

## **Salvation in Tribulation**

Revelation 7:1-17 (Rev.2.3)

### **Introduction**

In 1936 Fiorello LaGuardia was expecting high ranking NAZI visitors. AntiNazi sentiment was high. He was asked to provide high ranking Nazi officials with "protection". This protection consisted of an all "Jewish contention of police " Ironic. Jews to were appointed to protect Nazi's.

Chapter 7 begins a divine intermission or interlude between the 6th and 7th seals. During this "time-out" we see the calling and the conversion of the 144,000.

At the Imax theatre a film on "Storm Chasers" was shown. The program featured people who chase tornado's and hurricane's. They are devastating in their destructive power. Over 1000 toranado's will rip through the United States in one year. It is common knowledge in the midst of tornado's and hurricaines there is an "eye" or a place of still calm.

The end of the world will feature the ultimate clash between sin and righteousness, between holiness and iniquity. During the tribulation terrible judgment will descend on the earth. Chapter 7 is the "calm" in the midst of the storm. There is an "eye" a place of refuge in the midst of unleashing judgment. People will be saved during the tribulation. Jews and Gentiles will come to Christ. These converts will face the bitter hatred and demonic fury of Satan himself. People will be called upon to "seal" their testimony in their own blood. In times past, persecutors of the people of God, whether Nero, or Julian the Apostate, dictators in the past and future, will unleash horrors. But God has warned, strenghtened and will enable those to bear up in the time of trial.

### **God's Seal**

#### **The Calm Before The Storm: (vv. 1-3)**

1. People are reluctant to believe that God both orders and ordains the affairs of the earth. God has absolute control over time,space, nature and its contents. People want to believe that all things that happen humans have some control. The world's politicians believe when there is a temporary peace, it is due to their diplomatic skill and negoiting astuteness. The sudden peace that comes upon the world will not be human, but rather divine. Gen 19:22 "Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there."

**God will allow the tribulation to progress until he has done, what he wants to do.**

God will seal a remanant of believers.

Symbolic language in verse one: (1) The Land: frequently used as a symbol for Israel. Remember land was also strength and stability--you don't move the land. (2) The sea was often used as a symbol for the pagan or gentile nations. The sea is shifting and unstable. This is true when people live their lives apart from the authority of God and the scriptures. Idol worship, moral and social behavior that is against God's laws make

nations and people unstable. (3) Trees often refer to people or individuals. Nebuchadrezzar is seen as a tree cut down to a stump. Psalm 1:3 speaks of the righteous as being "like a tree **planted by streams of water, which yield its fruit in due season and whose leaf do not wither.**" "Trees are symbols of influential men and women, people of authority, who stand out from the crowd like tall trees in a forest" (Ray Stedman p.158).

**2.** God declares that angels will execute judgment. Here he restrains them until He has the opportunity to "seal" his servants. See Zech. 6:1-5. "The four horse-drawn chariots are symbolic of the four winds of heaven. The four winds of heaven which are held back, in chapter 7 of Revelation, could easily be identified with the four horsemen of chapter 6. Judgment is being held back until the servants of God are sealed" (Bob Beltz p.126)

**3. See Exekiel 9:1-6.** Cain received a "mark". Ezekiel 7&8 contain reports of Israel's descent into idolatry and the coming judgment of God because of sin. "Before God judges the nation of Israel, He goes through the city and "seals" those who grieve and repent over the sin of Israel. That "seal" provides protection against the judgment which is coming upon the land. The identical picture is now given to the Apostle John in the book of Revelation. Judgment is coming on the land, but before judgment comes, the seal of the living God is placed on the foreheads of his servants. Those who are sealed are protected (ibid p.128).

### **What is the seal?**

"In Scripture, a seal indicated ownership and protection" (Wiersbe p.590). **In the old west we brand cattle.** I have a "seal" that I use to mark my books. The word seal is used 32 times in the NT (22 in the book of Revelation). There are two kinds of people in the book Italians and people who wished they were (joke). Those sealed by God and those sealed by Satan. Is this a "real" or physical seal? Some have speculated that it is a computer chip implant.

In Ephesians 1:13 "When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit." Ephesians 4:30 "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." 2 Cor. 1:12-22 "He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come." In the NT "the seal" is the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Can you see the Holy Spirit? "We are not like the high priest at the tabernacle who wore a visible plate across his forehead that said, "Holy to the Lord." The "seal of the living God in Revelation 7 is symbolic of the presense of the Holy Spirit in a man or woman's life." (Bob Beltz p.129). We are sealed by our allegiance! If you give your life to the beast, you are sealed by the beast. Don't get me wrong. If they cancel all my credit cards and checking accounts and want to give me a computer chip in my hand or forehead I'll say

forget it!

### **God's Right To Claim His Own (vv.4-12)**

1. (v.4) God's seal. Is this a physical Israel or spiritual Israel? There are two Israel's in the Bible. One is national Israel, the physical progeny of Abraham and Jacob. In the heart of the book of Romans Paul distinguishes between national Israel and the church. Paul also says in Romans 2:28-29 "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

Paul also says something interesting in Galatians 3, "If you belong to Christ, you are Abraham's seed" (v.29). Paul also ends the book of Galatians with an interesting note, "Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even the Israel of God" (6:16). Paul is speaking of the church. Jew and Gentile form "one new man" even the church.

