

The Sealed People of God

“These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14, NKJV).



We know life is not always happy. Sometimes we have bad experiences. The only way we can be victorious and come through these times with our faith intact is to depend on God and seek His guidance.

Introduction

Ready for the Seal?

2 Pet. 3:13

The thread of Christ's return runs throughout the Bible from the Old Testament to the New Testament. It is the future, blessed hope that every true Christian lives with. Our view of the future should inform how we live today. Thus the anticipation of Christ's return comes with a responsibility that we must execute in this life.

The Bible provides the reason that Christ seems to be taking longer to return.

Upon His return, every person will stand before the Lord to give an account for how they lived their life. We are stewards, entrusted with gifts, possessions, and responsibilities to use for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. We have time, money, talents, and other responsibilities bestowed upon us to use for His cause. While we do not know the exact time of His return, we are sure that He will come, and all of us will give an account of how we used what Christ entrusted us with. Therefore, the question that we need to ask is, "Are we ready for His return?" Christ exhorts us to be ready for His return because He will judge everyone accordingly.

Many Christians have become impatient about Christ's second coming. Some have failed to fulfill their engagements, and some have changed their plans, based on the lapse of time. However, the Bible warns, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise." Peter provides a fitting answer to what many people consider slackness on the part of the Lord to fulfill His promise. The Lord is "longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9, NKJV). This view is confirmed in Revelation 7:1–3.

The Bible provides the reason that Christ seems to be taking longer to return. He is giving everyone a chance to repent and to join those who will have His seal. In His infinite mercy and love, Christ spares ungodly men, offering them more time for grace so that they can renounce their sins and find salvation through the blood of the Lamb.

So what must we do to be ready for the seal? The qualification to receive the seal of God hinges on our ability to walk in the light, as God Himself is in the light. Peter writes, "Therefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Pet. 3:14, KJ2000).

As we look forward to the second coming of Christ, we have a duty to keep ourselves pure and blameless as a step toward receiving the seal.

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Rev. 7:4–8

Evidence *Are You Among the Sealed?*

In understanding Revelation, it is important to note that the figures and imageries used may not be literal. Instead, they point to something bigger, which must be of importance to those living in this era. It is important to ask concerning the number 144,000 in Revelation 7:4–8 not just whether the number is symbolic but whether we shall be among the number when the roll is called up yonder.

God intends to seal a remnant of His people who will remain on the face of the earth when Christ returns.

Therefore, who are the 144,000 people described in this vision? Considering the entire scene as symbolic, we can conclude that the number refers to those who will be saved at the end. It represents the servants of God, Christians of all ages to the end of the world. The number 144,000 is made up of the number 12 multiplied by itself and the result multiplied by one thousand. According to one commentator, this number stands for “completeness and perfection in the ultimate degree.” What it means is “‘that not one of those who are worthy shall be overlooked or forgotten.’ It also carries the thought that the natural universe, the powers of evil, and the ravages of time, shall not interfere with God’s plans until all are accomplished.”¹

Thus the number symbolizes the complete number of the redeemed, when this world shall end. God intends to seal a remnant of His people who will remain on the face of the earth when Christ returns.

In Revelation 14, the character of the chosen 144,000 is outlined. This number thence represents a pure and virgin church, free of defilement. John’s vision exhorts us to do what God requires of us so that we can be among the number that will receive the seal of redemption. It also teaches that God always has a remnant on earth, people who will stick with His precepts even in the greatest adversities.

“When God sent the flood upon the earth, He separated Noah and his family from the rest of the human race and the flood did not hurt them. When God destroyed Jericho, He protected Rahab and her household. . . . In a similar way in the time of great tribulation protection will be given to this group of 144,000 Israelites.”²

1. James Burton Coffman, *Coffman’s Commentaries on the Bible: Revelation 7*, “Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary: Revelation 7:4,” StudyLight.org, accessed May 3, 2018, <https://www.studylight.org/commentary/revelation/7-4.html>.

2. John F. Walvoord, “7. The Saints of the Great Tribulation,” *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Bible.org, Jan. 1, 2008, <https://bible.org/seriespage/7-saints-great-tribulation>.

Restraining the Winds (Rev. 7:1–3)

One of the big questions we need to ask regarding Revelation 7 is, Why was it important to restrain the winds? Elsewhere, the Bible uses the word winds to denote a period of disaster that includes plague and famine (Ezek. 5:12). The use of wind in Revelation 7 implies a metaphor for God's wrath that will come upon the world, just before Christ's second coming. This wrath includes all sorts of tribulation: wars, incurable diseases, political disagreements, teenage pregnancies, drugs, and more.

**Anyone who accepts Christ as a personal Savior
has the chance to celebrate with Him in the end.**

Before He pours His wrath upon the disobedient earth, He holds on a little longer to give each son and daughter a chance to be with Him at the final close of this world. In 2 Peter 3:9, we learn of God's character that He is "longsuffering toward us" (NKJV). God wants us to come back to him in repentance. It is important to know that we are living in a time when God's people are being sealed, and so, shall we choose to receive the seal?

