

A Shelter In The Storm!

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Exposition of Revelation Chapter 7.

“After these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.” Revelation 7:1

This does not denote that the prophet now sees things that transpired after the events of Revelation 6, but that after the vision of chapter 6 he sees another representation concerning the saints in the end time.

“I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth.” Scripture reveals that to angels has been delegated by heaven, authority over the various elements. Scripture speaks of an angel having “power over fire” (Revelation 15:8) and “the angel of the waters.” (Revelation 16:5).

The number four denotes universality, telling us that the events predicted are to be worldwide. The four corners of the earth is an Old Testament term which is better translated ‘four quarters of the earth.’ [1] The expression “four angels” represents a worldwide angelic influence keeping in check the forces of destruction.

“Angels are belting the world, refusing Satan his claims to supremacy, made because of the vast multitude of his adherents. We hear not the voices, we see not with natural sight, the world of these angels, but their hands are linked about the world and with sleepless vigilance they are keeping the armies of Satan at bay till the sealing of God’s people shall be accomplished.” [2]

“The four winds” represent the world wide forces of destruction. Winds in Scripture represent war, strife and commotion, especially when the close of human probation occurs and the judgments of God in the seven last plagues fall upon the rejectors of the truth of God. This picture, as usual, in Revelation, is borrowed from the Old Testament.

The prophet Jeremiah in predicting the destruction of Elam (Persia) declared -
“Upon Elam I will bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven and will scatter them toward all those winds and I will bring evil upon them, even my fierce anger, said the Lord and will destroy from thence the king and his princes.” Jeremiah 49:33-39.)

The prophet Jeremiah, when recording the world’s finale, as a result of letting go the four winds, declared -

“A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations, [the unsaved] He will plead with all flesh, He will give them that are wicked to the sword. Evil shall go forth from nation to nation and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coast of the earth and the slain of the Lord shall be from one of the earth to the other.” (Jeremiah 25:31-33.)

The release of the winds of strife by angelic powers undoubtedly will produce “the great whirlwind” of destruction predicted to occur in “The Day of the Lord.” (Zephaniah 1: 14-18; 2:1-3) Some endeavor to symbolize “the earth, the sea, nor the trees.” We suggest that these terms are not symbolic but apply literally to the surface of the planet. When the seven last plagues fall they will seriously affect these areas of the earth. The second plague affects the oceans and the seas. The third plague affects all the water on the

dying planet, and the fourth plague of fierce heat will surely involve the destruction of the remaining forests of the world as well as vegetation in general.

Why are angelic powers commissioned by heaven to hold back the winds of judgment?

“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 till we have sealed the servants of ‘our God in their foreheads.’” (Revelation 7:2, 3)

An angel in prophecy often represents a message or a movement of God, i.e. a group of believers entrusted with a special message for the world.

This “Ascending from the east” denotes the origin and manner of the message. The east is the location from which any object is first seen when approaching our world from outer space. It is the designated point of the compass from which heavenly powers approach the earth [3]. It is a declaration that the angel or message is from heaven - it is God inspired.

Secondly it declares how the message comes. Like the sun in the east whose early rays are weak and gentle so the sealing message when it rose was small, weak and insignificant, and then like the sun, it gained power and strength until it reaches the zenith of its power in the final proclamation of the gospel, which is called “The Loud Cry.” (Revelation 18:1-4) What is the content of the sealing message? The answer to this is found when it is ascertained what the seal of God is. Scripture reveals three main seals associated with God’s people. The first seal is referred to as “The seal of the Holy Spirit.” It was initially connected with Jesus Christ and is alluded to in the gospel of John “For Him (Jesus) has the Father sealed.” (John 6:27.)

This sealing is associated with Jesus being anointed with the Holy Spirit at his baptism. It was prefigured in the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. When the Israelites brought their offerings for sacrifice, before they could be offered, the animal must be brought to the priest for inspection. If the priest was satisfied that the offering was free from blemish, he would then take ‘The Temple Seal’ and mark the animal. This sealed the animal for sacrifice, indicating that it was acceptable.

It was the same with the Lord Jesus. When at his baptism, John the Baptist publicly announced him as ‘The Lamb of God, there descended upon Jesus the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove and the voice from heaven which declared, ‘This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.’ This was the sealing of Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

This sealing was an assurance to Jesus that He was accepted, that He had been obedient to God. This would have been a wonderful encouragement to Him, as He was about to begin His difficult ministry.

THE BELIEVER IS SEALED BY THE SPIRIT

Scripture declares that not only was Jesus sealed with the Spirit but the believer in Jesus is likewise sealed with the Spirit.

“After you believed, You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” Ephesians 1:13)

This is a sealing that occurs simultaneously with our conversion to Christ. The literal Greek renders it, ‘when you believed, you were also sealed.’ (Abbott) Thus there is a sealing of the believer as soon as he accepts the Lord Jesus and receives the Holy Spirit.

“He which establishes us in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the spirit in our hearts. “ (2 Corinthians 1:21-22.)

THIS SEAL IS A GUARANTEE OF SALVATION

This means that when we receive the seal of the Spirit there is placed in our hearts or minds an earnest, or a pledge, or a guarantee of salvation, an assurance of forgiveness and acceptance.

THIS SEAL IS A GUARANTEE OF OWNERSHIP

It involves an assurance that we belong to God.

“The foundation of God stands sure having this seal, the Lord knows them that are His. “(2 Timothy 2:19)

When we receive the seal of the Spirit we also receive a beautiful assurance that we belong to God, that we are His sons and daughters, members of God’s family. This seal is also a guarantee of inheritance. The seal of the spirit involves an assurance that one day we will inherit the kingdom.

