

Revelation 7

Interlude Between the Opening of the 6th & 7th Seals

INTRODUCTION:

- A. SIX basic things happened to the Christians:
1. The first seal shows them being conquered by Christ in the Gospel.
 2. The second seal shows they were persecuted (some died).
 3. The third seal shows they were economically discriminated against.
 4. The fourth seal—they would die.
 5. NOW IN THE FIFTH SEAL we find them alive in Heaven with all those gone before.
 6. The sixth seal tells us judgment is about to fall—it is announced.
- B. This all leads us to chapter 7 where we will find that the God's servants on the earth are sealed—protected!
1. This does not mean they were protected from physical pain and death.
 2. Many perished through persecution, but their souls were preserved and delivered to God.
 3. They came out of the tribulation with eternal life—"saved."
 4. This gave great encouragement to the Christians remaining on earth.

HURT NOT EARTH OR SEA TILL SERVANTS SEALED

Verses 1-3

- A. John sees four angels at the four corners of the earth (literal? of course not), holding the four winds that they should not blow UNTIL all God's servants were sealed on their foreheads.
1. The idea is that before this judgment (announced by the sixth seal) should fall, God's people would be preserved by Him.
 2. The judgment here is a world judgment but God's people would be delivered (not necessarily spared, but preserved—saved).

SEALING THE 144,000—the Church (God Servants on Earth)

Verses 4-8

- A. How many of God's servants were sealed?—12,000 of every tribe of the children of Israel for a total of 144,000.
1. Again note the symbolism: 12 represented "God's organized religion on earth" (12 apostles, 12 thrones; 12 gates to the city of Jerusalem, etc.).

2. The number 1,000 symbolized “all” of anything, and indeed it was sort of an “x” factor as the number could change (rise or fall).
3. **Psalm 50:10** - “All the beasts of the forest are mine..., and the cattle on a thousand hills”
 - a. The number of cattle would surely change, but the 1,000 meant all or complete or total.
4. So here we have 12 times 1,000 or 12,000 for each tribe of “every tribe of Israel.”
5. **The 12 tribes times 12,000 would be 144,000—or all there is of God’s people on earth.**
 - a. NOTE: Remember, multiplying a number magnifies the symbol.
 - b. **Now, the tribes of Israel represented God’s people on earth.**
 1. The Old Testament discusses how God protected His people, Israel.
 2. The church today, being called the Israel of God, is also protected.
 - a. **Galatians 6:16** - And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.
 - b. **Romans 9:6** - But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.

B. GOD’S SERVANTS SEALED (THE ISRAEL OF GOD—the Church on Earth)

1. To call the persecuted church in the first century “Israel” in symbol is perfectly understandable.
2. 12,000 of “EVERY” tribe of Israel is NOT CORRECT IF TAKEN LITERALLY.
 - a. Where are the tribes of DAN and EPHRAIM?
 - b. They are NOT INCLUDED.
 - c. So, it is not a literal sealing, but a symbolic one.
 - d. The 144,000 is SYMBOLIC of all the Christians (servants) on earth at any one time.
 - e. That’s what it means. Away with all the wild speculation and literal application of such a symbolic passage.

THE IDEA OF SEALING

- A. The concept of sealing is expressed in **Ezekiel 9:3-5** - Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer's inkhorn at his side;

and the LORD said to him, “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.”

To the others He said in my hearing, “Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity.

- B. The Bible gives us three reasons for sealing:
1. To protect against tampering. The Lord’s tomb in Matthew 27:66.
 2. Shows ownership and destination. Example: **2 Timothy 2:19** - 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."
 3. Certifies genuineness. Example: **Esther 3:12** - Then the king's scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and a decree was written according to all that Haman commanded -- to the king's satraps, to the governors who were over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king's signet ring.
- C. This would encourage the Christians that God would take care of them in the face of death. They were sealed!
- D. Some would teach that this sealing is the Holy Spirit.
1. We acknowledge that the Holy Spirit “seals” our salvation (Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30).
 2. These Christians were ALREADY sealed in this way at baptism (Acts 2:38; 5:32; Titus 3:5).
 3. This is NOT the sealing of Revelation.
 4. Whatever the sealing of Revelation, it provided spiritual protection to those under persecution and death during John’s day! God’s servants (all of them) were sealed “on” (ASV) or “in” (KJV) their foreheads (Rev. 7:3).
 5. Again, we are not looking for a physical seal. We must understand **this is just a symbol designating that the souls of these Christians were protected (preserved).**

THE INNUMERABLE MULTITUDE—Saved in Heaven

- A. Note the location of the great multitude—before the Throne (Revelation 7:9).
1. Where was the Throne? IN HEAVEN (Rev. 4:2).
 2. Remember, the 144,000 (the church) were on earth, protected and sealed so the winds or forces on earth could not harm them spiritually.
- B. A word of caution when discussing the 144,000. There two different sets mentioned.

