

# Dr. David Mathewson, Revelation, Session 12, Revelation 6-7: 6<sup>th</sup> Seal—Who can Stand? Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

Revelation 6-7: 6th Seal--Who can stand?

## 1. Abstract of Mathewson, Revelation, Session 12, Revelation 6-7: 6<sup>th</sup> Seal—Who can stand?, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from Dr. Dave Mathewson's course on the Book of Revelation **explains Revelation chapters 6 and 7**. The lecture **focuses on the sixth seal's depiction of cosmic upheaval and divine judgment**, connecting it to Old Testament prophetic imagery. It then **examines the "interlude" of chapter 7**, which introduces two groups: the 144,000 sealed Israelites, interpreted symbolically as the church, and a great uncountable multitude. The lecture **argues that these groups represent the entirety of God's people**, a "mighty army" conquering through faithful witness rather than physical warfare. Finally, it **draws parallels between the imagery and Old Testament texts**, especially those detailing the military strength of ancient Israel.

**2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 12 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Revelation).**



**Mathewson\_Revelation\_Session12.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpts on Revelation chapters 6 and 7 by Dr. Dave Mathewson.

#### Briefing Document: Revelation Chapters 6 & 7

**Subject:** Analysis of Revelation 6 (Sixth Seal) and Revelation 7 (Interlude)

#### Main Themes:

1. **Vindication of the Saints:** A central theme is God's promise to avenge the blood of his suffering people, a theme rooted in the Old Testament. This vengeance will include both rewarding the faithful and punishing their oppressors.
  - **Quote:** "And that is the promise of God avenging the blood of his people, the promise of God vindicating his suffering people, those who have suffered and died at the hands of a godless, oppressive empire."
1. **Response to the Saints' Cry:** The saints' cry for vengeance (from the fifth seal) is met with a twofold response:
  - **White Robes:** Given to the martyred saints as a symbol of victory, purity, and righteousness, not as a resurrection body (which occurs later in Revelation 20).
  - **Quote:** "...the white robes suggest victory and probably even purity as well as righteousness."
  - **Waiting for Completion:** The saints are told to wait until the full number of martyrs is complete. This idea of a predetermined number of martyrs is drawn from Jewish apocalyptic literature (e.g., 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra).
  - **Quote:** "...there is a set number or a predetermined number, or at least a number of God's people who have yet to be martyred...And that number must be filled up..."
1. **God's Sovereignty and the Delay of Judgment:** The delay in final judgment is explained by this set number of martyrs and God's sovereignty. This delay serves to provide assurance to the suffering faithful and to call those who compromise to maintain their witness. \* **Quote:** "The use of this motif from apocalyptic literature may be used to demonstrate why a delay...but also probably to demonstrate again God's sovereignty over these events..."

2. **The Sixth Seal: Cosmic Upheaval:** The sixth seal unleashes a series of catastrophic events with imagery drawn from Old Testament prophetic texts (Isaiah, Joel). These events are symbolic of the end-time judgment, not to be taken strictly literally. \* **Quote:** "So clearly, John is speaking in the language of symbols, but he finds symbols from his Old Testament predecessors."
3. **The Day of the Lord:** The sixth seal introduces the "great day of the wrath" which is the time when God will judge the wicked and vindicate his people. The imagery used is stock language depicting the complete dismantling of the universe.
  - **Quote:** "Here, we see John borrowing from Old Testament prophetic text, the language of judgment, and drawing on what is probably rather simply stock imagery or stock language again, which he finds from prophetic text."
1. **Interlude in Chapter 7:** Chapter 7 functions as an interlude between the sixth and seventh seals. It answers the question raised at the end of chapter 6, "Who can stand?"
  - **Quote:** "Chapter seven is going to tell us who can stand in the day of God's wrath, who can stand against these plagues that are narrated in chapter six..."
1. **Two Groups in Chapter 7:** Chapter 7 introduces two key groups:
  - **The 144,000:** Sealed from the 12 tribes of Israel, 12,000 from each tribe. This group is not literal ethnic Israel, but rather symbolizes the complete people of God (the church) both Jews and Gentiles, protected from God's wrath.
  - **Quote:** "A third view is that this mention of 144,000 from the tribes of Israel is to be taken symbolically for the complete people of God consisting of both Jews and Gentiles."
  - **The Great Multitude:** A countless number from every nation, tribe, people, and language, wearing white robes and worshipping before the throne of God.
1. **Symbolic Use of Numbers:** The number 12 (and its multiples) is symbolic of God's people. 1,000 symbolizes a large, complete number. The 144,000 is not a literal count but a symbolic representation of the complete people of God.
2. **The 144,000 as an Army:** The numbering of the tribes is likened to Old Testament censuses that determined military strength. The 144,000 are presented as a "mighty army," who conquer not through physical battle, but through their faithful witness, even unto death, emulating the Lamb's victory.