“You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the pledge of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.” (Ephesians 1:13-1-1)

This inheritance we will receive in the kingdom at the Second Advent. Through the centuries millions of Christians, without an outward evidence, have accepted God’s promise of an eternal inheritance. How can we explain this? This blessed assurance within the believer is involved in the seal of the Holy Spirit which we receive at conversion. The Holy Spirit is not the seal. He is the sealer. He produces the seal within the believer.

“Those who believed in Christ (referring to Pentecost) were sealed by the Holy Spirit.” [4]

“The Holy Spirit was given to them (the Apostles) in its fullness, sealing them for their work.” [5]

Every true Christian through the ages has received this seal of the Spirit. This is the first of the three seals that are essential for the believer.

THE SEAL OF THE LAW

The second seal is a seal which is emphasized in the end-time of our world’s history. This is the seal of the law or the seal of the Sabbath. “Seal the law among my disciples.” (Isaiah 8:16)

While this chapter of Isaiah had its initial application to Isaiah’s day, it also has a latter day application. Amongst God’s people, in the latter days, God’s law is to be sealed.

THE SEAL INVOLVES THE SABBATH

The seal is connected with God’s law. Every law, to be valid, must have a seal. Therefore God’s law must also have a seal. A seal contains three elements. It must contain the name of the person or authority, his title, and the territory or dominion over which he rules. These three elements are found in one commandment only, of God’s law. That commandment is the fourth commandment, the commandment of the Sabbath. In this command we have God’s name, ‘the Lord thy God’ - His title, ‘Him that made heaven and earth’ or Creator; and thirdly, we have the territory or dominion over which God rules: “heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is.” (Exodus 20:8-11) Only in the Sabbath command are the three elements that make up the seal of the law.

THE SEAL IS FOR SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

Other Scriptures clearly declare that the Sabbath is the sign or seal between God and His people.

“Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath ... it is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever.” (Exodus 31:16)

Who is Israel? In the New Testament the term “Israel” is applied to the Christian church, to true believers.

“If you be Christ’s then are you Abraham’s seed.” (Galatians 3:29)

“He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly of the heart, in the spirit, whose praise is not of men but of God.” (Romans 2:28-29)

An Israelite then is one who belongs to Christ. This means that Christians are called to keep the Sabbath and it then becomes the sign or seal between the Christian and his God.

THIS SEAL IS A SIGN OF CREATION

In what way is the weekly Sabbath a sign or seal to the Christian? First of all it is a great sign of creation, that God created all things.

“It is a sign (or seal) between me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.” (Exodus 31:17)

THIS SEAL IS ALSO A SIGN OF OUR ORIGIN

It tells us from whence we came. It takes us back to Genesis where we are informed that ‘God created man in His own image’. Adam was created ‘a son of God,’ (Luke 3:38). Therefore we are descended from a son of God. What a high and holy origin belongs to our race.

IT IS A SIGN ALSO OF OUR RESTORATION TO GOD’S IMAGE

The seal of the Sabbath also assures us that God intends to restore in us ‘the image of God’, which we have lost.

“Hallow my Sabbaths and they shall be a sign between me and you that I am the Lord that sanctifies you.” (Ezekiel 20:12)

Sanctify means, to make a man holy, to change a man’s character. It means the restoration of the image of God in man.

HOW DOES ONE RECEIVE THE SEAL?

The believer receives the seal of the law by his observance of the true Sabbath.

“Hallow my Sabbath and they shall be a sign (or seal) between me and you.” (Ezekiel 20:20)

Hallow means to treat as sacred. Thus, to receive the seal, means treating the Sabbath as sacred, keeping it holy.

“Those who desire to have the seal of God must keep the Sabbath of the fourth commandment.” [6]

The Christian is not merely to believe in the Sabbath, he is to keep it. The prediction of Revelation 7 then, reveals that in the end time, prior to the Day of the Lord and the judgments of God upon the earth, a divine message is to sound to mankind calling God’s servants back to the original rest day as decreed in the fourth

commandment. Is such a call being sounded? The Seventh-day Adventist movement holds that this section of Scripture is part of their bible authority for proclaiming the Sabbath message to the world. In 1844 this call to mankind commenced and today this message is being proclaimed in most areas of the world. The return to the true Sabbath and the observance of God's commandments they proclaim is one of the essentials in order to be ready for Christ's return.

“And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.” (Verse 4)

As shown above the term Israel in the New Testament applies to spiritual Israel, to true, born again Christians. In verses 4-8 are listed the twelve names of the tribes from whom twelve thousand each are sealed. This makes up the number 144,000. These terms are to be understood in a symbolic sense. [7]

The number 144,000 represents the final product of the sealing message. They are the ones who, in answer to the despairing cry of the unsaved of chapter 6:17, will be able to stand when Christ appears in power and glory at the Second Advent. It is not necessarily a literal number. It is a multiple of twelve and in Scripture twelve is associated with church government.

Altogether there were thirteen tribes of Israel, but they are always classed as twelve tribes. This indicates that we need to take care in classing the 144,000 as literal. In the Old Testament the order of the tribes is not always listed in their correct order.

There are approximately eighteen different orders of the tribes. But Revelation 7 differs from all the Old Testament orders of listings. The tribes of Dan and Ephraim are missing. This is because these two tribes were involved in apostasy. In their places are the names of Joseph and Levi. However the order of the names of the tribes is changed.

Judah	leads	instead of	Reuben
Reuben	is second	instead of	Simeon.
Levi	is eighth	instead of	third.
Gad	is third	instead of	eighth.
Asher	is fourth	instead of	ninth.
Naphtalim	is fifth	instead of	tenth.
Manesseh	is sixth	instead of	eleventh.
Simeon	is seventh	instead of	second.
Issachar	is eighth	instead of	sixth.
Zebulon	is tenth	instead of	fifth.
Joseph	is eleventh	as usual.	
Benjamin	is twelfth	as usual.	

