

SEALING OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Introduction

The sealing of a special group of people, called the 144,000, is introduced in Revelation 7. That chapter is designated as an **interlude** between the breaking of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12) of a unique scroll and the seventh seal (Revelation 8:1). Interludes add important information to the whole prophecy under study.

- Those seven seals protected that document created by God on a judicial throne (Revelation 4:2, 5; 5:1, 7).
- Jesus was the only Being found **“worthy”** to open those seals, which initiated a final transition in history.
- Jesus, identified as a **“lion”** and a **“lamb,”** had been opening each seal sequentially (Revelation 5:9 through chapter 6), then, this **“informational break!”**

An important orientation to appreciate: The **sealing** of that body of saints refers to a different **“seal.”** It is on their foreheads – not on a scroll (though they are both discussed in the same prophecy).

In Revelation 6 there is great distress among God's people related to the final tribulation and its associated global crisis. That world crisis is prophesied in many Biblical references.¹ Divine protection became essential for that last generation of saints.

- The cry of the saints **“How long?”** (6:10) from all those suffering at that time is: **“Who shall be able to stand”** (Revelation 6:17; cf. Joel 2:11, Nahum 1:6, Malachi 3:1) – reflecting a state of helplessness!
- Revelation 7 and 14:1-5 answer that question. It will be the true Israelites – the 144,000 who are sealed!
- Describing these saints, John and an **“elder”** (from around the throne area) are talking. **“Who are these people around the throne?”** the elder asks. John responds: **“Sir, thou knowest....”** The elder answers: **“These are they which *came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*”** (Revelation 7:14b).

Those saints (too great in number to be counted – part of the final generation) permitted the blood of Christ to cleanse their characters! We will discover that they too had been sealed!

Timing of Their Sealing

The four winds of strife, held and controlled by four symbolic angels, represent God's wrath. They are delayed in **“blowing”** by the command of an angel from the east (a direction representing deliverance in prophecy). **“East”** suggests **“from the sunrise”** – where the day first

¹ LaRondelle, Hans K., Th.D.; *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible* (First Impressions; Sarasota, FL 34243 – 1997), p. 144.

breaks. It was where deliverance of the Babylonian captivity would come from (Isaiah 41:2, 25 – a significant prophecy related to Cyrus even before he was born). Ezekiel saw God’s glory in the east (Ezekiel 43:2). John now speaks:

- “*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, nor on the sea, nor on any tree....**” That angel from the east said: “*Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, **till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads***” (Revelation 7:1, 3). This is an urgent cry.*
- The destructive winds are detained to permit the **sealing** of God’s people (Revelation 7:4). That sealing is timed, somehow, to help those saints prepare for the “storm”!

“John sees the elements of nature – earthquake, tempest, and political strife – represented as being held by four angels. These winds are under control until God gives the word to let them go.”² Such winds are an Old Testament symbol, especially described in Daniel 7:2.

“The restraining Spirit of God is even now being withdrawn from the world. Hurricanes, storms, tempests, fire and flood, disasters by sea and land, follow each other in quick succession. Science seeks to explain all these. **The signs thickening around us, telling of the near approach of the Son of God**, are attributed to any other than the true cause. Men cannot discern the sentinel angels restraining the four winds that they shall not blow until the servants of God are sealed; but **when** God shall bid His angels loose the winds, there will be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture.”³ (Four winds equal the four directions of the compass.)

- Those winds represent the vengeance of the anticipated seven trumpets (Revelation 8–9), followed by the seven vials of wrath shown in Revelation 15 and 16.⁴
- If such scenes as this are to be expected as fearful judgments on a guilty world, where will the refuge be for God’s people? How will they be sheltered until such indignation is past?

That sealing has a divine protective element! It occurs before those tribulation events.

Who has that Seal? Who Seals?

“*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” (Revelation 7:2.)*

- “*Another angel*” (besides those holding the winds) has that seal. It is He who will do the sealing.
- “This angel coming from the east is in ultimate control. The concept of ‘the rising of the sun’ [or east] found elsewhere in the New Testament is associated with Christ. The fact that this angel commands the four angels of the higher rank, presumably cherubim,

² White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 444.

³ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 408 (emphasis added).