- **Quote:** "The people of God in chapter seven are depicted as those who are sealed...are now depicted as a mighty army who goes out and does battle."
- 1. **Interpreting The 144,000** There are three main views about who the 144,000 represent:
  - Literal ethnic Israel in the end times (often associated with Dispensationalism)
  - Literal Israel that will be saved in the future (as per Romans 11)
  - Symbolic for the complete people of God (the Church composed of Jews and Gentiles) which Dr. Mathewson supports.
- **Significance of the Tribe List: Omission of Dan and Ephraim:** Possibly due to their association with idolatry in some Jewish literature.
- **Judah Head of the List:** Signifies Christological emphasis - Jesus is the Lion from the tribe of Judah and that membership in the people of God is determined by their relationship to him.
- 1. **Scholarly Sources:** Dr. Mathewson recommends two key books to understand the book of Revelation:
  - "The Theology of Revelation" by Richard Bauckham
  - "Reading Revelation Responsibly" by Michael Gorman

#### **Key Ideas/Facts:**

- The lecture provides a framework for understanding Revelation chapters 6 and 7, interpreting them symbolically rather than literally.
- It emphasizes that the book is not a strict chronological narrative but uses visionary language and symbolic numbers.
- It draws connections between Revelation and the Old Testament, as well as other Jewish apocalyptic literature.
- The lecture highlights the themes of God's justice, the vindication of the faithful, and the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom.
- It gives specific attention to the symbolic meaning of the 144,000, connecting this to the fulfillment of God's promises in the church.
- The lecture sets up a contrast between the worldly violence of the first seals and the ironic battle strategy of the church: conquering through a faithful witness.

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Mathewson's lecture provides a detailed overview of Revelation 6 and 7, emphasizing the importance of understanding the text within its historical and literary context. He argues for a symbolic interpretation of numbers and events, highlighting the central themes of God's sovereignty, the vindication of the saints, and the ultimate triumph of God's Kingdom through the faithful witness of the church.

This briefing document should provide a clear and comprehensive understanding of the main points and ideas covered in the lecture excerpts.

## 4. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 12, Revelation 6-7: 6<sup>th</sup> Seal—Who can stand?

### Revelation Chapters 6 and 7 Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. How does God respond to the cry of the martyred saints in Revelation 6:9-11?
2. What does the white robe symbolize in Revelation and why are they given to the saints?
3. According to the lecture, what must be completed before God comes to render his final judgment and avenge the blood of the saints?
4. What are some of the ways Dr. Mathewson explains the language of cosmic upheaval in Revelation 6?
5. What question does Revelation 6:17 end with and how is this question answered?
6. What is the function of Revelation Chapter 7 in relation to chapter 6?
7. What two groups are introduced in Revelation Chapter 7?
8. Why are the four winds significant in Revelation 7?
9. How does the lecture interpret the significance of the number 144,000 and the tribes of Israel in Revelation 7?
10. How does the lecture describe how the people of God will engage in battle?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. God responds to the cry of the martyred saints by giving them white robes, symbolizing victory, purity, and righteousness. They are also told they must wait patiently until the full number of those who are to suffer for their faith is completed.
2. The white robe symbolizes victory, purity, and righteousness. It demonstrates that God reverses the world's verdict on the saints and vindicates them for their suffering.