Why this particular order of the twelve tribes? Some believe that when the Hebrew meaning of the names of each tribe is spelt out, a significant description of the character of the 144,000 is presented. The following is a suggested interpretation of the order of the twelve tribes:

Judah	Praise God,
Reuben	A Son,
Gad	A company of sons, redeemed and
Asher	Happy, after
Naphtalim	Wrestling with God in prayer,
Manasseh	Forgetting self and the past,
Simeon	Hearing God's word and
Levi	Joined to God, as
Issachar	Servants
Zebulon	Dwelling with
Joseph	Added joys and blessings, as
Benjamin	Sons of the right hand of God.

After this I beheld, and lo a great multitude, which no man could number of all nations, and kingdoms, 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 sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:9-10)

The Revelator is now directed from the sealed group of the end time, to the total number of the redeemed saints before the throne in the kingdom of God. What a thrilling picture. The number of the redeemed is beyond human estimation. In spite of the fact that Jesus Christ declared that -

“Straight is the gate and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it. “(Matthew 7:13-14)

Out of the six thousand years of human history and the deadly reign of sin, finally there will be saved through the gospel of Christ a portion of mankind beyond human computation. What a testimony to the power of the gospel and the mercy of God.

The terminology of verses 9 and 10 shows that this marvelous scene is the antitype, a fulfillment of the celebrated feast of tabernacles of Old Testament times. This feast or festival was the final gathering of Israel for the ceremonial year. It was celebrated when the final harvest of the land had been gathered in. It lasted for eight joyful days during which the Israelites dwelt in temporary shelters or booths reminding them of the wilderness wanderings of their forebears. All this was typical of the final ingathering of God’s people in the heavenly Kingdom.

THE SONG OF MOSES

“Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:10)

All the glory for the marvelous salvation of the saints will be given to the Godhead. Originally the Trinity covenanted together for the salvation of the race. The Father and the Holy Spirit sent the Son to be incarnated as a man. [8] The Son himself volunteered to be a substitute for guilty man. He was “The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. “(Revelation 13:8) For six thousand years the Godhead had endured the baleful presence of sin with its heart-rending consequences. The Father had suffered with the son. Their separation in payment for making atonement for the broken law, was beyond human conception. But now it is completed, the fallen race is restored, harmony reigns supreme as men and angels rejoice together around the throne.

“And all the angels stood around about the throne, and about the elders and four living creatures, and fell before the throne on their faces and worshipped God.” (Revelation 7:11)

FEAST OF TABERNACLES

TYPE

1. This feast was the final festival for the ceremonial year in Israel
2. It was celebrated after Israel had reaped the main and final harvest of the land.
3. Israel camped in temporary booths in old Jerusalem for the feast.
4. Israel kept the feast for seven days amid great rejoicing.
5. The feast concluded on the eighth day.
6. The feast was to remind Israel of their wilderness wanderings.
7. In the feast they carried palm branches which were so frequently used during their wilderness experience.
8. Israel did no servile work during the feast - they rested.
9. Only those who were born Israelites could celebrate the feast.

ANTITYPE

1. It represents the final great gathering of God's people to the kingdom of heaven.
2. The antitype will be fulfilled after the great final harvest of Spiritual Israel is reaped at the Second Advent.
3. The saints will dwell in "The camp of the saints" in the Jerusalem [Revelation 20:9] However their permanent abode will be in the renewed earth.
4. Seven denotes continuity in Scripture, and speaks of the continual joy of the saints in the kingdom.
5. Eight in Scripture frequently denoted regeneration or resurrection, revealing that the final harvest of the saints involves the resurrection.
6. In heaven the saints also will be reminded of their earthly sojourn in the wilderness of sin.
7. The saints in heaven will "have palms in their hands" reminding them that they were "strangers and pilgrims on earth."
8. In heaven the saints will cease from their labors and enter into their eternal rest.
9. Only those who are "born again" as spiritual Israelites will celebrate the heavenly feast

The Revelator then hears the resounding anthem of praise in the worship of the Deity. It is seven fold and commences and ends with a mighty "Amen."

"Saying, Amen: Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be unto our God, forever and ever. Amen." (Verse 12)

What a moving and impressive event this must be when millions of voices in perfect harmony render whole hearted praise to their Maker.

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?" (Revelation 7:13)

At first glance one might conclude that the elder is referring to the great multitude of verse 9, because they alone are so described. However, when one realizes that all the redeemed will be clothed in white, it may suggest something special about a particular group. The only other group mentioned in the chapter are the saints represented by the number 144,000. Will there be something distinctive regarding the white robes of this group? White robes symbolize righteous character - "the righteousness of the saints." (Revelation 19:8)

The group symbolized by the 144,000 will reach a degree of character development in which they are described as having the seal of God, or the name of God, and having no guile and without fault. (Revelation 14:1-5) We suggest that they will reach a degree of character development that will be in advance of all other groups of God's people. This appears to be confirmed in the following verses of the chapter. Another point that suggests that the elder is not alluding to the great multitude is his question - "Whence came they?" Verse 9 clearly states from whence the great multitude came, so it is justifiable to conclude that the elder is referring to the first group in the chapter - the 144,000.

The details in verses 14-17 confirm this conclusion.

"And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of (Greek.) the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Verse 14)

It would not be correct to conclude that the great multitude have come out of the great tribulation. While it is true that Jesus promised His followers:

"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33.)

