

09.02.2019 THE SEALED PEOPLE OF GOD

And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Revelation 7:14

Chapter 7 is an interlude between the opening of the 6th seal and the opening of the 7th seal in Revelation 8:1. At the end of Chapter 6, the 6th seal has brought us to the Second Coming of Christ and His judgment on the wicked i.e. all who have rejected God's grace.

Revelation 6 ends with the words: *"For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"*

Revelation 7 answers that question. The ones who will stand in the great day of His wrath are those who have been sealed; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

This has great significance for us Christians who live before the opening of the seventh seal. This is the character of God's people. Though throughout the ages of history, men and women have always been saved by the blood of the Lamb and sealed by the Holy Spirit, nevertheless, the people of God in the end-time will have to face the 'great tribulation'. To survive this tribulation, they are sealed with the Holy Spirit. The end result is a holy people who serve God night and day in His Temple (Revelation 7:15).

Restraining the Winds: Revelation 7:1-3

After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

Winds are symbolic of destructive forces by which God brings judgment on the wicked e.g. Jeremiah 23:19, 20 and Daniel 7:2.

And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come. Jeremiah 49:36

Seals and Sealing:

Documents are sealed to protect their contents and to validate authorship of the document. People are sealed as a sign of ownership or for protection. When we accept God's salvation, He seals us with His Spirit.

Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 2 Timothy 2:19

In Him (Christ) you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:13, 14

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Ephesians 4:30

The Sealed People of God: Revelation 7:4-8

And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed...

As we saw in our earlier study of Revelation 4, this number is not a literal number. It has a spiritual significance.

144,000 = 12 x 12 x 1000

Twelve is a symbol of God's people. In the Old Testament we have the 12 tribes of Israel (their names are inscribed on the gates of the New Jerusalem). In the New Testament we have the church built upon the foundation of the 12 apostles (Ephesians 2:20) – their names are on the 12 foundations of the city. This number therefore, signifies the totality of God's people, both Jew and Gentile, who endure unto the end.

It is interesting that this number also signifies a people at war. It is the church militant.

In the Old Testament, a basic military unit was made up of 1000 men (see Numbers 31:3-6). So this is also a reference to God's people who are ready for the great battle of Armageddon in the end-time.

God's sealed people are those on God's side and God will protect them in the final conflict.

The Great Multitude: Revelation 7:9, 10

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

This is a group of people who have been loyal to God and persevered in faith despite the tribulations they went through for the sake of Christ. They were sealed before the great tribulation and now emerge victorious. This is the church victorious – the great company of people who have been saved by grace.

The Characteristics of those who follow the Lamb

"These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and 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 dwell among them." Revelation 7:14, 15

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile (deceit): for they are without fault before the throne of God. Revelation 14:1-5

These are they which were not defiled with women...they have not committed spiritual adultery (Revelation 17:5; 18:3). They are faithful to God alone.

And in their mouth was found no guile (deceit)...they are not hypocrites, or double-tongued. They are true to the Lamb and His commands.

These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb...

They are a people who acknowledge that their salvation is not by any works that they have done, but their salvation is because of the blood of the Lamb and His righteousness. They have ceased from their own works and entered into God's rest; the true rest of the Sabbath-keeper (Hebrews 4:9-11). They have learnt to love God wholly and love each other as Christ has loved them. Thus they keep His commandments (Matthew 22:37-40).

To such a people God will give the rest of the heavenly Canaan... ***“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 dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” Revelation 7:15-17.***

Salvation to our God and to the Lamb!

God’s people are ‘without fault (blameless)’ as they stand before the throne of God. God’s people are a holy people (Exodus 19:6, 1 Peter 2:9). The home of the saints is called the Holy City.

How do God’s people reflect this truth?

They recognise that the Christian’s hope and expectation of salvation lies entirely in God, never in himself.

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Romans 3:19, 20

To the whole world, silent and guilty before God, the universal offer of salvation is made:

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Romans 3:21-24

In a great passage in Ephesians 1:3-14, Paul declares the basis of our assurance:

Ephesians 1:3-6 God has chosen us for salvation...

Ephesians 1:7-12 Christ has provided salvation; redemption, forgiveness, holiness...

Ephesians 1:13, 14 The Holy Spirit seals us and guarantees our final inheritance.

Those who stand before the throne have worked out their salvation by allowing God to do His good will and His good pleasure in their lives (Philippians 2:12, 13). He will present them holy and without blemish before the throne (Ephesians 5:27). They are not afraid to come into the light of God’s presence for it will be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God (John 3:21, Ephesians 2:10). They have given their lives to the One who will keep *‘them from falling and present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy’ Jude 1:24*

Those who stand before the throne have recognised that the unconditional, unchanging, self-giving love of God is the basis of their salvation. This is the Love that begins with ‘no condemnation’ and ends in ‘no separation’ (Romans 8:1, 39). The Love that will not let us go until it sees us safe home to glory.

Can we wonder at the doxology of praise that is sung before God’s throne?

“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.” Revelation 7:12