The Sealed People of God (Rev. 7:4–8)

The Bible is clear about who will receive the seal: their number and their tribes. From the tribe of Judah to that of Benjamin, twelve thousand in each tribe are sealed. John uses this imagery to represent the entire generation of God's people, those who will stick with Christ to the end. It is one thing to call yourself a Christian and another to uphold the tenets of true Christianity. The number 144,000 is a representation of those who will have persevered to the end. It is derived from the 12 tribes of Israel, which Christ the Savior originated.

The Great Multitude (Rev. 7:9–14)

In Revelation 7:9, John sees a great multitude that no one can count. He also sees people from all nations, tribes, and tongues gathered before the Lamb. The gospel of salvation is like the mustard seed, which upon being planted, grows into a mighty tree that provides shelter and shade to all types of animals, people, and birds. Anyone who accepts Christ as a personal Savior has the chance to celebrate with Him in the end.

The sealed people of God are the products of the seed of the gospel of salvation. If we are to stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion when the world ends, we must accept the message of salvation brought to us by Christ and His representatives across the world.

Those Who Follow the Lamb (Rev. 14:1–5)

Earlier in the Bible, Christ is recognized as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, NKJV). In Revelation, John sees the Lamb and those who follow Him. So who are the followers of the Lamb? To begin with, the number 144,000 denotes the sealed people from all corners of the world.

In the vision, the revelator notices the characteristics of the sealed people—the followers of the Lamb. One quality that stands out is that they “keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12). Christ appears here as the true Lamb, covering His followers and His church with His blood, which He shed on the cross, to make them victorious even in the midst of tribulations.

Another characteristic of the followers of the Lamb is the distinguishing mark that each of them wears—the name of God on their foreheads. This confirms that they have made a bold and an open declaration of their faith in God and in Christ, which they have demonstrated in word and deed.

In addition, the chosen of the Lamb know only one duty—to offer congratulations and praises to God and Christ in a language that only the redeemed can understand. As Christians living in the days just before the end of time, we have a choice to make: either to join the camp of those who follow the Lamb or to remain in the world and face God’s wrath.

Followers of the Lamb (Rev. 14:5)

In Revelation 14:4, 5, the revelator proceeds to highlight the character and description of those who follow the Lamb. First, they are chaste and pure—they are virgins. They are undefiled. The followers of the Lamb must not defile themselves with corporal or spiritual adultery. They must keep themselves from the sins of the antichrist generation.

Second, the followers of the Lamb maintain loyalty and unwavering adherence to God. They keep the first commandment, which states, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exod. 20:3).

“Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One, Himself the source and sustainer of all, is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship. Man is forbidden to give to any other object the first place in his affections or his service. Whatever we cherish that tends to lessen our love for God or to interfere with the service due Him, of that do we make a god.”¹

Above all, the followers of the Lamb are a happy remnant that gives glory to Christ always. The seal of the living God is reserved for people with these qualities.

REACT

1. How long do you think God should restrain the winds?
2. What other qualification for receiving the seal of God can you add to the ones mentioned?

1. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 305.

Testimony *Reflections About the Sealed*

Rev. 7:14

“As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old.”¹ Therefore, “the sealing is a pledge from God of perfect security to His chosen ones. . . . Sealing indicates you are God’s chosen. He has appropriated you to Himself.”²

“Sealing indicates you are God’s chosen.”

This grand plan by God to save His people makes Satan more enraged. “Satan is now using every device in this sealing time, to keep the minds of God’s people from the present, sealing truth; and to cause them to waver. I saw a covering that God was drawing over His people, to protect them in the time of trouble; and every soul that was decided on the truth, and was pure in heart, was to be covered with the covering of the Almighty God.”³

The seal “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.”⁴ It is “a mark which angels, not human eyes can read; for the destroying angel must see this mark of redemption. The intelligent mind has seen the sign of the cross of Calvary in the Lord’s adopted sons and daughters. The sin of the transgression of the law of God is taken away. They have on the wedding garment, and are obedient and faithful to all God’s commands.”⁵

But why must God hold on a little longer before He destroys the world? “The bottles of God’s wrath cannot be poured out to destroy the wicked and their works until all the people of God have been judged, and the cases of the living as well as the dead are decided. And even after the saints are sealed with the seal of the living God, His elect will have trials individually. Personal afflictions will come; but the furnace is closely watched by an eye that will not suffer the gold to be consumed. The indelible mark of God is upon them. God can plead that His own name is written there. The Lord has shut them in. Their destination is inscribed—‘God, New Jerusalem.’ They are God’s property, His possession.”⁶

1. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 614.

2. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15, p. 225.

3. Ellen G. White, “Dear Brethren and Sisters,” *The Present Truth*, August 1, 1849.

4. Ellen G. White Comments, in Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1977), p. 1161.

5. Ellen G. White, “The Abiding Trust,” *The Gospel Herald*, June 11, 1902, p. 178.

6. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 446.