Nevertheless few Christians have suffered great tribulation. Therefore this group must be one that has passed through such an experience. The only one that fits the picture is the 144,000. They sing a special song - denoting a special experience (Revelation 14:3) They stand as a special group in the kingdom of God.

They have “gotten the victory over the beast and his image and over his mark and over the number of his name and stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.” (Revelation 15:2).

This is the great tribulation of the end time “the final conflict” and “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” [9]

“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.: (Revelation 7:16-17)

During the seven last plagues, the 144,000 are promised protection. [10] Nevertheless they will suffer some of the effects of the plagues. These effects will be famine and pestilence, causing hunger and thirst. The sun also will scorch the unsaved with unrelenting fire. [11]

The saints will cry to God day and night for deliverance from their pursuers as a result of the death decree that will be issued against them. [12] This explains why this special group is promised a highly privileged position in the kingdom.

“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day night in his temple: and He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. For the lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” (Verses 15,17.)

This promise corresponds with the promised privileges to the 144,000 of Revelation 14. They also are very close to the throne and to the Lamb.

“I looked and lo a Lamb stood on the mount Zion and with him an hundred forty and four thousand. And they sung a new song before the throne. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.” (Revelation 14:1, 3, 4)

This privileged group “serve Him day and night in His temple.” (Verse 15) In the renewed earth when the New Jerusalem becomes the capital of God’s kingdom on earth the Revelator states:

“And I saw no temple therein: [the New Jerusalem] for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it.” (Revelation 21:22)

This does not mean that there is no longer a great temple in God’s kingdom, but that the temple is no longer situated in the holy city. It could also mean that the purpose of the temple is changed. No longer is it the centre of the drama of how the Deity deals with the sin question. Sin has now been eliminated from the universe. Undoubtedly the temple wherein the 144,000 serve God, will be employed for grander purposes.

A view that has become popular of recent times is that “the great multitude” of verse 9, is the actual number of the symbolic 144,000. This view was presented originally by Taylor G. Bunch in the 1940’s. While this commentary leans to the 144,000 as being a symbolic number, it totally rejects the above view, on the following grounds.

If the final number of the redeemed living on the earth at the Second Advent amounts to such a vast host of people, then the biblical concept of “the remnant” is totally destroyed. It means that well nigh the total inhabitants of earth will be saved at the Second Advent. Today, experts are well able to estimate the approximate population of the globe. It is quite certain that the number is not beyond computation. But “the great multitude” is beyond computation, for “no man could number” them. Scripture is very certain that only a minority of the race at any period of human history will be saved in God’s kingdom and this is especially so of the final generation of mankind.

“Strait is the gate and narrow is the way and few there be that find it.” (Matthew 7:14)

“Fear not little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32)

“When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth.” (Luke 18:8)

“The dragon was wroth with the woman [the church] and went to make war with the remnant of her seed.” (Revelation 12:17)

It is informative to notice the description of the redeemed when they finally reach the kingdom. The prophet describes the four different groups of the saved before the throne of God.

1. Nearest the throne are those who were once zealous in the cause of Satan, but who, plucked as brands from the burning, have followed their Savior with deep, intense devotion.
2. Next are those who perfected Christian characters in the midst of falsehood and infidelity, those who honored the law of God when the Christian world declared it void.
3. The millions, of all ages, who were martyred for their faith.
4. And beyond is the “great multitude, which no man could number of all nations, and kingdoms, and people and tongues. The palm branch in their hands is a symbol of their triumph. [13]

A SECOND APPLICATION OF REVELATION 7

According to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy there are two applications of ‘the sealing’ of Revelation 7. First of all it applies to the seal of the law - the Sabbath, the message of which is to go ‘to every nation, kindred tongue and people.’ [14]

The second application refers to a third seal - ‘the seal of redemption.’ This seal is also to be placed upon the foreheads of the saints, prior to the close of probation.

THE SEAL OF REDEMPTION

This seal or ‘mark of redemption’ is described very fully in the Spirit of Prophecy and is based on the ninth chapter of Ezekiel. This prophecy had its initial, local, and literal application to Israel in Old Testament times. It now has a spiritual, worldwide application to our times, to spiritual Israel - the church.

EZEKIEL CHAPTER 9

9:1

He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.

9:2

And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar.

9:3

And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side;

9:4

And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

9:5

And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:

9:6

9

Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.

9:7

And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.

9:8

And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?

9:9

Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not.

9:10

And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head.

9:11

And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.

What a terrible scene! It describes the marking of God's people in the city - representing the church of God, in the last days. Those who do not receive the mark, receive the judgments of God, but those who do receive this mark will be protected. This is spoken of as 'the mark of redemption'. It is a seal of protection. This mark is in the form of the Hebrew letter 'Tau' the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

THIS SEAL APPLIES TO THE REMNANT OF THE CHURCH

"By demarcating them in this way the angel marked them as the last of the righteous." [15]

This is the righteous remnant. Here we have a marking of the remnant of the woman's seed. Notice the setting. It is the setting of the investigative judgment. The man that does the marking is clothed with linen, similar to the garments of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. This is a Day of Atonement setting. The man had a writer's inkhorn by his side. This suggests that he is recording, and decisions are being made. This suggests that there is a marking or sealing during the Day of Atonement.

A SEALING ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT IN

This coincides with the ritual on the Day of Atonement back in the days of ancient Israel. In the typical scene, there was a sealing on the earthly Day of Atonement.