3. According to the lecture, a set number of God's people who must be martyred or suffer for their witness must be completed before God comes to render his final judgment and avenge the blood of the saints.
4. Dr. Mathewson explains the language of cosmic upheaval as symbolic, drawing on Old Testament prophetic texts to describe the final day of the Lord. He suggests it should not be taken literally, but rather as metaphorical language to describe a cataclysmic event.
5. Revelation 6:17 ends with the question, "Who can stand?" This question is answered in Revelation 7, which introduces those who are sealed and are protected from God's judgment.
6. Revelation 7 functions as an interlude between the sixth and seventh seals. It clarifies the events of chapter 6 and tells us who can withstand God's wrath by further interpreting the events rather than chronologically following them.
7. The two groups introduced in Revelation 7 are the 144,000 Israelites from all the tribes of Israel who are sealed and a great multitude that no one can number from every nation, tribe, people, and language.
8. The four winds in Revelation 7 represent the plagues and destruction that God brings to the earth, especially as found in chapter six. They are restrained to allow the sealing of God's people to take place.
9. The number 144,000 is symbolic and represents the complete people of God. The 12 tribes of Israel is also symbolic, representing the entire people of God as a mighty army, not a literal number.
10. The people of God engage in battle through their faithful suffering witness for Jesus Christ. They conquer not through physical warfare, but through their commitment to the Gospel, even to the point of death.

## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Respond to the following questions in a well-organized essay format.

1. Discuss the significance of the cry of the saints in Revelation 6:9-11 and how it connects to the broader themes of justice and vindication in the book of Revelation.
2. Analyze the use of Old Testament imagery and apocalyptic literature in Revelation 6. How do these allusions contribute to the message of the chapter?
3. Explain the purpose and meaning of the interlude in Revelation 7. How does it address the question raised at the end of chapter 6, and what does this reveal about God's plan?
4. Compare and contrast the two groups presented in Revelation 7: the 144,000 and the great multitude. How has the lecture explained their similarities and differences, and what might this indicate about the nature of God's people?
5. Evaluate the argument that the 144,000 in Revelation 7 represents the Church, using both the lecture material and any other relevant supporting information.

## Glossary

- **Apocalypse:** A literary genre that reveals hidden truths about the future, often involving symbolic language, visions, and cosmic upheavals.
- **Vindication:** The act of clearing someone of blame or suspicion; in Revelation, refers to God's act of vindicating his suffering people.
- **Martyr:** A person who is killed because of their religious beliefs or faithfulness to Christ.
- **White Robe:** Symbolizes purity, righteousness, and victory for those who are faithful in Revelation.
- **Cosmic Upheaval:** A term for extreme events that affect all of creation, often as the way apocalyptic literature describes the end times.
- **Day of the Lord:** A term from Old Testament prophecy that describes God's coming judgment and redemption.
- **Interlude:** A pause or break between two main events, a type of literary structure utilized in apocalyptic literature.
- **Seal:** In Revelation, one of seven judgments or events that will take place during the end times. The seals open to reveal God's plan.
- **The Four Winds:** In Revelation, symbol of destruction and judgment that God holds back from the earth before the sealing takes place.
- **144,000:** A symbolic number in Revelation that represents the complete people of God, often described as a mighty army.
- **Symbolic Numbers:** Numbers used in literature to represent ideas rather than numerical value, especially common in apocalyptic literature.
- **Sovereignty:** God's supreme power and authority over all creation.
- **Christological:** Related to the study and interpretation of Jesus Christ.