⁴ Stefanovic, Ranko; *Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs, MI; 2002), p. 261.

suggests that he is the commander of the heavenly hosts; in the book of Revelation the commander of the heavenly angels is Michael (12:7), and Michael is ... Jesus Christ. There is no doubt that in the appearance of *this angel* we have *the presence of Jesus himself*.⁵

Moving deeper:

The divine Host and Teacher of Ezekiel 8, where four abominations are presented, merges into a judicial Being in chapter 9. The imagery of Ezekiel 9:2 is intriguing.

- “*And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer’s inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar*” (Ezekiel 9:2).
- Six beings are commissioned by God for the execution of a divine sentence. One, however, a seventh, is set aside as an agent of life (9:4) and then an agent of death (10:2).^{6,7}

That Being is completely dressed totally in linen. The Hebrew word for linen is *bad*. It is fine linen worn by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:4, 23).

- Such a Being was seen by Daniel above the Tigris River (Daniel 10:5-6) and above another river, likely the Ulai, in Daniel 12:6-7. There, Atonement imagery is again elicited!
- Since this Being’s role is to execute sentences on behalf of God, it has to be someone worthy to bring legal action onto humanity. This immediately suggests a link with Revelation 5, where another legal worthy Being was found – the “Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Lamb” – the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36).

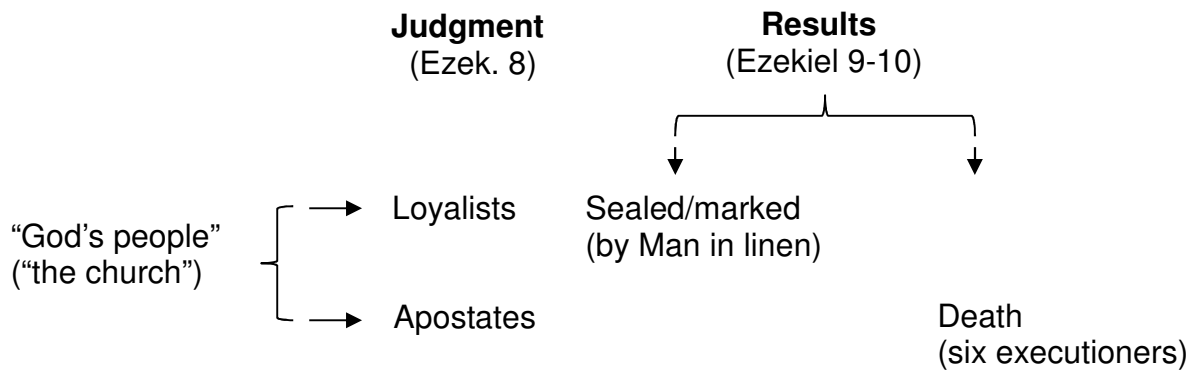
This “*man in linen*” has a writer’s inkhorn to put a seal on the saints’ foreheads (Ezekiel 9:2, 4) and then reports to a higher Being that His work is complete (Ezekiel 9:11). **Then** – the six angels⁸ bring the death sentence to the rebellious. Notice: This is related to God’s people symbolized as/from “Jerusalem.”

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

⁶ Block, Daniel I.; *The Book of Ezekiel*, Chapters 1–24 (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1997), p.

⁷ Keil, C. F. and F. Delitzsch; *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 9 (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts 01961-3473; 2006 – 2nd printing), vol. 9, p. 74.

⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 431.



The symbolic tool for the sealing is the writer's inkhorn (Ezekiel 9:3). The Divine Agent is the Man in linen, Jesus. But the Holy Spirit and God the Father also have a special sealing role noted in the New Testament.

- *"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that **Holy Spirit** of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory"* (Ephesians 1:13-14).
- *"Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is **God**; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts"* (II Corinthians 1:21:22).

"The living God" (Revelation 7:2), the "owner of the seal," is a familiar expression in both the Old Testament for God the Father (e.g., Joshua 3:10, Psalm 42:2, Hosea 1:10) and the New Testament (e.g., Matthew 16:16, 26:63, John 6:69, Acts 14:15).⁹ It is **His seal** that this "angel" carries!

Therefore, it is "God's mark" that is placed on those saints!

- The use of the term *"living God"* in the Old Testament is related to a comparison between Him and man-made idols (dead gods).
- Here in Revelation the twenty-four elders worship the God "who lives forever and ever" (Revelation 4:9-10).¹⁰
- The phrase, therefore, the *"living God,"* additionally means that this seal belongs to the **"eternal God"!**

That Seal – The Mark

There are antecedents to such a sealing:¹¹

1. In the night of deliverance from Egyptian bondage, blood from a lamb on the doorpost was a "seal" of protection to those Israelites. It signified their total trust in God.