"As the day (of atonement) draws to its close, the earnestness and intensity increase. It is generally believed that the close of this day is recorded in heaven as a sealing time, If the people have done sufficient repenting they will receive a good seal, which means they have stood the test in heaven. If not, then they fear that they are lost and may die at any time. Hence in their closing prayers of the day, instead of saying 'Our Father our King, write our name in the Book of Remembrance', etc. they say, 'Our Father, our King, seal our name in the Book of Life. Seal our name in the Book of Remembrance. When the service is ended they greet each other with the salutation 'I hope you have received a good seal'." [16]

As there was a sealing on the typical Day of atonement, so likewise in the great anti-typical Day of Atonement, in which we now stand. At its close there will also be a sealing of the saints. Ezekiel 9, and Revelation 7, refer to this same sealing.

"This sealing of the servants of God, is the same that was shown to Ezekiel in vision." [17]

Thus, while Revelation 7 refers first of all to the seal of the Law, it has a second application to 'the Seal of Redemption' - the same seal or mark of Ezekiel 9.

THE SEALING IN REVELATION

In the Book of Revelation there are presented two different pictures of the sealing work. The first sealing is in Revelation 7. The second picture of the sealing is in Revelation 14:1-5. However, in Revelation 14 it is not spoken of as the seal. It is described as the "Father's name written in their foreheads," The name of God represents the character of God and represents the same as the seal of Revelation 7.

Thus we have two pictures of the sealing? Why? The first reason is that Revelation 14 reveals the character of those who are sealed, and when one reads the beautiful description of the 144,000 there, one realizes that they have reached perfection of character.

"They are without fault before the throne of God."

On the other hand, Revelation 7 gives the purpose or reason for the sealing. And what is the purpose of the sealing? It is to protect the saints during the time of trouble. This seal is a seal of protection. The angels are commanded to hold the four winds - the judgments of God - until the saints are sealed. Why? Because when the winds are released, when the judgments of God come, only those sealed will receive divine protection.

In Ezekiel 9:6 it says - 'Slay utterly old and young but come not near any man upon whom is the mark'. It is a mark or seal of protection. In Revelation 6:14 onwards, there is pictured the terrifying events of the sixth seal, when the heavens depart as a scroll and in the distance the unsaved behold the coming Christ. They rush to the rocks and mountains, and the question is forced from their lips, 'The great day of his wrath is come and who shall be able to stand?' The answer is given in the next chapter - Revelation 7. The ones who will stand in the day of His wrath are those who are sealed in their foreheads with the seal of the living God. The purpose then of the third seal is to protect the saints.

THREE ELEMENTS IN THE SEAL OF REDEMPTION

What is involved in the seal of protection? Like the second seal it also is formed of three elements. However these three elements are quite different from the three elements of the seal of the law. This denotes that the seal of redemption, is a different seal from the seal of the law. The Revelator declared:

"He that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God and He shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and The name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." (Revelation 3:12)

The spirit of Prophecy confirms that the three elements of this verse apply to the third seal, the seal of protection, or "the mark of redemption."

"On their foreheads was written, God, New Jerusalem and a glorious star containing Jesus new name." [18]

What is the significance of the three elements that comprise this seal? They denote ownership, destiny, and character. First of all the name of God is upon them. They belong to God - they belong to the Father. Secondly the name of the city of God is upon them, the New Jerusalem. This indicates their destiny. They are destined for the New Jerusalem. Thirdly, Christ's new name is in the seal, indicating that its bearer has the character of Christ.

THE SEAL DENOTES OWNERSHIP

In describing the saints during the final scenes of the last great conflict we read, “The indelible mark of God is upon them. God can plead that his own name is written there. The Lord has shut them in. Their destination is inscribed, ‘God, New Jerusalem.’ They are God’s property, his possession.” [19]

This is the First significance of this final seal that is placed upon the saints before the end. The next point is that it is invisible to human eyes.

AN INVISIBLE SEAL

“It is a mark which angels, but not human eyes can read, for the destroying angels must see this mark of redemption.” [20]

This is reminiscent of the Passover in Egypt. The destroying angel, when he saw the blood over the doorway, passed over, and the Israelites were protected. When the angels with the seven last plagues pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the last generation of this earth, those who have the Seal of Redemption upon them will be passed over - they will be protected during the time of trouble.

TIME OF TROUBLE DESCRIBED

When we read about the time of trouble we certainly will need divine protection.

“The Day of the Lord is at hand; It shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. All hands shall be faint, every heart shall melt.” (Isaiah 13:5-7)

“The Day of the Lord is at hand, as a destruction from the Almighty will it come.” (Joel 1:14)

“The Day of the Lord is great and very terrible, who can abide it.” (Joel 2:11)

“The mighty man shall cry there bitterly.” (Zephaniah 1:14-18)

“It is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasting and destruction, a day of darkness and gloominess of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring distress upon men. It may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger.” (Zephaniah 1:18; 2:1-3)

“There shall be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture.” [21]

“Everything was in the utmost confusion. Strife, war and bloodshed, with famine and pestilence, raged everywhere.” [22]

“Soon the dead and dying will be all around us, those only who have the seal of the living God will be sheltered from the storm of wrath that will soon fall on the heads of those who have rejected the truth.” [23]

Thank God for the seal of protection that God offers his people.

THE TIME THIS SEAL IS RECEIVED

The next point of importance with this seal concerns the time that we receive it. There are some who believe that this sealing is accomplished at the time of the Latter Rain. [24] This view must be rejected. When we examine Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy on this question, it is very clear that the final seal of God is received by God’s people immediately prior to the Close of Probation. Nowhere does the Spirit of Prophecy state that the final seal will be affixed at the Latter Rain before Loud Cry.

