
TOPIC

The Sealing of God's Servants

MEMORY VERSE

*“Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees,
till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads”
(Revelation 7:3).*

TEXT: Revelation 7:1-17

Immediately after the rapture, there will be the Great Tribulation. Among the events will be the pouring out of God's wrath and the Antichrist's tyranny upon the inhabitants of the earth who did not make the rapture. Through the sequential opening of the sevenfold seals, there will be a step-by-step display of God's judgment. This will not happen before the rapture because God cannot destroy the righteous with the wicked. Examples can be seen in the cases of Noah and Lot. He spared them before He destroyed the inhabitants.

In Revelation chapters 4 and 5, the saints of God are already in heaven (Revelation 4:10,11; 5:8-10). On earth, there will be the Great Tribulation (chapter 6), while the Church celebrates the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in heaven. Chapter 7 reflects on the short break following a series of woes upon the inhabitants of the earth. This study provides insight into the short break in the punishment and the sealing of God's servants. The Jews will be

the major focus of the Antichrist as he tries to corrupt the covenant they have with God. The text finally reveals the rejoicing of those who make it to heaven after passing the test of their faith.

The purpose of the Great Tribulation will be for God to pour out His wrath upon the sinful world (Isaiah 26:21). Another reason will be to prepare the nation of Israel for the coming of their Messiah, whom they rejected. They will turn away from their ungodliness and cry to God for mercy because of the broken peace agreement with the Antichrist (Deuteronomy 4:30,31; Zechariah 9:9). Both Daniel and John revealed that the Antichrist will make war against the tribulation saints during the Great Tribulation and prevail against them.

1. PURPOSEFUL PAUSE OF THE WRATH OF GOD

(Revelation 7:1-4; Romans 9:15; Genesis 18:23; 19:17; Numbers 16:24,27-31; Matthew 25:32)

Every time the phrase “after this” occurs in the book of Revelation, John beholds and sees a new series of events (Revelation 4:1; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1; 20:3). Chapter 7 is introduced with “after these things”; that is, after the opening of the seals of a book containing the wrath of God (Revelation 6:1-17). Before the opening of the seventh seal, which contains deadly, destructive, and devastating punishments, there will be a pause for the sealing of God's servants.

The reason for the pause will be to seal, secure, and protect the redeemed and righteous servants of God before the opening of the seventh seal (Revelation 7:3,4). “And 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 given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth...till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads” (Revelation 7:2,3).

The assignment of the four angels holding the four corners was about to be carried out, after which many lives would be lost, because angels are known to carry out every command from God without compromise. God restrained the angels who covered the north, south, east, and west of the world from pouring out wrath upon the earth. “Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in the foreheads” (Revelation 7:3).

It is clear, then, that after the rapture, the presence of the Holy Spirit as the Restrainer will be removed only in the sense that He came in a unique way at Pentecost. As the Omnipresent One, He worked effectively before Pentecost; so will He function effectively during the Great Tribulation (1 Samuel 10:9,10; Psalm 51:10-13; 2 Peter 1:21; Micah 3:8; Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21) for the salvation of repentant Jews and Gentiles.

During the Great Tribulation, two groups of people will be saved and preserved. The Antichrist will not be able to torment the 144,000. They will not be arbitrarily chosen by God but will be saved through repentance and faith in Christ (Revelation 14:1-4) as “virgins” who are “not defiled with women”.

The second group, “Which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues...” (Revelation 7:9), will be made up of multitudes of Gentiles from all kindreds and nations. Apart from the 144,000 Jews who will be secured and preserved, this second group will suffer affliction and lose their lives because of their faith in God during the Great Tribulation (Revelation 7:14).

Question 1: What will be the purpose of the Great Tribulation?

Question 2: What will be the reason for the break in the pouring out of the wrath of God?

2. THE RECORD OF THE SEALING OF GOD'S SERVANTS

(Revelation 7:5-9; 9:4; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; Exodus 11:7; Leviticus 10:10; Exodus 8:22; Esther 8:8)

The holding back of the wind will be important because, if the fury of the wrath of God is not restrained, there will be destruction throughout the world. The purpose of the restraint will be to enable God's servants to be sealed. Specifically, the 144,000 will be children of Israel.

