

Protecting the Servants of God, Part One (Revelation 7:1-4)

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Introduction

1. The seals of chapter six and purpose of chapter seven

The fifth seal and the seventh chapter explain the patience of God, not as injustice, but as His purpose in redemption demands that all whom He has given to Christ must come to Christ (John 17:12; 2 Peter 3:9).

2. The assurance of the church in the day of judgment

The loosing of the sixth seal is the final judgment upon all rebels who have rejected the rightful king and fought against His kingdom (2 Thess. 2:6).

3. The cry of despair: “*Who is able to stand?*” (6:17).

“Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken into pieces by him” (Nahum 1:6).

4. The chronology of chapters six and seven

Chronologically, the seventh chapter should come before the sixth chapter. Before the day of His wrath, John is given a vision of God’s care for His people.

I. The Delay of Judgments

1. The four winds of earth

- a. Four angels are stationed at the four corners of the earth and hold back the four winds of earth.
- b. The number 4 represents the whole of the earth and the universal effects of the actions described.
- c. The winds represent the four horsemen because these general judgments are patterned on the vision of Zechariah (6:1-8).

2. Judgment and the mercy of God

- a. A fifth angel provides the reason for the delay.
- b. The four angels are not to harm the earth, the sea, or the trees until the servants of God are sealed.
- c. These general judgments (the seals) affect all who dwell on earth, both saved and lost. Yet, as tragic and destructive as these judgments can be, they reflect the mercy of God more than His justice.

II. The Sealing of Protection

1. The nature of seals and sealing

- a. Sealing protects the sealed from spiritual harm (Ezek. 9:4-6).
- b. Sealing identifies the sealed as true saints (2 Tim. 2:19).
- c. Sealing guarantees the sealed of their sanctification (Eph. 1:13, 14; the means? James 1:2).

2. The purpose of the sealing
 - a. It answers the promise Christ gave to the church at Philadelphia (Rev. 3:10).
 - b. Sealing also separates those whom Christ has redeemed from the rest of the earth-dwellers.
3. The effect of the sealing
 - a. It will not keep believers from physical suffering.
 - 1) They will not escape the hour of trial by some sort of secret rapture.
 - 2) They will be kept from spiritual harm in that hour of trial (Rom. 8:33-39; 1 Pet. 1:5-7).
 - b. Preserved and blessed in the hour of trial
 - 1) Believers will experience the joy and comfort of the Holy Spirit, who is testing and purifying His own unto holiness.
 - 2) They will have peace through the promises of the Word of God, which gives them a strong hope.
 - 3) Earth-dwellers will face God's wrath and be punished for their rebellion against God and for their ill-treatment of God's servants (2 Thess. 1:5-10).

Use

1. God saves His own for a purpose. Saved people live to serve Christ as witnesses to His greatness and salvation. Is it your sole purpose to please the King? Do those around you know that this is your purpose in life?
2. As we shall see, God has called us to spiritual warfare—the church confrontational—but we have become the church comfortable. Our work is to make Jesus known, but such work is offensive. Those who follow Christ will suffer the displeasure of the world.