“Before the work is closed up and the sealing of God’s people is finished, we shall receive the outpouring of the Spirit of God.” [25]

CONFUSION BETWEEN THE TWO SEALS

Because of some confusion between the Seal of the Law (the Sabbath) and the final Seal of Redemption, it appears that a statement in Great Controversy has been misunderstood. In the chapter entitled ‘The Final Warning’, which outlines the events of the “Loud Cry”, it says:

“The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controversial. When one class receives the Mark of the Beast, the other receives the Seal of God.” [26]

This seal is the seal of the law - the Sabbath - and while individuals accept the truth of the Sabbath, they will be receiving this seal. This could continue until near the close of Probation when the last of God’s people come out of Babylon. However, the Seal of the Law, while it is the sign of our sanctification and loyalty, etc. and is closely associated with the Seal of Redemption, yet on the other hand, it is quite distinct from it.

The Seal of Redemption is placed upon God’s people after the formation of the image to the beast.

“The image of the beast will be formed before probation closes, for it is to be the great test for the people of God. This is the test that the people of God must have before they are sealed.” [27]

What is the Image to the beast? When the united Protestant churches ally themselves with the state and issue religious laws - particularly Sunday laws, then the image of the beast will be formed. Seeing the image of the beast and Sunday laws come into existence in reaction to the Loud Cry of the third Angel’s Message, [28] the final seal of God cannot be affixed to the saints until well after the Latter Rain

THE SEAL IS RECEIVED AT CLOSE OF PROBATION

The four angels had power from God to hold the four winds, and that they were about to let them go; but while their hands were loosening, and the four winds were about to blow, the merciful eye of Jesus gazed on the remnant that were not sealed, and He raised His hands to the Father, and pleaded with Him that He had spilled His blood for them. Then another angel was commissioned to fly swiftly to the four angels, and bid them hold, until the servants of God were sealed with the seal of the living God in their foreheads. [29]

“When the third angel’s message was closing the power of God had rested upon his people. They had received the latter rain, the last warning had sounded everywhere. It had stirred up and enraged the inhabitants of the earth. I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven. An angel with an writer’s inkhorn by his side returned from the earth and reported that his work was done and the saints were numbered and sealed Then I saw Jesus throw down the censer and say, It is done. The angelic host made the solemn declaration, He that is unjust let him be unjust still.” [30]

It was when ‘the third angel’s message was closing that the final seal is given. The angel with the writer’s inkhorn returns to heaven because his sealing is completed and the announcement is then made of probation’s close.

“Just before we entered the time of trouble we all received the seal of the living God, then I saw the four angels cease to hold the four winds.” [31]

Notice that “all” receive the seal just before the time of trouble. The time of trouble here, refers to the seven last plagues which commence at the close of probation.

“The living righteous will receive the seal of God prior to the close of probation.” [32]

“When this time of trouble comes, every case is decided, there is no longer probation, no longer mercy for the impenitent. The seal of the living God is upon his people.” [33]

These with many other statements in the Spirit of Prophecy clearly show that the final seal of protection is applied just before the close of probation, in fact, it appears that when the death decree is issued, then the seal is affixed.

“When the decree goes forth, and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless forever.” [34]

What stamp is impressed? The stamp of the seal. And what is the decree that goes forth? It appears to be the death decree. [35]

“While Satan was urging his accusations and seeking to destroy this company, holy angels unseen were passing to and fro placing upon them the seal of the living God.” [36]

In commenting on the marking or sealing of Ezekiel 9, and the period to which it applies, the prophet declares:

“When Jesus is about to leave the mercy seat and put on the garments of vengeance.” [37]

This means then that the marking or sealing of Ezekiel 9, is immediately before the close of probation. What of the claim that probation closes for S.D A’s before the world? - See Appendix “A”

THE SEAL DENOTES PERMANENCY OF CHARACTER

The next point about this final seal is what it signifies in regard to character. First of all it denotes permanence of character. It is the sign that the characters of the saints are now fully mature, that they have reached a state of permanent stability.

“The people of God are sealed in their foreheads. It is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth both intellectually and spiritually so that they cannot be moved.” [38]

How impressive? When we receive this final seal, we will have developed a stability of character, from which we cannot be moved. We will have reached the stage where we will fully love righteousness, and fully hate iniquity. This could not be said of the majority of us now. There are some things that we may not do but which we do not fully hate. By the time we receive this final seal we will have come to the place in our characters, in our minds, where we fully love righteousness and fully hate iniquity. On the other hand, with regard to the unsaved, it will also denote that they have reached a permanency of character in regard to evil.” (Revelation 22:11)

THE SEAL DENOTES ETERNAL SECURITY

This final seal indicates that we are eternally secure.

“The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, never more to be defiled by the corruptions of the world. Now they are eternally secure from the tempter’s devices, holy angels unseen, were passing to and fro placing upon them the seal of the living God.” [39]

This means that not only are our characters fully established, but we are eternally secure, nevermore to be defiled, we will have ceased to commit sin.

“As wax takes the impression of the seal, so the soul is to take the impression of the Spirit of God and retain the image of Christ.” [40]

THE SEAL DENOTES PERFECTION OF CHARACTER

We may reflect the image of Christ in a partial degree now, but by the time this final seal is affixed we will reflect the image of Christ fully. We will “retain the image of Christ.” This seal then denotes perfection of character. This is the significance of Revelation 14:1-5. This group that is sealed prior to the close of probation have in their foreheads the name of God.

“A lamb stood upon Mt. Zion and with him an 144,000 having his Fathers name (or character) written in their foreheads. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits to God and to the lamb and in their mouth was found no guile for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

“While Satan was urging his accusations and seeking to destroy this company, holy angels were passing to and fro, placing on them the seal of the living God. These are they shall stand on Mt. Zion with the Lamb Father’s name written in their foreheads.” [41]

The above scripture is a description of the 144,000, the number representing the final group of God’s people who will be translated. It says ‘there is no guile in their mouth’. This is the character, that God will finally produce in his saints, so that they will be fit for translation.