A seal is like a stamp, symbol, or device bearing the name of the owner, which could be stamped on someone or something. It was practised in the East to brand the name of the master on the forehead of a slave. This seal will be clearly engraved on the foreheads of each of the one hundred and forty-four thousand Jewish servants of God as a sign of divine ownership and a pledge of safety. The seal or mark will clearly identify them as true servants of God. They will be saved and sealed during the Great Tribulation.

Today, those who are born again are “sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13). Believers will take part in the rapture before the first seal is broken during the Great Tribulation period in Revelation chapter 6.

The small number of 12,000 from each tribe of Israel will be sealed because they believe in Christ as their Messiah. Most of the people will remain in unbelief and will not be protected from the wrath that will come through the opening of the seventh seal.

In the sealing, we observe that selling one's birthright is dangerous. In the listing of the sons of Israel, the tribe of Judah is mentioned first instead of Reuben, the first son. "Forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed... Judah prevailed above his brethern, and of him came the chief ruler" (1 Chronicles 5:1,2; Genesis 49:3,4).

In the same vein, the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are not mentioned; rather, the tribes of Levi and Joseph take their places. Dan wholly turned to idol worship, and judgment was pronounced upon them: "And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel" (Judges 18:30; Deuteronomy 29:18-21). Ephraim was also addicted to idols and identified with the enemies of Israel (Hosea 4:17).

Saved people should be careful because God does not share His glory with anyone. Acknowledge and repent of all attitudes or conduct that belittle God in your life. Show penitence like the prodigal son, forsake your sins, and come to God. As their names were removed and replaced by others, so the names of those who are saved but backslide are removed from the Book of Life. "And the Lord said unto Moses, whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book" (Exodus 32:33). All hope is not lost for the tribe of Dan, as they will be restored with the other tribes and included (Ezekiel 48:30-35).

Another group of people who will be saved are those who repent and exercise faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord amid those who mock the preaching of the sealed servants as a religious fallacy (Revelation 9:20,21; 16:9). It will not be only the 144,000 who are saved, but also "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands..." (Revelation 7:9).

Question 3: Who are the two groups of tribulation saints who will be saved?

Question 4: What is the significance of God's seal of ownership upon believers?

3. GLORIOUS, UNIVERSAL WORSHIP OF THE LORD

(Revelation 7:10-17; 15:4; 14:6,7; 4:9-11; 19:4-6; Isaiah 43:7,21)

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9,10).

There will be explosive worship and praise to God, who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb. As all who are in heaven rejoice in ascribing praise, blessing, honour, glory, and power to the Lord, the living creatures will echo “Amen” (Revelation 7:12).

God created us to praise, worship, and glorify Him. He said, “This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise” (Isaiah 43:7,21). We must, therefore, devote our lives, talents, time, intelligence, and resources to accomplishing this divine purpose of our creation. It is only when we are born again that it will be meaningful and acceptable (1 Peter 2:9).

The redeemed, raptured, and glorified saints in heaven will fulfil this purpose without hindrance or interruption. In heaven, angels and saints—Jews and Gentiles—will praise the Lord forever and ever (Revelation 4:10,11; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 14:6,7; 15:4; 19:4-6).

One of the elders in heaven asked John a question: “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?” John knew that the enquirer was more knowledgeable than he was; hence, he answered: “Sir, thou knowst”. He was informed as the elder told him what qualified them: “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb...Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple”.

We will share the same benefits if we remain faithful to God. These and many more will be our rewards if we remain steadfast and faithful to the end. In the words of a songwriter:

*“When we all get to heaven
What a day of rejoicing it shall be
When we all see Jesus
We will sing and shout the victory”*

Question 5: What precautions should Christians take to avoid having their names removed from the Book of Life?

Question 6: What are the benefits of remaining steadfast with God amid trials?
