood,¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.¹⁴ The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.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,¹⁶ calling to the mountains and 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,¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

1. The history of sinful humanity ends the way it began (hiding):

Genesis 3.6-10: So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.⁹ But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”¹⁰ And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”

2. In the final judgment God removes the object of idolatry: this world/earth (hence, idolaters are “those who dwell on the earth” – Rev 8.18, 13.8, 12, 14; 14.6-9; 17.2,8)

Hebrews 12.26-28 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.”²⁷ This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken – that is, things that have been made-- in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.²⁸ Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.

Romans 1.18-25: For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools,²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (cf. Deut 4.19; 17.1-4; 2 Kgs 23.4-5; Jer 8.2; Ezek 8.16; Amos 5.25-27; Acts 7.41-43)

Colossians 3.1-4: If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (cf. Col 3.5ff)

Revelation 7.1-17

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. ²Then 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, ³saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." ⁴And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

⁵12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed,
 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,
 12,000 from the tribe of Gad,
⁶12,000 from the tribe of Asher,
 12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali,
 12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,
⁷12,000 from the tribe of Simeon,
 12,000 from the tribe of Levi,
 12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,
⁸12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,
 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph,
 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.

⁹After 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, ¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹And 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, ¹²saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

¹³Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴I 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.

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.

¹⁶They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;
 the sun shall not strike them,
 nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷For 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."

1. **The Saints are Sealed:** “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.” (7.1-3)
 - a. Four angels; four corners; four winds (cf. four horseman in 6.1-8 and Zechariah 6.1-8; also, Isaiah 11.12; Ezek 7.2; Rev 20.8)
 - b. God’s people are sealed before they go through the tribulation of Revelation 6.1-8: “... sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads” (cf. Rev 9.4; 14.1-4)

Ezekiel 9: Then he cried in my ears with a loud voice, saying, “Bring near the executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand.”² And behold, six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his weapon for slaughter in his hand, and with them was a man clothed in linen, with a writing case at his waist. And they went in and stood beside the bronze altar.³ Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his waist.⁴ And the LORD said to him, “Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.”⁵ And to the others he said in my hearing, “Pass through the city after him, and strike. Your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity.⁶ Kill old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women, but touch no one on whom is the mark. And begin at my sanctuary.” So they began with the elders who were before the house.⁷ Then he said to them, “Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain. Go out.” So they went out and struck in the city.⁸ And while they were striking, and I was left alone, I fell upon my face, and cried, “Ah, Lord GOD! Will you destroy all the remnant of Israel in the outpouring of your wrath on Jerusalem?”⁹ Then he said to me, “The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great. The land is full of blood, and the city full of injustice. For they say, ‘The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see.’¹⁰ As for me, my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; I will bring their deeds upon their heads.”¹¹ And behold, the man clothed in linen, with the writing case at his waist, brought back word, saying, “I have done as you commanded me.” (cf. Exodus 12.7, 13, 22-28)

Revelation 9.4 They [the locusts] were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

- c. Seal = sign of ownership (hence, the seal = the name of Christ and God in Rev 14.1 and 22.4; cf. sign of the beast = name of the beast in Rev 13.16-17; 14.9-11)

2 Corinthians 1.21-22: And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us,²² and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Ephesians 1.13-14: In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (cf. Eph 4.30)

2. **144 000** “And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel” (7.4)

Revelation 14.1-3: Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads. ² And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, ³ and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.

- a. A census? (The Lion/Lamb of Judah leads God’s people into battle)

Numbers 1.1-3: The LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, ² “Take a census of all the congregation of the people of Israel, by clans, by fathers’ houses, according to the number of names, every male, head by head. ³ From twenty years old and upward, all in Israel who are able to go to war, you and Aaron shall list them, company by company.

3. **144 000: The Whole of God’s People** “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” (7.9-10)

- a. 144 000 (12 x 12 x 1000): not one is missing

John 6.37-40: Everyone whom the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never send away. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. ³⁹ Now this is the will of the one who sent me – that I should not lose one person of every one he has given me, but raise them all up at the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father– for everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him to have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 10.27-30: My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.

- b. 144 000 = great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages (i.e., *the church* – OT title, images, and promises for Israel are applied to the church in the NT)

Exodus 19:4 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.”

1 Peter 2.9-10 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into

his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Revelation 1.5b-6: To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 5.9-10 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." (Cf. prophecies about Israel fulfilled in the church (e.g., Isaiah 62.2; 65.15 and Revelation 2.17; 3.12))

Romans 2.28-29: For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God. (Jew = *Iudaios* > Judah, which means "praised")

Philippians 3.3: For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

Galatians 3.27-29: For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Galatians 6.15 For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶ And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

James 1.1: James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings ... **James 5.14:** Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

** If references to Sodom and Egypt (11.8) and Babylon (14-18) in the book of Revelation are taken figuratively, references to Israel may also be read figuratively.*

c. audio-visual: (rev 5; 7)

Revelation 5.5-6: And one of the elders said to me, "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 its seven seals." ⁶ And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

Revelation 7.4-4, 9: And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: ⁵ 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed ... 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.

- d. "... standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (cf. "who can stand?")
- e. "... clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands" (cf. the Feast of Tabernacles)

Leviticus 23.39-43 "On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. ⁴⁰ And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. ⁴¹ You shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. ⁴² You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, ⁴³ that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God." (cf. Nehemiah 8.15)

- 4. **All Heaven Breaks Loose** "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." (7.10-12)
- 5. **Who are These?** 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. (7.13-14)
 - a. "the great tribulation": *thlipsis*: "pressure" to compromise faith, both internal (e.g., false teaching) and external (persecution)

Revelation 1.9: I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

John 16.33: I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Acts 14.21-22 When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

Romans 5.1-5: Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings (*thlipsis*), knowing that suffering (*thlipsis*) produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to

shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Romans 8.35-36: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

Romans 12.12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

b. "... washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"

i. Purification

Hebrews 9.13-14: For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

1 John 1.7: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

ii. Purification

Revelation 3:4 Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

Daniel 11.32-35: "By smooth *words* he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action. ³³ "Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for *many* days. ³⁴ "Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy. ³⁵ "Some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the end time; because *it is still to come* at the appointed time. (cf. Dan 12.10)

Next Week: Revelation 7.15-17 – *the Hope of the Church*

May 1: No study (see Rev 8.1)