“The seal of God will never be placed on the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed on the forehead of an ambitious, world-loving man or woman, one of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God.” [42]

Those who receive the final seal will be overcomers. God will have produced in them a perfect, mature character.

“Those who receive the seal of God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully.” [43]

THE SEAL REVEALS WHAT GOD WILL DO FOR BELIEVERS

Sadly this beautiful truth engenders a negative reaction among many today, but it is the clear unequivocal teaching of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy again and again. Some claim that they become discouraged by it, but this is a lack of faith. It is a promise. It tells us what God guarantees to do for us. This is what the final sealing involves. Our responsibility is to trust and obey. Believe that God will accomplish what he promises.

In commenting on this Scripture the Spirit of Prophecy says,

“Those that overcome the world, the flesh and the devil, will be the favored ones that will receive the seal of God. Those whose hands are not clean, whose hearts are not pure, will not have the seal. Those who are planning sin and acting on it will be passed by. Only those who in their attitude before God are filling the position of those who are repenting and confessing their sins will be recognized and marked as worthy of God’s protection. Those who are steadfastly looking and waiting and watching for the appearing of their Savior who have works corresponding to their avowed faith.” [44]

What a standard, but how reassuring! The promises of God are clear that He will accomplish it. ‘It is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.’ (Philippians 2:13)

The seal is “Upon those who bear a likeness to Christ in character. They must overcome pride, passion, spiritual slothfulness and make a determined effort for symmetry of character.” [42]

Here is heaven’s answer to those who proclaim that we are unable to keep the commandments of God, that we will sin till the Second Advent. The truth is exactly the opposite. We are to gain -

“Victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love the world, over every wrong word and action.” [43]

“Those who are distrustful of self who are humbling themselves before God and purifying their souls by obeying the truth, these are receiving the heavenly mould and preparing for the seal of God.” [45]

THE SEAL FOR THOSE THAT SIGH AND CRY

The prophet Ezekiel in his portrayal of the final sealing declared

“Put a mark (or seal) on the foreheads of the men, that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.” (Ezekiel 9:4)

“The prophet, looking down the ages, had this time presented before his vision. Those who have had the greatest light and privileges have become contaminated by the prevailing iniquity. Love for the divine precepts increases with one class, according as contempt for them increases with another class. The time for God’s visitation has about come although loathe to punish nevertheless he will punish and that speedily.”

“Those who walk in the light are not to sit in quiet unconcerned expectancy of the ruin, comforting themselves that God will shelter his people in the day of visitation. They should labor diligently to save others.”

“At the time when danger and depression of the church are greatest, the little company will be sighing and crying for the abominations. These have been holding forth the word of life had reprov’d, counseled and entreated. But more especially will their prayers arise on behalf of the church, because its members are doing after the manner of the world. The earnest prayers of this faithful few will not be in vain. Some repented and humbled their hearts but the glory had departed from Israel. His presence and power were lacking.”

TWO CLASSES DEVELOP IN THE CHURCH

In the time when his wrath shall go forth in judgments, these humble, devoted followers will be distinguished by their soul anguish expressed in lamentation, weeping, reproofs and warnings. While others try to throw a cloak over the existing evil and excuse the great wickedness everywhere prevalent, these will not hold their peace to obtain favor of any. Their righteous souls are vexed with the unholy works and conversation of the wicked.

They are powerless to stop the rushing torrent of iniquity and hence are filled with grief and alarm. They see religion despised in the very homes of those who have had great light. They lament because pride, avarice, selfishness and deception of almost every kind are in the church.

JUDGMENTS FALL ON UNFAITHFUL IN CHURCH

The class who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension nor mourn over the sins of others, will be left without the seal of God. Those who had stood as guardians of the spiritual interest of the people had betrayed their trust. They had taken the position that the Lord is too merciful to visit his people in judgment.

Thus peace and safety is the cry from men who will never again lift their voice like a trumpet, to show, God’s people their transgressions. These dumb dogs that would bark are the ones who feel the just vengeance of an offended God. The abominations of which the faithful ones were sighing and crying were all that could be discerned by finite eyes, but by far worst sins were unrevealed. These persons came to feel secure in their deceptions but he will open before others those sins which they were so careful to hide.

Those who have been regarded as worthy and righteous, prove to be ringleaders in apostasy and examples in indifference. It is with reluctance that the lord withdraws his presence from those who have felt the power of the word in ministering to others. They were once his faithful servants but they departed from him and led others into error and therefore are brought under the divine displeasure. The seal of God will be

placed upon the foreheads of those ONLY who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land.” (Emphasis ours) [46]

SIGHING AND CRYING

“The people of God are sighing and crying for the abominations done in the land.. the anguish and humiliation of God’s people, is unmistakable evidence that they are regaining the strength and nobility of character lost in consequence of sin.” [47]

PREPARATION FOR THE FINAL SEALING

In the light of the fearful conflict in which we are now entering, what are the essentials in preparing for the final seal of redemption, protection and deliverance?

1. We are to preserve the faith in its purity.

“When the Lord comes forth as an Avenger, he will also come as a protector of all those who have preserved the faith in its purity and kept themselves unspotted from the world.” [48]

What is ‘the faith’ that we are to preserve in its purity? It is the Three Angel’s messages of Revelation 14. These distinctive messages and no others, prepare God’s people for the sealing.

“The third angel is binding, or sealing them, in bundles for the heavenly garner.” (Early Writings, page 89)

This tells us of the vital necessity to fully believe and obey the three angels’ messages.

