

Session 09 The Sealing and Preservation of God's people Revelation 7

This vision is still part of the 6th seal but there is a break, v1. We need to see another aspect of the same story.

It opens with four angels holding back the four winds of the earth (from all quarters) – the winds are obviously agents of **destructive power**. The angels have been given power to harm the earth and the sea. Note that power is always given and is never grasped by God's servants.

God's servants must be sealed with a mark of protection before this destructive power is released v3. Obviously they are living on the same planet where the judgements will happen and will share in the environmental disasters that will ensue, just as they will be caught up in wars. They need to be assured that their ultimate security is guaranteed by the Living God, v2, the God to Whom the angels are subject, v3. However urgent the judgement, in God's estimation it takes second place to the needs of the saints. What happens to them in a physical sense will not ultimately harm them – even death cannot do that, Luke 12:4-9, Rom. 8:35-39. Eph. 1:13-14 describes the Spirit as a seal – giving inner assurance of the covenanted promise.

What is this seal?

The seven seals confined events until God released them under the authority of His chosen Son. Only then could the judgements be released, Acts 17:30-31. Daniel had revelations that were “sealed up” until the end of time, Dan. 12:4, 9-13, c.f. Rev. 22:10. Some prophetic writings can only be understood when the time has arrived and only the Holy Spirit can interpret them, c.f. John 16:4, 12-13.

This new type of seal enclosed His servants for their protection in the midst of universal judgements. It is given to those who already have the internal seal of the Holy Spirit, Eph. 1:13, 4:30.

- **It has to do with authority. A king used a seal to authorise his commands,** Daniel 6:17. God is in control of what happens to His people.
- **It signifies relationship – God's Name,** Num. 6:22-27, to the Father 14:1, and to Jesus, 22:3-4.
- **It confers protection,** Ezekiel 9, Isaiah 43:1-2. It protected against demonic power, Rev. 9:4.
- **The same principle applied to circumcision,** Gen. 17:10-11, to the blood at **Passover**, Exodus 12:22-23, and to the permanent **ownership of a servant**, Exodus 21:6.

It contrasts with the mark signifying relationship to the “religious beast”, (ultimately inspired by the dragon) 13:16-18, and those who receive it, his name, will be subject to the wrath of God, 14:9-11.

John hears the number of those sealed, rather than seeing them in his vision, in contrast to v9. It is a symbolic number (144,000) whereas the next part of the vision reveals the more literal situation, (a great number that no one can number). Both refer to the same group.

144,000 is 12x12x10x10. It indicates completeness, c.f. 14:1-4, 21:12 and 14 and v16-17 – the symbolism is the same. It is the whole church made up of Jewish and Gentile believers, or possibly those who have passed through the great tribulation towards the end of the age. Gentile believers have not replaced Israel in the purposes of God and the age will not come to an end without the complete fulfilment of God's Covenant with His physical people, (they also are preserved and protected – Revelation 12), but Gentiles have been grafted in as the spiritual seed of Abraham – enlargement rather than replacement theology. Where there is no seal there is no protection.

Then John sees the great crowd of the redeemed in white robes and with palm branches, 7: 9-17– **victory celebration,** c.f. John 12:13.

Salvation runs parallel to judgement, c.f. the Exodus event, and John 12:31-32, Rev. 19:1-9. In their worship they attribute their salvation to the Father and to the Lamb. The Lamb is Yeshua, Matt. 1:28 – He is both the sheep and the shepherd. He has delivered them from sin and all its downstream consequences and they are secure in the presence of God, standing before the only throne in the Universe that matters.

The promise of Jesus has been accomplished – the Gospel of the Kingdom has reached to every people group in the world, Matt. 24:14. There is total unity and reconciliation in Jesus – what the UN could not accomplish!

The Elders and the Living Creatures respond by falling on their faces and worshipping. Amen means “I agree”. They are overcome at the wonderful evidence of God’s sublime attributes, witnessed in the accomplishment of redemption.

John is asked a question – does he follow the plot? He wisely submits to superior wisdom.

The great throng are fully identified for John’s benefit.

Even at this stage in Revelation the end of the journey is anticipated –we are actually there. The story will be retold, recapitulated and detail added about the intervening chapters. but we are already where Revelation comes to a conclusion.

The goal has been reached, c.f. Rev. 21:1-7, 22:1-5, 16-17

- **Restoration to the Presence of God;** “I will dwell among them” – “dwell” is related to “mishkan” (tent/tabernacle/shekinah), c.f. Ezek. 37:27 “My tent shall be upon them”.
- **The frustration of the broken and cursed creation will be ended,** and the proper relationship between God and His creatures will be restored. The life of God is abundantly available to satisfy every thirst of the human soul – **fountains of living water,** c.f. Psalm 36:9, Prov. 13:14, 14:27, John 4:5-14, 7:37-39, Rev. 22:1, 17.
- **Death has been abolished** - there are no tears, c.f. Isaiah 25:8.
- There is **something extra and new – the wonder of God’s redeeming love and the tenderness of the Lamb/Shepherd** – He is qualified to be the Shepherd because He knows, par excellence, what it means to be a lamb “led to the slaughter”.
- **The Lamb is in the midst of the throne,** c.f. 5:6 – a Human Being who knows through experience what that means.