

Chapter 7

The Interval Between the Sixth and Seventh Seals

A 'format' is followed from 'breaking of Seals' (Rev.6) to 'Bowls of Wrath' (Rev.16). Between the 6th & 7th of both the Seals and Bowls there is an interlude, in which additional information is given concerning persons and events.

- Before opening of seventh (last) seal there is an interlude to make sure of the salvation (sealing) of a great company of people. This is after the church has been caught out. (McGee)
- The events recorded here take place during the wrath of the 6th seal. Yet, 'In wrath, God remembers mercy' (Hab.3:2).

I. Nature of the Sealing (Vs.1-3).

- A. After these things (Events of Ch.6, which took place after the breaking of the 6th Seal (Earthquakes, Sun blackened, Moon as blood, etc.).
- B. Four angels (Likely the first four 'trumpet judgment angels' of Ch.8). They are told not to blow their trumpets, bringing judgment, until a certain company is sealed.
- C. Four corners of the earth. **Note:** The Bible teaches that the earth is round, so the question is raised, 'how does it have corners'? John is speaking of the 'four winds' (four directions of the earth - north, south, east, and west). These angels have power to hurt the earth by simply releasing the forces of destruction.
- D. Another angel. A fifth angel (of higher rank than the four because he gives the orders).
Note: Since he ascends from the east, there are those who believe him to be Christ. They mention Mal.4:2 in order to prove their theory. (I disagree with this theory - Eze.44:1-3.)
- E. The Seal of God. Some believe this sealing to be the receiving of the Holy Spirit, as stated in Eph.1:13,14. But that can't be. This sealing is at the hands of angels. 'This is simply having the name of God stamped, or written, in their forehead' (Dake, Rev.14:1). It's a sign of ownership, protection, and preservation.
- F. Examples: (a) Children of Israel were saved by a 'mark' (blood on the doorpost on night of the Passover). (b) Rahab and family, of Jericho, were saved by a 'mark' (scarlet cord, which she displayed in the window of her home). **Note:** I believe the 'sealing', whatever it might be, will be as literal as the 'mark' given by the 'Antichrist' (Rev.13:15,16).

II. Subjects of the Sealing (Vs.4-8).

They are 144,000 of twelve Tribes of Israel. John was given the exact number.

- Some believe they represent the entire Church. But that can't be. The Church will have been raptured before this takes place.
- Others believe they are Jews, saved at time of 'rapture' but left behind on earth for a special purpose.
- Still others interpret 'Israel' as the 'Church', and 'Jewish tribes' as 'Christian peoples'.
- Jehovah's Witnesses believe the 144,000 will come entirely from their group. Judge Rutherford said, they began to be resurrected in 1918; and in 1926 there were perhaps 50,000 of the final number (144,000) who had not yet died.

Note: I believe the 144,000 are literal blood descendants of the 12 Tribes of Israel, just as outlined here in Scripture. God has known, and knows now, who they are and from whence they will come.

- By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, James wrote his Epistle 'to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad' (Ja.1:1).
- These 144,000 will become 'servants of God' after the Church has been caught out. Too, it's believed they will be ministers and evangelists who will evangelize the world during the 'tribulation'. McGee says, 'They will evangelize the world by preaching the death, resurrection, ascension, and return of Christ. And through their ministry, a great company of both Jews & Gentiles will turn to God'. (I Agree.)

Question: Why are the tribes of Dan & Ephraim substituted by tribes of Levi & Joseph?

- One writer says, it's because they were guilty of going into idolatry (Deut.29:18-21). Dan, the first to fall into idolatry (Ju.18:30) was, for centuries, a headquarters of the calf-worship whereby 'Jeroboam made Israel to sin' (I Kgs.12:28-30). Yet, all tribes of Israel went into idolatry. So, there must be a better reason for them being omitted.
- This is a memorial company, fixed forever in number, position, and function. Dan means 'judge', and the 144,000 have no judicial or executive capacity. Ephraim means 'fruitful', and there will never be fruitfulness or increase in this company.

Twelve Tribes, and meaning of their names:

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| 1. Judah - 'praise'. | 7. Simeon - 'The Lord has heard'. |
| 2. Reuben - 'distress'. | 8. Levi - 'joined'. |
| 3. Gad - 'fortune'. | 9. Issachar - 'laborer'. |
| 4. Asher - 'happy' or 'blessing'. | 10. Zebulon - 'dwell'. |
| 5. Nephthalim - 'wrestling'. | 11. Joseph - 'adding'. |
| 6. Manasseh - 'forgetfulness'. | 12. Benjamin - 'Son of My right hand'. |

An interesting note from G. H. Montgomery:

'We praise our God, for He remembered us in our distress, and brought us to this supreme fortune of our nation. Our happiness abounds, because our wrestling is over, and we can forget our strife and wanderings, for the Lord has heard our prayers and joined us together forever. No more shall we be laborers (slaves) to other nations. We shall dwell in the presence of the Lamb of God forever, for He has added us together as one man to be the son of His right hand'.

Since the Tribes of Dan & Ephraim are in the list of the Twelve Tribes that will occupy the Holy Land during the Millennium (Eze.48:1-7, 23-29), it is evident that the 'sealing' of the tribes is more for 'heavenly preservation' than to keep them for an earthly inheritance. This view is confirmed by the fact that they are later seen with the Lamb on the Heavenly Mount Zion (Rev.14:1-5). (Larkin)

Remember: Any blood descendant of Israel can be saved at any time he will accept Christ as Savior. But there will be no 'great mass revival' among the Jews until after the Lord returns in glory and the 'Great Tribulation' has begun. (Montgomery)

'The Blood-washed Multitude'

Three 'visions' are embraced at the breaking of the 'Sixth Seal': (1) Earth-shaking events in Ch.6:12-17; (2) Sealing of 144,000; and (3) The multitude of palm-bearers before the throne. The first two relate to the earth and to people in the flesh. The third relates to heaven and to peoples in heaven. 'What it represents is subsequent in time, both to the 'great shaking', and, to the 'gracious sealing' (Seiss).

