

WHO IS ABLE TO STAND?

By Matt Leasher

As the Age of Grace we are currently living in draws nearer and nearer to a close and the lateness of the hour becomes more relevant to those of us who have our eyes on heaven and the coming of the Lord, we can't help but be concerned about those that do not know their Savior and are living for the world and for themselves. Almost every saved Christian has some unsaved friends and family that do not accept the truth of the gospel and who they know will be left here on earth to endure the soon to come Tribulation period that Jesus clearly warned us is sure to come before He physically returns to Earth to set up His Kingdom, (see Matthew 24:3-31, Mark 13:3-27 & Luke 21:7-28).

The Book of Revelation lays out much of the horrific details of this forthcoming history-ending period. The actual Tribulation itself begins in chapter 6 with Jesus (referred to as the Lamb), opening the seals of the scroll and beginning the seven seal judgments. Since Jesus is Lord, this is therefore the beginning of the wrath of God upon a Christ rejecting world.

“But of the Son He says, YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER,
AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM.
YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS;
THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU
WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS.” (Hebrews 1:8).

The first four seals are the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. The fifth seal is the cry of the martyrs and the sixth seal is of cosmic disturbances upon the earth. All of these seal judgments seem to happen very rapidly in succession because at the end of the description of the sixth seal it says:

“And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (Revelation 6:15-17)

We see from the last verse that it isn't until the sixth seal the folks hiding themselves in caves have realized the wrath of God has begun! We know the Church is gone at this point because “*God has not appointed us to wrath*”, (1 Thessalonians 5:9), and it clearly states “*the day of His wrath has come*”, but it is the very last phrase of that verse that also reveals the absence of the Church where it asks the sobering question – “**who is able to stand**”?

There are some similar Old Testament prophecies about the dreadful Day of the Lord in the last days that are almost identical to Revelation 6:15-17 asking the same question as to who will be able to stand? They are Psalm 76:7, Malachi 3:2 and Nahum 1:6. All of these verses imply it will be impossible to stand at the time of God's fierce anger. As I mentioned above we are still living in the Age of Grace. God is incredibly merciful and gracious to us even though the world

continues to wax more and more in wicked opposition to Him. God has been longsuffering and patient but the inevitable day of His wrath is coming.

So what does it mean not to be able to stand at His coming? Most all the verses where this is used it refers as to being able to stand *before* Him in judgment. God is so holy and righteous that no sinful man can stand in His presence. Ezra 9:15 exemplifies this:

O LORD God of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as it is this day. Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this!”

Since all people are sinful it would seem we are all hopelessly lost in the presence of the Lord but the good news is that we are not! Because of the loving sacrifice of Jesus Christ those who believe in Him can stand in the presence of the Lord and He doesn't see your sins, He sees you through the lens of Jesus Christ standing before you! God the Father directed His wrath against sin upon His Son Jesus Christ while He was on the cross. Christ endured what we deserve. All we have to do is simply accept it. It is God's free gift. It is not dependent upon anything that you can do but only upon all that Christ did for you. It is so simple yet so many people refuse it. They would rather believe that they can earn their own way to heaven through *their own* good works, *in contrast to works of faith* (Galatians 3:2, 5), but the sad reality is that when you stand before a perfect and holy God without Christ, even if you sinned only once in your lifetime, you are guilty on judgment day.

But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; (Isaiah 64:6a)

So now that we've established what it takes to be able to stand before the Lord the question remains in Revelation 6:17 – *who will be able to stand?* In context this is after the Rapture and in the early part of the Tribulation. Immediately following this verse in chapter 7 we see the 144,000 Jewish witnesses being appointed and also a great multitude of martyred saints standing before the Throne of the Lamb arrayed in white robes washed clean with the blood of the Lamb. These are Tribulation saints! Those that came to Christ after the Rapture but undoubtedly had to suffer severe persecution. Nevertheless *they* are able to stand! Even while God is pouring out His wrath upon the Earth He is still merciful and all knowing to those that come to Him.

*The mountains quake before Him, The hills melt,
And the earth heaves at His presence,
Yes, the world and all who dwell in it.
Who can stand before His indignation?
And who can endure the fierceness of His anger?
His fury is poured out like fire,
And the rocks are thrown down by Him.
The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble;
And He knows those who trust in Him.
(Nahum 1:5-7)*

The will of the Lord is that we should come to Him today while His grace is still abounding. *Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near,* (Isaiah 55:6). Accepting Christ as your Savior is much more than just fire insurance from the coming Tribulation. When

you become a born again Christian all things become new and He wipes away any guilt of sin that you may have been lugging around with you. Your life takes on new purpose as you joyfully serve Him. You will still have to endure the hardships of this world while we are sojourning here but we walk in His promises knowing that *as we abound in the work of the Lord, our labor is not in vain in the Lord*, (1 Corinthians 15:58). This current existence that we dwell in is only preparation for the *real* life that is to come!

So the question of who is able to stand can be answered individually amongst ourselves. God has granted us free will to choose our own eternal destiny. Are you choosing life or death? Will you be able to stand at His coming?

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

This may sound rather threatening but Jesus said, *“he that is not with Me is against Me,”* (Matthew 12:30). The message of the gospel is pretty straightforward. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. God does not strong-arm us to obey and follow Him. He allows us to make our own choices but there are consequences for our choices and He lovingly warns us of those consequences just like an earthly father or mother warns their child of the consequences of their choices.

As we currently observe the conditions of the world in relation to Bible prophecy there are several signs that are signifying the Age of Grace is soon about to come to an end. I cannot express the importance of knowing and accepting Christ as your Savior this very day. There is soon coming a day when God’s grace will end and He is going to draw the line and receive unto Him what He bought and paid for, (Ephesians 1:14), and judge the remaining world with fiery wrath. In Luke 21:36 Jesus encourages us to be watching and to be ready for this day:

“Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Notice that Jesus doesn’t just warn us to be able to be counted worthy to escape the things that will come (The Great Tribulation), but also to be able to stand before the Son of Man. This is a clear indication that those that take part in the Rapture are also worthy of standing before Him. This will be when the saints are given their crowns and rewards, the winner’s circle if you will. The apostle Paul expounds on this in his valedictory at the end of his life recorded in 2 Timothy 4:6-8:

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

In the above passage we see a reward for those that love His appearing but in 1 Corinthians 16:22 we are given another warning regarding those that do not love the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming:

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. (KJV)

The word “anathema” is Greek for “accursed” and according to the American Heritage Dictionary means to be banned or excommunicated. The word “Maranatha” was a popular Aramaic first century greeting among Christians that translates, “Our Lord Cometh”. So if we wanted to paraphrase that verse it could very well read like this:

*If any man does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be **left behind** at the Lord's coming!*

My dear reader, don't let this be you! Even if the Lord were to tarry for several more years or even decades you still do not know if you'll be here tomorrow. Your dying day is your personal judgment day and you will want to be able to stand on that day! The Bible mentions nothing about any second chances after death.

I began this article mentioning those of us that know Christ as our Savior and have loved ones we know that don't. Sometimes no matter what we say or do we cannot get them to know and understand the eternal life saving grace of Christ. That doesn't mean we are out of options. There is still prayer! In fact prayer should be our first option not our last and is probably the strongest thing we can do for them for we are not in control of who is saved and who is not, that has already been determined by God before the world was even created, (Ephesians 1:4). What we need to do is pray it is in His will that they are saved, (Ephesians 1:11) and that they will be able to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ and hear the words, “well done good and faithful servant come and enter into the joy of your Lord”. Will you be able to stand?