“Not all who profess to keep the Sabbath will be sealed. There are many even among those who teach the truth to others who will not receive the seal of God in their foreheads. They had the light. They knew their Master’s will, they understood every point of our faith, but they had not corresponding works. However high any minister may have stood in favor of God, if he neglects to follow out the light given him of God, if he refuses to be taught as a little child, he will go out into darkness and Satanic delusions, and will lead others in the same path.” [49]

“God has shown me that at the very time that the signs of the times are being fulfilled all around us, when we hear as it were, the very tread of the hosts of heaven fulfilling their mission, men of intelligence, men in responsible positions, will be putting rotten timbers into their character building, material which is consumed in the day of God. They will lose heaven and an eternity of bliss.” [50]

What a solemn and dire warning this is to everyone who knows the truth for these last days?

2. We are to expect and welcome special trials, as God’s method of purifying us for the final seal.

“Those who of late have embraced the truth would have to know what it is to suffer for Christ’s sake, they would have trials to pass through that would be keen and cutting. in order that they may be purified and fitted through suffering to receive the seal of God, pass through the time of trouble, and see the King in his beauty.” [51]

“We will know the conflict of overcoming. “(5 Testimonies, page 215)

3. We are to seek help from God NOW.

“May God help his people now, for what can they do in such a fearful conflict without his assistance! Courage, fortitude, faith and implicit trust in Gods power to save, do not come in a moment. These heavenly graces are acquired by the experience of years. By a life of holy endeavor, and firm adherence to the right, the children of God were SEALING their destiny.” [52]

We must look to Jesus as our pattern of example.

“We are to look to the man Christ Jesus who is complete in the perfection of righteousness and holiness. He is the pattern man. His experience is the measure of the experience that we are to gain. His character is our model. Let us take our minds off the perplexities and difficulties of this life, and fix them on him, that beholding, we may be changed into his likeness. As we look to him and think of him, He will be formed within, the hope of glory.” [53]

GOD WILL ACCOMPLISH HIS PLAN IN SPITE OF OPPOSITION

Whether we believe it or not, God will fulfill his plan for his remnant people. He will have a people holy and undefiled, ready for translation.

“A great work was to be accomplished to prepare a people to be sealed with the seal of the living God.” [54]

“The great, grand work of bringing out a people, who will have Christ like characters and who will be to stand in the day of the Lord is to be accomplished.” [55]

“In a little while, everyone who is a child of God, will have this seal placed upon him. Though united in church capacity, he is not saved until the seal of God is placed upon him.” [56]

“Only those who receive the seal of God will pass through the gates of the Holy City.” [57]

CONCLUSION

Here then are the three seals that are essential for the believer. Which seal is the first in importance? Unquestionably it is the seal of the Spirit. Without conversion, without the possession of the third person of the Godhead, the true reception of the final two seals is utterly impossible.

The seal of the Sabbath is next in importance. It is the outward sign that the believer is cooperating with God in the process of sanctification or holy living - of obedience to all the commandments of God. It is the outward sign that God is preparing believers for the final seal of redemption, which is essential for every saint who passes through the seven last plagues and is translated.

The first seal is given by the Holy Spirit. The second seal is received through the believer's obedience, when he hallowes the Sabbath. The third seal will be affixed by a special ministry of the angels of God.

APPENDIX

An erroneous claim is being made by some that the probation of the S.D.A. church will close before that of the world; that those who proclaim the Loud Cry of Revelation 18 are sealed at the commencement of the Latter Rain and at that time their probation closes etc.

There is no scriptural or Spirit of Prophecy evidence for this view whatsoever, unless it is from a misreading of the prophet's words. This view of the Close of Probation of S.D.A's originated initially with “The Shepherds' Rod” offshoot. Surprisingly some are continuing to advocate this error in the ranks of The Remnant. [58]

The S.O.P. plainly declares that the C.O.P. will come suddenly upon all when Jesus leaves the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary.

PROBATION CLOSES FOR ALL WHEN JESUS LEAVES THE MOST HOLY PLACE

“When Jesus ceases to plead for man, the cases of all are forever decided. This is the time of reckoning with his servants. To those who have neglected the preparation of purity and holiness, which fits them to be waiting ones to welcome their Lord, the sunsets in gloom and darkness, and rises not again. Probation closes; Christ’s intercessions cease in Heaven. This time finally comes suddenly upon all, and those who have neglected to purify their souls by obeying the truth, are found sleeping.” (2 Testimonies, page 191)

“The Lord is proving anti testing his people. Angels of God are watching the development of character, and weighing moral worth. Probation is almost ended, and you are unready. Oh that the word of warning might burn into your souls! Get ready’ Get ready.’ Work while the day lasts; for the night cometh when no man can work The mandate will go forth. He that is holy let him be holy still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still. The destiny of all will be decided.” (2 Testimonies, page 401)

“When Jesus rises up in the most holy place and lays off his mediation garments and clothes himself with the garments of vengeance in place of the priestly attire, the work for sinners will be done. The period of time will then have come when the mandate will go forth, ‘He that is unjust let him be unjust still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.’ All will be tested before Jesus leaves his position in the most holy place. The probation of all closes when the pleading for sinners is ended and the garments of vengeance are put on.” (2 Testimonies, page 691)

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24)

Dr. E. Gane. "Enlightened By the Spirit," page 109-127. It is reported that this view was originally introduced by the offshoot group called "The Shepherd's Rod." Some find authority for this error by quoting 9 Testimonies, page 97. However this statement makes no reference whatsoever to probation closing for the saints. It refers to "those who would not enter," i.e. those who reject the truth, not to those who are faithful to the truth.

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