

## Marked and Sealed by Angels

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God has an interesting way of sparing and protecting his obedient children in times when he sends his destroying forces upon the lands and peoples of this world. The prophet Ezekiel saw it in actual process when God gave him a vision of the coming destruction of Jerusalem by the army of the Babylonians. This took place in the 6th century before Christ. Ezekiel saw six armed angelic beings advancing into the city with their destroying weapons at ready. This is recorded in the 9th chapter of Ezekiel.

One of the six, however, had a writer's inkhorn by his side, and before the angelic warriors could begin their work, he was commanded to put an identifying mark upon the foreheads of the inhabitants of the city, the ones "... that sigh and cry for the abominations that are done there." After he did his work the others began their task of destroying the rest of the people, who were the objects of God's anger and who did not have the mark of identification on their foreheads. God had already sent his prophets to the people of Judah and Jerusalem, urging them to turn from their wicked ways before it was too late, but they would not turn.

Ezekiel was enabled to see these ordinarily invisible angels in his vision, but what the people of Jerusalem saw were the soldiers of Babylon pouring into their sacred city. It was a time of great death, anguish and loss.

Many Christian people living in our time hardly believe that God would hurt and destroy people in this way. To them, he is only a God of love and forgiveness, not wrath and destruction. These people need to read their Bibles and stop listening to liberal preachers before their own lives may be in jeopardy.

Now, this is not just Old Testament stuff. In the New Testament Book of Revelation, we find the same work of sealing the people of God on their foreheads before the seven trumpets began their blasts of prophetic events. Chapter 8 shows us the first trumpet sounding forth peals of disaster. This time it would again be the destruction of Jerusalem and Israel, but now by the Roman army in the year 70 AD. Jesus Christ had warned them about it in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, but again they would not listen and heed. He had described the awfulness of the coming Roman invasion and had assured them that the newly reconstructed temple would be destroyed so completely that there would not be left one stone upon another.

In his warnings about the coming destruction, Jesus had told his disciples and the believing minority of the people how to escape the coming siege by the Romans. They remembered what he had said, and they escaped. Here is the prophecy about it in Revelation 7: 1-4.

*And 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, neither the sea, nor on any tree.*

*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,*

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*hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.*

*And I heard the number of them that were sealed, and there were sealed 144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel.*

During his ministry time on earth, the Lord Jesus instructed his disciples to not go and preach to any Gentiles. He had come to witness just to Israel, and thus it was just Jews who, for three and a half years after Pentecost, made up the New Testament Church. Then Peter preached to the household of the Gentile Cornelius and the entry of Gentiles into the church began.

You can find more detailed information about the timing of these events in our tract, *The 70 Week Prophecy of Daniel*, and more about the details of the first trumpet in our tract, *The First Trumpet of Revelation*.

Ezekiel saw God's destructive forces in the persons of angels. Daniel saw them as the four winds of heaven striving upon the great sea of humanity, and that is how they appear here in Revelation. Our treatise on these winds is the tract, *The Nations at the End of Time*, also available from Waymarks.

These destroying forces in Revelation were ready to deploy against the disobedient nation of Israel, but as in Ezekiel's time, the marking of the obedient ones had to take place first. And so it did.

There are all kinds of ideas and explanations about these 144,000 marked individuals. It seems reasonable to understand that this was the number of Jews that were preserved from the intense Roman persecutions in the early years of the church. That number would seem to fit.

Then, beginning with verse 9 of Revelation 7, we read a description of the Gentiles who would be surging into the New Testament church during this long age of the gospel through which we have been passing. It is a crowd so huge that no man could number them, and they are from all countries and people groups of the world. And, they endured much persecution and martyrdom - and still are in some places.

This wonderful fact that God protects his own people in times of persecution and loss is not hard to understand. It is seen all through the Bible, and we Christian believers have all experienced the delivering power of our God.

There is a story that comes to us out of the World Wars of the past century about an allied force called the 91st brigade. It served during some of the hottest battles with the German army when there were huge numbers of casualties, doubtless on both sides. But this 91st brigade did an unusual thing. Together they recited the 91st Psalm every morning before engaging the enemy. The report is that they did not suffer a single casualty. Here is that psalm:

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*He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress, my God. In him will I trust.*

*Surely he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the foul pestilence. He shall cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you shall trust. His truth shall be your shield and buckler.*

*You shall not be afraid for the terror by night nor for the arrow that flies by day, nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand shall fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not come nigh you. Only with your eyes shall you behold and see the reward of the wicked.*

*Because you have made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High your habitation, there shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come nigh your dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.*

*You shall tread upon the lion and the adder. The young lion and the dragon shall you trample under feet.*

*Because he has set his love upon me, therefore I will deliver him. I will set him on high because he has known my name. He shall call upon me and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him my salvation.*

Perhaps a warning is in order here. You may be aware that the devil knows scripture. When he was tempting the Lord Jesus in the wilderness, he suggested that Jesus throw himself off a pinnacle of the temple, perhaps to prove his divine identity. Satan quoted from this very psalm about the angels bearing us up. Of course, the Lord quoted scripture back to him that one should not tempt God in such a way.

Knowing about this wonderful protecting power of God might perhaps lead us to do rash things or live recklessly - maybe even to promote ourselves. But if we do, it would put us at the mercy of Satan the destroyer. And, that is a place we do not want to be.

- Loren Wilson (This article may be copied freely.)