- Of the many different groups, creatures, beings, judgments, etc. in Revelation, this company of blood-washed saints has created, possibly, the greatest number of differing opinions.
- 'After this'. **Note:** We are still in the sequence of the 'tribulation' called forth by the breaking of the 'sixth seal', and it represents what John saw immediately after the sealing of the 144,000.

I. The Great Multitude - Part One (Vs.9-13).

- A. 'Which no man could number'. Not that they could not be numbered, but that no man seeing them together in a multitude could tell the number. **Note:** John is speaking relatively, not absolutely.
- B. 'Of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues'. These converts will come from every part of the earth. 'These are mostly Gentiles, in contrast to the 144,000 who are Israelites' (McGee).
- C. 'Stood before the throne, and before the Lamb'. Evidently, they are not the 'first' or 'highest' class of those redeemed. The 'Elders' and 'Living Ones' (also redeemed out of every kindred, tongue, etc.) were in heaven at the opening of the 'first seal'. **Note:** These two 'orders' of saints were 'seated upon thrones', while this multitude 'stands'.
- D. 'White robes'. Typify the righteousness (holiness) of Christ, with which they are clothed. **Note:** Almost without exception, when 'white' is used in the Bible in a symbolic sense, it speaks of purity. **Ex.** (a) Overcomers in Pergamos were promised a 'white stone'. (b) Worthies of Sardis to walk with Christ 'in white'. (c) Laodiceans were counseled to buy 'white raiment' to cover their nakedness. (d) Twenty-four elders were clothed in 'white raiment'. (e) Souls under the altar (5th Seal) were given 'white robes'. (f) At marriage of the Lamb, the Bride will be arrayed in fine linen, 'clean and white'.
- E. 'Palms in their hands'. A sign of victory! 'This multitude forms a part of the real Triumphal Entry when Christ returns to the earth' (McGee).
- F. 'Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb'. 'God alone is the author of salvation, and the Lamb is the One who purchased it' (Dake).
- G. Angels worship - with a Seven-fold worship:
 - a. Blessing - worship. (v.12; 5:12)
 - b. Glory - praise. (v.12; 5:12)
 - c. Wisdom - omniscience (v.12; 5:12)
 - d. Thanksgiving (v.12; Heb.13:15,16)
 - e. Honor - reputation (v.12; 5:12)
 - f. Power - omnipotence (v.12; 19:6)
 - g. Might - strength (v.12; 5:12)

Note: These 'angelic beings' praise God for His attributes and goodness, but not for salvation. They are sinless creatures, not sinners having been redeemed.

II. The Great Multitude - Part Two (vs.14-17). Who are they? From whence do they come?

- A. 'Out of great tribulation'. 'They represent all those saved during the entire 7-year tribulation' (Dake). 'It is not said that they pass through the tribulation, but they come out of it, thus leaving it behind them to run on after they are gone' (Seiss). **Note:** The 'elders' and 'living ones' were in heaven before 'the hour of trial' (tribulation) began, having been 'accounted worthy to escape all these things'. The 'palm-bearers' were in the 'trial', and only reach heaven 'out of tribulation'.

- B. 'Before the throne of God'. They are not joined to the throne, as were the 'living ones'; nor are they associated with the throne's Occupant in sub regencies, like the elders. They are in the presence of the throne, before it, and near it - nearer even than the angels. **Ex.** David before King Saul and his throne after killing Goliath.
- C. 'Serve him day and night in his temple'. Not kings and priests, as were the elders and living ones, but palm-bearers (servants). They are a part of the same general company (redeemed ones), but in a different capacity.
- D. 'Hunger' - 'thirst' - 'heat'. All of these will be a part of the 'tribulation' (6:1-17), and all (both sinner and those who have accepted Christ) must suffer these and other tortures - with the exception of the 144,000. But now, for these 'blessed ones', that tribulation is over.
- E. The question is: Who are they?
 - a. They are ransomed human beings. 'Whether they are considered a part of the Church proper, or not, they are by nature of the stock of Adam. And, by grace, they are of the family of the redeemed' (Seiss). **Note:** I definitely don't believe they are a part of the Church (Bride of Christ).
 - b. They are people living on the earth during the tribulation. Some believe they are the 'last company' to be redeemed in the Book prior to the return of Christ and His saints to the earth. Others believe they will go through only the first part of tribulation (to 7th Seal), but not through the time of the reign of Antichrist.
 - c. They are people who were unprepared at the time of the rapture of the Church. Because of that, they were 'left behind'.

Note: 'People often ask how sinners can be saved after the Holy Spirit is taken out at the rapture of the Church (II Thes.2:6-8). At the rapture, the Holy Spirit will be 'taken out of the way' only insofar as He dwells in the hearts and lives of Christians caught out. But in the same sense in which the Holy Spirit moved upon the prophets, convicting and converting sinners in the Old Testament and during time of Jesus' ministry, so He will convict and convert sinners after the rapture. Remember, the Holy Spirit will only be taken out in the sense that He has dwelt in believers since the resurrection of Christ. Many will be saved during the 'great tribulation' after the 'man of sin' is revealed' (Rice).