⁹ Aune, David E.; *52B World Biblical Commentary*; Revelation 6–16 (World Books; Dallas, Texas), 1997, p. 454.

¹⁰ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 308.

¹¹ LaRondelle, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-152.

“And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:13; cf. 12:22-28).

- In Ezekiel God gave this prophet four things that were abominations to Him (Ezekiel 8). In the next chapter *those who grieved and lamented over those sins* were given a “mark” that was also one of protection.

“And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Ezekiel 9:4).

The apostates and rebellious lost their lives. Those with the “mark,” who grieved at sin in the “church,” were not to be harmed.

“God showed His mercy by separating a repentant, spiritual remnant from an *apostate Israel*. Those identified by the angel’s token found protection from the ‘outpouring’ of divine wrath. God commanded, ‘Do not touch anyone who has the mark.’ Begin at my sanctuary’ (Ezek. 9:6). **The justice of God was executed upon the impenitent only after the angel of mercy had completed his sealing work (see Ezek. 9:10; also Ezek. 8).** In both Exodus 12 and Ezekiel 9 we notice the same sequence: first the sealing, then follows the covenant curse on those who did not receive the mark of protection.”¹²

- From that Old Testament record some mark or “seal” (visible – blood; and, likely, invisible – forehead) becomes an ensign or emblem of loyalty to God.
- In Revelation the same sequence and meaning are implied.

Identifying God’s true people in:	→	Seal:	→	Calamity–Curse:
Egyptian captivity		Blood on doorpost		Death of firstborn
Apostate Jerusalem		Mark on forehead		Death of all apostates
Sinful world – captivity		Seal on forehead		Disease and death of wicked

Seal on Forehead

The sealing is a time of **spiritual separation** within humanity! Character, loyalty to God and faith in Jesus Christ becomes the dividing standard.

- “The sealing enables them **to respond in faith to the trials through which they pass**, so that these trials become the very instruments by which they can even be strengthened in their faith (see on 6:1-8)... The nature of this protection is spiritual. The seal is closely related to the salvation of the people who bear it. This is evident from 14:1-4, where the group that has ‘written on their foreheads’ the names of Christ and

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 152 (emphasis added).

the Father (v 1) is also said to be redemptively 'purchased' (v 4; cf. v 3; see *Pss. Sol.* 15:6, 9).¹³

- Many other scholars recognize the sealing as a spiritual shield.¹⁴

In the list of things that those apocalyptic four winds will harm, e.g., land, sea and trees, (Revelation 7:1-3), John is distinctly pointing to the trumpets and the bowl plagues where divine punishment is executed. That “*seal*” sets the saints apart as the property of God so they can endure this difficult time period!¹⁵

Expositor Harmon noted: “The living saints, 144,000 in number ... were all sealed and perfectly united. On their foreheads was written, God, New Jerusalem, and a glorious Star containing Jesus’ new name.”¹⁶ This deepens our awareness of this sealing. These names suggest that they have become members of God’s kingdom!

“The spotless robe of Christ’s righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, yet faithful children of God.... Their names are retained in the Lamb’s book of life, enrolled among the faithful of all ages. They have resisted the wiles of the deceiver; they have not been turned from their loyalty by the dragon’s roar. Now they are **eternally secure** from the tempter’s devices.... The remnant are not only pardoned and accepted, but honored. ‘A fair miter’ is set upon their heads. They are to be as kings and priests unto God.... These are they that stand upon Mount Zion with the Lamb, having the Father’s name written in their foreheads [Revelation 14:1-5].”¹⁷ It is a mark of deliverance.¹⁸

The setting is “end-time,” which relates to the period leading up to Christ’s Second Coming (Revelation 1:1, 3, 7). Those sealed saints come through that ***era of tribulation***.

- It is wonderful to know that “*the Lord knows those who are his*” so they can be sealed (II Timothy 2:19)!
- “*They will be mine,*” says the LORD Almighty, “*in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. And you will see again the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not*” (Malachi 3:16-18).

Daniel was told by Gabriel that only those who were “*found written in the book*” would be delivered or saved (Daniel 12:1).

- Delivered from the tribulation – in that context
- Being in that book **and** sealed will protect God’s people, a broader understanding (cf. Revelation 9:4).

¹³ Beale, Gregory K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan – 1999), pp. 409-410.