Revelation 7:1-8	Revelation 14:1-5
Are on the earth	Are in Heaven
All the saved on earth at any one time	All the saved on earth at any one time

1. For those who contend that only 144,000 will be saved, consider this.
 - a. In Revelation 7:1-8 there are the 144,000 on the earth.
 - b. In Revelation 14:1-5 there are the 144,000 in Heaven.
 - c. $144,000 + 144,000 = 288,000$.
 - d. For you to be correct, 144,000 of these 288,000 will have to volunteer to be lost.
 - e. Should you be ranked among the 144,000 to be saved, would you volunteer to be lost in order to reduce the 288,000 to comply with your doctrinal number of 144,000?

Verse 9

- A. The scene shifts from those being sealed (protected) on the earth to the innumerable host standing before the throne of God in Heaven. **Verse 9** - 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.
1. Clothed in white robes (overcomers, who died faithful and were now with God).
 2. With palms in their hands, denoting the Messiah who SAVES NOW. Does this not remind you of the Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem on "Palm Sunday"?

Verses 10-11

- A. They are loudly shouting SALVATION to God on the Throne and the Lamb. In this scene all surround the Throne and worship God.
1. Salvation does indeed belong to God.
 2. Only God can and will grant salvation.
 3. Men have authored their own plans promising salvation, but they cannot make God honor what they falsely promise.
 4. God will deliver on His plan for man's salvation in and through Christ.

Verse 12 - SO BE IT! All praise to God forever.

Verse 13 - Who are these in white and from where did they come?

Verse 14 -

- A. Verse 14 answers the question raised in verse 13.
1. They came out of great tribulation
 2. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
 3. **Certainly this is a figurative way of expressing our literal and real salvation.**
 4. How can robes be made white in the blood of the Lamb?

a. The Lamb of course is Jesus, not a literal lamb. His dying at Calvary shed the blood that makes us white (cleansed of sin).

1. **Matthew 26:28** - For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Observe: This passage tells us that the blood of Jesus provides remission of sins.

2. **Acts 2:38** - . . . Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins . . .

Observe: Baptism in the name of Jesus brings forgiveness providing by His blood of Matthew 26:28

3. **Acts 22:16** - And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Observe: As long as one puts off baptism, they are putting off the blood of Christ and its accompanying forgiveness and salvation.

4. **Romans 6:3-4** - Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Observe: Being baptized into His death is where the benefit of His shed blood for the forgiveness of sins is appropriated.

5. **Romans 6:17-18** - But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness

Observe: Being set free from sin means being forgiven of those sins . . . and that is only done by reaching the blood of Christ in baptism where God has appropriated it.

7. **Ephesians 1:7** - In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”

Observe: Cleansing for salvation comes only through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

8. **1 Peter 1:18-19** - Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,

but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Observe: We are redeemed by the blood of Christ, forgiveness received, once we have appropriated it to our souls through the appointed place and act of immersion into Christ.

B. The tribulation is a series of difficulties on earth that all Christians must endure. Do you remember what Jesus said in **John 16:33**? **In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.**

Verse 15 - They live with God forever, always worshipping Him around the Throne.

Verses 16-17 - Perfect care by God. The Lamb in the midst of the

- A. These symbols signal that their tribulation is over. They now dwell before the throne and the Throne is in Heaven (Revelation 4:2).
- B. Remember the 3rd seal and the black horse? Economically discriminated against. They will never be discriminated or deprived again.
1. Henceforth, the Lamb would feed them . . . opposite to the symbols of want in tribulation.
 2. He would lead them to living fountains of waters . . . no longer amid the dangers of the persecuting powers, but now where provender, peace, refreshment and satisfaction were unrestrained.
 3. Then the ultimate in this set of symbols, **“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”**
 - a. The persecutions had ended for those around the Throne.
 - b. For them, the tribulations were over.
 - c. Here the visions and scenes all merge into one company, the victorious church of Christ.

CONCLUSION:

A. Note: Just because something is not literal or physical does not mean it is not real. Spiritual things are just as real. God is spiritual, not physical, but He is real. Is Herod a fox (Luke 13:32)? Is Jesus a vine (John 15:1)? Is Jesus a door (John 10:7)? These are all true statements, but they are not literal, yet they are real.

B. MAJOR CONTRADICTION OF THE CULTS

1. Some teach that the 144,000 are to be the select heavenly group. Then they falsely teach the innumerable multitude are those who remain on earth when Christ returns for His “1,000 year reign.” Three mistakes are made here:
 - a. First, they have it reversed. The 144,000 are on earth, not Heaven (read Rev. 7:3-4).
 - b. Second, the innumerable multitude are In Heaven—not on earth (Rev. 7:9).
 - c. Third, the idea of a 1,000 year reign by Christ on the earth is unscriptural.
 - d. For the explanation of this we must wait until we come to Revelation

chapter 20.

1. John 5:28-29 and 2 Peter 3:8-11 certainly do not agree with the many millennialists and voices of hysteria talking of “rapture,” and looking for a literal return of Jesus to a throne in Jerusalem.
2. Some people are really confused. JESUS CHRIST IS RETURNING TO DESTROY THE WORLD (earth) and not to establish a kingdom, nor reign on earth (or even above the earth) for 1,000 literal years.