2. **The 144,000.** (vv.5-8). Judah begins the list, the tribe of Jesus Christ. Reuben has forfeited the place of primacy. Both Dan and Ephraim (one of the son's of Joseph) is missing. They are conspicuous by their absence. The O.T. records their guilt of going into idolatry (Judges 18; 1Kings 11:26; Hosea 4). "The tribes of Levi and Manasseh here take their place. However, both are listed in Ezekiel's millennial temple (Ezek. 48), so they simply forfeit their chance to preach during the tribulation. Some have concluded on the basis of Genesis 49:17 and Jeremiah 8:16 that the antichrist will come from the tribe of Dan. (Willimington's Guide To the Bible p.555).

"In 1 Corinthians 15:8 is a clue concerning the way God will work after the church's rapture. After the apostle had listed those to whom the resurrected Christ appeared, so as to authenticate His resurrection, he says, 'and last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.' This phrase, 'born out of due time' means a premature birth. That is exactly what the apostle Paul is saying--'I was one that was born prematurely.' What did he mean? Comparing Revelation 7 with Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 15, we conclude after the rapture of the church, God will perform the same miracle he performed on Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road 144,000 times over." (cited from *Will man Survive? J. Dwight Pentecost--taken from ibid p.555*).

Can you imagine 144,000 Billy Grahams, Greg Lauries, and Paul the Apostle's ? Some people have estimated there are less than 35,000 evangelists of all denominations right now! 144,000 is significant (12x12=144) because it signifies perfection and completion. Some people have seen in this 12 (OT saints) and 12 (NT Saints). Good application but bad interpretation (Wiersbe).

Matt 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come". I believe this passage refers to these high powered Jewish evangelists of the last days.

**Jehovah's Witnesses are fond of this passage.** They believe they constitute the 144,000. Then they had more than 144,000 members. Now they have a group called the

"servant band". The evidence seems to be these are Jews. This is not without problems. Why is Levi included when it had no physical inheritance? (Num. 18:20-24). Why is Joseph named but not Ephraim? Why is Dan omitted? "Dan will be a serpent by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horses heels so that its rider tumbles backwards" (Gen.49:17). Dan not only introduced idolatry but made it an artform (including homosexual acts) But the same problem occurs even if you "spiritualize" the passage and say the church is Israel. If that's the case, why are the tribes mentioned? The secret things belong to the Lord.

**3. The result?** (v.7) A massive revival like the world has never seen. How many people are saved? Verse 9 says "a great multitude" (countless numbers).

### **God's Security (vv. 9-17)**

**1.** The number of people saved cannot be numbered. The harvest is global. There is no doubt because the elder explains it to John (v.14). These are Gentiles who are saved (we will meet this same group in Revelation 14). People can come to Christ today in relative comfort. If you belong to the JW's and one gets saved, the JW spouse practices "shunning". Jews and Muslims and even Roman Catholics who report being "born-again" are sometimes shunned. Friends may reject you. But we have a family of faith.

It won't be so easy in the final years of the Tribulation. Unless people wear "the mark" they will not be able to buy or sell. This will leave most believers with little or nothing. Revelation 7:16 seems to indicate they will suffer hunger; thirst (16:4); and perhaps be homeless.

**2.** See verse 9: **"standing before the throne and the Lamb". The very fact that they are standing means they are not identified with the 24 elders (they were seated). Look John doesn't even know who they are! Why? If they are the OT saints or the NT saints he would have recognized them. These are tribulation saints.**

**We know they are "accepted" because they stand before the throne of the lamb. They stood for the truth when truth was not popular. They stand for Jesus in a time when Satan is in control of the world. Their white robes and palms indicate righteousness and victory. They are overcomers. The Jews used Palm branches in the feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:40-43) which was a time of national rejoicing!**

**They are joyful. They sing praises, and they are joined by the hosts of heaven.**

**They are rewarded. They have the opportunity to be with the Lamb at all times. They will serve the throne! You mean there is work in heaven? Yes. The lamb will be the shepherd and will satisfy us and give us every good thing.**

## **Conclusion**

**The opening of the 7th seal will introduce us to the 7 trumpet judgments (Chapters 8-11).**

**The wrath of God will be poured forth with a frequency and intensity that boggle the mind. But before that occurs, God demonstrates his mercy before he vents his judgment. Think about it. In spite of a world given charge to Satan's antichrist, in spite of the blood, the terror, the horror, there will be hope and salvation still found in Jesus Christ. In the OT, in the NT and in the Tribulation, God's means of salvation remains the same; faith in Christ, faith in the Lamb, faith in the lamb slain.**

**Horrible that people will prefer the beast to the lamb. They will prefer the dragon to the King of Saints. Some people today prefer Satan to the Savior. They prefer this world, rather than the world to come. People who reject Jesus are just as condemned as those who accept the mark in the Tribulation.**