

6. The Sealed People of God (1Q 2019—Revelation)

Biblical material: Revelation 7; 2 Pet. 3:9–14; Deut. 8:11–17; Rev. 14:4, 5, 12; 17:5; Rom. 3:19–23.

Quotes

- They [referring to the early Adventists] are now being sealed in their foreheads with "A SEAL OF THE LIVING GOD." Even "a hundred forty-four thousand, of all the tribes of the children of Israel." *Joseph Bates* (1849)
- The law of God is being sealed-confirmed-among the disciples of the Lord. The words of the prophet are now being fulfilled. *R.F. Cottrell* (1855)
- In 1848 occurred one of the greatest upheavals in the national affairs of Europe that had been for many centuries... No man could assign any reason for it, but the student of prophecy knew that the angels were holding the winds until the servants of God could be sealed in their foreheads. *S.N. Haskell* (1914).
- God is now, and has been for more than a year, continuously calling to his people to receive the Holy Spirit, is it not perfectly plain that we are now in the time of the sealing of God's people? *A.T. Jones* (1898)
- The sealing time is very short, and will soon be over. Now is the time, while the four angels are holding the four winds, to make our calling and election sure. *Ellen G. White* (1882)
- It was because of these plain statements, that our people and ministers, down to 1894, believed and taught that the sealing work had been going on since 1848, and that the 144,000 were being sealed. *J.N. Loughborough* (1916)

Questions

Is it important to define the “sealing time”? How can we best describe what the “sealing of God’s people” really means? How do we avoid arguments over the 144,000? In contrast to the previous chapter, what do we see in Revelation 7? In what way can we see through the imagery to God and his wonderful character?

Bible summary

Revelation 7 describes the four angels holding back the winds of strife so that the people of God can be sealed. The number is symbolic, since the 144,000 is made up of 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. The great crowd that no one could count sums up the victorious spread of the gospel. Not just a few will be saved—there will be so many they can’t be counted! Those dressed in white are those who have passed through persecution. Further description of the saved is given in Rev. 14:4, 5, 12, while in Rev. 17:5 Babylon the Great is portrayed. Deut. 8:11–17 explains the importance of knowing and following the Lord. Those who accept the saving goodness of God are described in Rom. 3:19–23.

Comment

How much time and energy has been wasted arguing over such concepts as the 144,000? Surely this was not John’s intention when he recorded what he saw in vision! The primary reason for the Book of Revelation was to encourage John in his exile on

Patmos, and also to encourage the churches of the time that God was still in control, even though all the other disciples had died. The church was experiencing violent persecution, and needed to be reassured that God would be victorious. Jesus had already won the victory, and ultimately the final consummation and judgment would come.

Revelation shows us the angels holding back destructive events while God's people are being convinced of the truth. The truth about what? Most essentially, the truth about God! The sealing is really about becoming so settled into the truth that we can't be moved, whatever the trouble and temptation that may come to us.

However the most important aspect of the whole chapter is that there will be a great crowd of people, so many they can't be counted, who will be saved! Sometimes we get the impression that only a very few will be saved. Revelation 7 says no—there will be very many! This gives us all confidence and reassurance, and shows that God is an inclusive God, not exclusive. Those who are excluded are those who have chosen not to accept his free offer of salvation, who have turned their back on him, who have decided to live in their sinful rebellion. God weeps over those children who do not respond to his call, who willfully chose their own path that leads to destruction. He calls out, "How can I give you up? How can I let you go?" But he has to, because he has to honor their free choice.

In this way our main text is a source of great comfort because it shows the kind of God we believe in. He is a saving God, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. We are to take confidence in that—not claiming we are one of the 144,000, or that we have been sealed, but that we know the Savior! Instead of focusing on these other elements, let's see again the vision that so encouraged John on Patmos: the vision of the redeemed from all the ages, surrounding the throne, and worshipping the God who loves them with an undying love.

Ellen White Comments

Just as soon as 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 they cannot be moved--just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming.

The days are fast approaching when there will be great perplexity and confusion. Satan, clothed in angel robes, will deceive, if possible, the very elect. There will be gods many and lords many. Every wind of doctrine will be blowing. . . {Mar 200.3}

It is the duty of the people of God to have their lamps trimmed and burning, to be as men that wait for the Bridegroom, when He shall return from the wedding. You have not a moment to lose in neglect of the great salvation that has been provided for you. The time of the probation of souls is coming to an end. From day to day the destiny of men is being sealed, and even from this congregation we know not how soon many shall close their eyes in death and be habited for the tomb. We should now consider that our life is swiftly passing away, that we are not safe one moment unless our life is hid with Christ in God. Our duty is not to be looking forward to some special time for some special work to be done for us, but to go forward in our work of warning the world; for we are to be witnesses of Christ to the uttermost parts of the world. {1SM 189.3}