Rev. 14:1-5

How-to *Characteristics of the Sealed*

Our study this week revolves around the sealed people of God. Therefore, it is a requirement for us to take time to analyze what we must do in order to obtain the seal. In its literal meaning, a seal is a device that makes an impression to show ownership, agreement, or authenticity. In ancient times, seals comprised stones, pieces of ivory, or wood with engraved letters or designs (cf. Exod. 28:11; Neh. 9:38). A seal implies a mark of authenticity or possession.

In order to stand with Christ in the fullness of time, we must shun sin and all its roots.

Revelation 14 begins with the final triumph of Christ and His sealed people. John paints a picture of the events just before the ultimate destruction of the wicked world. In the vision, John assures Christians that the Lamb will ultimately triumph together with His chosen followers. The scene in the beginning of this chapter presents Christ in His official capacity as the sacrificial Lamb, with the 144,000 sealed followers.

The sealed followers have special characteristics, one of which is the Father's name written on their foreheads. This is an open demonstration that they are children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Of importance for us in this generation is the character that we must cultivate in order to stand counted as the sealed of God.

Chastity and purity. The world offers lots of temporal things with the potential to lure Christians out of their spiritual track. In this vision, John speaks of the multitude with the Lamb as people who have not defiled themselves in any way whatsoever. In order to stand with Christ in the fullness of time, we must shun sin and all its roots (Gal. 5:19-23).

Absolute loyalty to Christ. The main duty of the sealed is to glorify Christ and adhere to His principles. As followers of Christ, we are obliged to follow the conduct of His word, Spirit, and providence. We must leave it to Christ to lead us into wherever and whatever He pleases.

Redemption. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). In order to receive God's seal, we must disown our former selves and embrace a new life with Christ. Through His redeeming mercy, Christ will separate the chosen from the rest of the world.

REACT

How can we identify people who have the seal of God? Is it something visible for all to see?

Opinion

Blessings of the Sealed

Rev. 7:9–14

John describes a great multitude that stands in heaven before the throne of God and the Lamb (Rev. 7:9–14). The multitude represents the saved lot—the redeemed and sealed who will inherit the kingdom of God.

To stand before the heavenly throne is a great honor. John describes the multitude as wearing white robes, something that was reserved for saints (Rev. 6:11). The white robes represent the level of purity expected from God's people. With the palm branches in their hands, they demonstrate a sense of victory, celebration, and deliverance (cf. Lev. 23:40).

The blessings of the sealed are ours to claim.

In a show of solidarity, the multitude cries out with a loud voice, “Salvation to our God . . . , and unto the Lamb” (Rev. 7:10). Their word is a testimony that they rejoice in the truth and that salvation is only through God and the Lamb (cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Our duty as created beings and as a church is to praise and glorify God to eternity. In heaven, our major role will be to praise and acknowledge the glory of God and the Lamb.

But what do the chosen of God stand to benefit? The first blessing is that they have the chance to appear before the throne of God. This is a far greater privilege than sharing a presidential pavilion in this world. Second, God Himself protects the sealed. The Bible explains that “He who sits on the throne will spread his tabernacle over them” (Rev. 7:15, NASB). In the complete presence of the Father and the Lamb, the chosen will enjoy a wonderful intimacy, free from all forms of devastation and tribulation. There is no hunger, thirst, or scorching sun.

Above all, the Lamb Himself is their shepherd (John 10:11). Christ, with all the authority given Him by the Father, will lead the sealed to the springs of living water. There will be no more tears because God will wipe away their tears. This is a great assurance to the saints who suffered for His cause during their life in this world. The choice to remain on God's side comes with a great responsibility—and a prize. If we hope to inherit the kingdom of God, we must brace ourselves for war with the devil. But the blessings and the ultimate prize of our suffering outweigh the struggle, pain, and suffering that we can experience in this world.

The blessings of the sealed are ours to claim. What we must do is to choose to stick with the Lamb to the end of time.

REACT

1. What are some of the things that can hinder us from being sealed?
2. What can we do in order to receive the seal of God?

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Rom. 3:22

Exploration

The Seal of Righteousness

CONCLUDE

The seal of God's people is proof that they belong to the Sealer. The seal protects; it shows permanence; and it shows the prominence of the sealed people. Above all, the seal demonstrates power and provides peace to both the sealed and the Sealer. Regardless of our past sins, our race, gender, or background, God gives us equal chance to be His sealed people. He is willing to seal us by the blood of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

CONSIDER

- Making a list of items in your house or office that you would like to have sealed. What is the difference between the items with the seal and those without it? Think of how this activity relates to this week's lesson.
- Watching a documentary about Christian persecution in various parts of the world. What does this teach you about the price Christians must pay for their loyalty?
- Writing about the characteristics of Christ. Identify which traits of Christ are lacking in your life. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you develop the lacking traits and to use them for Christ's cause.
- Reading Revelation 14:1–5 and drawing two columns. In one column write the characteristics of those who are with the Lamb on Mount Zion. In the other column, write your own characteristics. Compare the two columns and identify what is missing and how you can acquire it.
- Listening to Christian songs that highlight the love of God for His chosen people.
- Interpreting John's vision in relation to the present state of the church. Which issues come up in your interpretation?

CONNECT

Matthew 25:46; John 3:16; Ephesians 4:4.
Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 175.