## 5. FAQs on Mathewson, Revelation, Session 12, Revelation 6-7: 6<sup>th</sup> Seal: Who can stand?, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions on Revelation 6 & 7

- What is the significance of the "cry for vengeance" from the souls under the altar in Revelation 6:9-11?** This cry, rooted in Old Testament themes, represents the appeal of suffering saints for God to vindicate them and punish those who oppressed them. It is a recurring theme in Revelation. God responds by giving them white robes, signifying purity, righteousness, and victory. However, this is not the resurrection of the saints, which occurs later in Revelation 20. The white robes are a declaration of God's verdict that the saints' witness was not in vain. They will also have to wait for their final vindication.
- What does it mean that the saints must "wait patiently" until the full number of martyrs is complete?** This concept, drawn from Jewish apocalyptic literature, suggests there's a predetermined number of God's people who will be martyred before final judgment. This idea is meant to explain the delay of God's final judgment. It emphasizes God's sovereignty and assures believers that their suffering is not meaningless. It motivates faithful witness, and comforts those enduring persecution, promising a future vindication.
- How should we understand the cosmic upheavals described in Revelation 6:12-17 during the opening of the sixth seal?** This vivid imagery of earthquakes, a darkened sun and moon, falling stars, and a rolled-up sky should not be taken literally. It is metaphorical language, common in Old Testament prophetic texts like Isaiah and Joel, used to describe the cataclysmic nature of God's judgment on the unbelieving world. It is symbolic of the complete dismantling and dissolution of the universe and conveys the sheer magnitude of God's wrath.
- What is the central question at the end of Revelation 6, and how does chapter 7 answer it?** Chapter 6 ends with the question, "Who can stand?" in the face of God's wrath. Chapter 7 serves as an interlude that answers this question by describing two groups: the 144,000 sealed from the tribes of Israel and the countless multitude from every nation. Chapter 7 interprets the events of chapter 6, explaining who perseveres through trials and God's judgement, rather than chronologically following it.

- **Who are the 144,000 sealed from the tribes of Israel in Revelation 7:4-8, and what is their significance?** These are likely symbolic of the complete people of God, the church, comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. The number 144,000 is a symbolic figure derived from the number 12 (representing God's people) multiplied by itself and by 1000 (a large and complete number). The enumeration of the 12 tribes alludes to the idea of God's people as a mighty army ready for battle and also shows God's protection over his people. The absence of Dan and Ephraim and the inclusion of Judah at the beginning of the list, may indicate the removal of tribes that have been associated with idolatry in Jewish traditions and the emphasis on Jesus as the one from the tribe of Judah. They are sealed by God to be protected from final judgement.
- **What does the sealing of the 144,000 symbolize?** The sealing symbolizes that God protects his people from spiritual harm or from being thwarted of their inheritance from him. It does not mean that they will be spared all physical suffering. As they give their faithful witness, they will be protected from becoming recipients of God's judgment.
- **Who is the "great multitude that no one could number" in Revelation 7:9-17, and how are they related to the 144,000?** This is a second group introduced in Chapter 7 who are also God's people but are shown from a heavenly perspective. They are presented as a great multitude from all nations and tribes, standing before God's throne. They are wearing white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb and holding palm branches as symbols of victory. They are those who have come out of the "great tribulation," indicating that they are those who have remained faithful despite suffering. Some interpret the 144,000 and the great multitude as being two separate groups while others see them as the same group shown from different perspectives (earthly and heavenly). The latter perspective is more common.
- **How do the two groups in Revelation 7, the 144,000 and the multitude, portray the people of God?** Together, these two groups paint a picture of the church as a complete and protected people, a mighty army that fights through faithfulness, not through physical violence, and a diverse, international gathering in heavenly worship. God's people have triumphed over suffering and have been assured a place with God forever. They demonstrate that they were able to "stand" in the face of tribulation and the day of the Lord.