

The Protection of God's Children

Revelation 7:1-17

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Introduction: We have seen the proclamation of God's holiness (4), the portrait of God's love (5), & the pouring out of God's wrath (6). We come now to chapter 7, which can be seen as the protection (or preservation) of God's children. This chapter is a parenthesis in the narrative, between the 6th & 7th seals. It seems to look back to the beginning of the Tribulation as well as ahead to the end of the 7 year period. Note with me 2 groups of people identified here: those protected from death & those preserved through death. The chapter opens with John seeing 4 angels standing on the 4 corners of the earth, holding back or restraining the winds. The "4 corners" implies that they overshadow all the earth, the whole earth is under their control. We speak today of 4 quadrants (see 20:8), or 4 points of the compass. Without the circulation of the winds, there would be no rain, therefore causing a world-wide drought (cf. Rev. 6:5-6). John sees another angel in verse 2 which was sent with a message from God. The servants of God are to be sealed before further judgment is poured out on the earth.

I. Those **protected** from death (:3-8) [one of 2 alternative: Protection & deliverance]

A. Their designation (:3)

1. They are sealed – in their foreheads (cf. 14:1, sealed with the Father's name – later imitated by Antichrist, 13:16).
 - a. Speaks of **possession** > identify (guarantee of ownership).
 - b. Speaks of **protection** > security.
 - c. Speaks of **purpose** > ministry.Application: Compare the sealing of believers today in II Cor. 1:22 & Eph. 1:13; 4:30.
2. They are servants (cf. 14:1-5).
 - a. Their **redemption** > having a relationship to God the Father (14:1).
 - b. Their **separation** > physically chaste [cf. I Cor. 7:32] & spiritually pure (14:4).
 - c. Their **devotion** > "no guile" [no falsehood or deception] & "without fault" (blameless; no compromise with error, & no defilement of evil)] (14:5).

B. Their description (:4-8)

1. The **identification**:
 - a. 12,000 Jews, one thousand from each of the 12 tribes (Why 144,000?).
 - b. Juda (Judah) first? Tribe of Christ (Gen. 49:10 & Heb. 7:14).
 - c. Reuben – the first-born, but the double inheritance went to Joseph (I Chron. 5:1-2).
 - d. Why Joseph & Manassas & not Ephraim? Idolatry (Hosea 4:17).
 - e. Dan is omitted? (1) first tribe to fall into idolatry, Judges 18:30-31; (2) tribe from which the Antichrist comes? Gen. 49:17 & Jer. 8:16.
2. The **interpretations**:
 - a. There is no such thing as the "lost" tribes of Israel. Though Jews today do not know their original tribe, God surely knows them.
 - b. "It is noteworthy that the 12 tribes of Israel are formally listed many times in Scripture (some 29 times) & the order of enumeration is different in almost every case. If nothing else, this tells us that – except for Judah – the order is irrelevant. They are all equally important in the sight of God" (H. Morris).
 - c. This shows God's continued purpose for the nation of Israel & their preservation through the Tribulation. In spite of Satan's persistent persecution a godly remnant remains.
 - d. Compare the promise of Christ to His apostles in Matthew 19:28.

II. Those **preserved** through death (:9-17) [2nd alternative: Promotion to paradise]

A. Their **designation** (:9)

1. An **unnumbered** multitude > “*which no man could number.*”
2. A **universal** multitude > “*of all nations, & kindreds, & people...*”
3. A **unique** multitude > (a) clothed in white – the righteousness of Christ (cf. 6:11).
(b) “*palms*” – speaks of their triumph.

Summary: “Thus has He chosen white as the symbolic color of His victorious kingdom, & so the redeemed wear it, even the newly born, freshly escaped out of the great tribulation, because they are all of them more than conquerors. They wear the victor garb & bear the palm which is the victor symbol” (Spurgeon).

B. Their **declaration** (:10-12)

1. A **doxology** (:10) > “*Salvation to our God*” & cf. “*Hosanna!*” in John 12:13.
2. A **repeated doxology** (:11-12) >
 - a. By the elders (Church Age saints) & living creatures.
 - b. Sevenfold doxology: each word preceded by the definite article “the” – “...thus emphasizing that God is deserving of all the blessing & glory that exists. He is the Creator of all, the Savior of all, therefore, deserving of all” (H. Morris).

C. Their **description** (:13-17)

1. Their **suffering** (:13-14) >
 - a. The persecution – they came out of the great Tribulation (martyred for their faith).
 - b. The paradox – they washed their robes in blood & were made white: The only way for sin to be washed away is by the blood of the Lamb (not by the blood of martyrs).
2. Their **servicing** (:15) >
 - a. Heaven is not just a place of rest, but of responsibility.
 - b. “*Day & night*”? They will continually serve God & not need sleep as we do now. “They may have missed chances to serve here, but they are determined not to miss any opportunities there in heaven” (Custer).
3. Their **sustaining** (:16-17) >
 - a. A contrast: They hungered & thirsted during the Tribulation (cf. Rev. 13:17 & note Matthew 25:34-40, those who assisted the ones being persecuted).
 - b. A comparison: The Lamb is taking the role of the Shepherd. “...Christ in His sacrifice of Himself makes provision for the needs of His people” (L. Morris).
 - c. A compassion: God wipes away every tear = (1) griefs & tears of the Tribulation are forever over; (2) tears of regret for wasted lives & loss of rewards??

Conclusion: Remember, when believers face disaster, there are 2 alternatives: Protection & deliverance or Promotion to paradise. This chapter details those protected from death, the 144,000 Jews sealed by God in order that they might serve God during the Tribulation. We saw also those preserved through death, the unnumbered multitude that are saved during the Tribulation. These are no doubt those who never heard the Gospel before the Rapture. “Just as death terminates the day of possible salvation for those who reject Christ, so in all probability will the Rapture. Nevertheless there are perhaps at least 2 billion (?) in the world today who have never heard & understood enough of the Gospel either to accept or reject it. It is among these that the great number of Tribulation converts will be gleaned” (H. Morris).

How about you today? Have you been washed in the blood of the Lamb? Have you tasted of the water of life? Are you ready should the Lord return today to rapture His church? Do not let II Thessalonians 2:10-12 describe you, “...*because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.*” What will you do with the truth today?