¹⁴ Thomas, Robert L.; *Revelation 1–7 – An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. I (Moody Press, Chicago – 1992), pp. 469-470.

¹⁵ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

¹⁶ Harmen, Ellen G.; *Day Star*, January 24, 1846.

¹⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 369 (emphasis added).

¹⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Maranatha*, p. 296.

The Forehead

This symbol comes from Ezekiel 9:4-6 where that seventh “*angel*” makes a mark on those loyal to God.

- The forehead signifies love for what that mark represents (God the Father, Christ and God’s people).
- It represents submission and total trust in those divine Beings (cf. Revelation 14:1).
- It signifies *the mind* that is fully committed to God.

*“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with **all** thine heart, and with **all** thy soul, and with **all** thy might.... And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes”* (Deuteronomy 6:5, 8).

- The hand (by works) outwardly shows what they seem to support, which can be seen by others. (Though it could be feigned, being on the hand.)
- The forehead symbolizes the heart/mind, where true loyalty lies.¹⁹

Interestingly, the opposite of God’s seal is the **mark of the beast**, the antichrist’s seal.

- *“And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads”* (Revelation 13:16).
- Therefore, at the end of time there are two sealed groups:
 1. Those with the seal of the living God
 2. Those with the mark of the beast, the antichrist

Community of the Redeemed

The parallels between Revelation 7:3-8,14:1-5 and 5:9 shed light on those who are sealed.

1. They were redeemed (14:3) (“purchased”) from the earth, just as the twenty-four elders testified (Revelation 5:9b).
2. *“From the earth”* (14:3) in John’s Revelation means that they are from “*every tribe, tongue, people and nation*” (Revelation 5:9b), suggesting a large group of people – a large remnant of humanity.²⁰
 - This would explain the “*great multitude*” that John describes.
 - *“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands”* (Revelation 7:9).

¹⁹ <http://www.biblemeanings.info/Words/Body/Forehead.htm>

²⁰ Beale, *op. cit.*, pp. 412-413.

This “community” represents the whole “church” that is translated as “living saints” who greet Jesus at His Second Coming.²¹

- Interestingly, that seal on all of Satan’s followers (Revelation 13:16-17, 14:9-11) – the “mark” of the beast [“mark” (*charagma* – G)] is “etched” or “engraved.”²² It is a permanent mark. They will not turn back. This mark only saves them from the antichrist’s wrath – but not from eternal damnation.
- God’s mark or seal (*sphragizo* – G) suggests “secured for eternity.”²³

The sealing defines the remnant, the community of the redeemed, those translated as living saints, those whose names are retained in the Lamb’s Book of Life. “*Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them*” (Revelation 7:15).

A qualifying characteristic is also noted:

- “*Here is the patience of the saints: here [are] they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus*” (Revelation 14:12).
- Interestingly, that adds to the wonderful list of characteristics of God’s people noted in Revelation 7 and 14:1-5.

The Philadelphia Church Factor

Eliakim replaced Shebna as the chief steward of King Hezekiah’s household and was given the “*key to the house of David*” (Isaiah 22:22). Eliakim was a symbol of Christ, who controls “*the keys of the kingdom.*”

- “*And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, **he that hath the key of David**, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth*” (Revelation 3:7).
- Using that symbolic “*key of David*,” He told the Philadelphia church that an open door was before them that no one can close (3:8).

This “*open door*” is an assurance statement that they are citizens of the kingdom. Christ even said, as a judicial observation: “*You have kept the word of my patience*” (vs 10 – KJV). (“*You have kept my command to endure patiently*” (NIV).

- This is a judgment comment. It means that they have been accepted into God’s kingdom.
- Because of their obedience, Christ promises them: “*I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth*” (Revelation 3:10).

²¹ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, pp. 14-15.

²² *Friberg Analytical Greek Lexicon*.

²³ *Ibid*.

There is that “tribulation” (temptation) again. Before it comes God will vindicate His people and protect them from the stress and horrors just ahead that the whole world faces from God’s wrath.

- God will do something special for them – the sealing! That’s how He “keeps them”!
- We recall Christ’s amazing prayer: *“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest **keep them** from the evil”* (John 17:15). The persecution and pressures of earth are to be endured. Just protect them from sin!
- Help them through those final end-time trials that precede the eschaton.²⁴

This protection from what lies ahead, the ability to remain faithful “no matter what,” is suggestive of what the sealing process does! Beale notes:

- “They are not preserved from trial by removal from it, but their faith is preserved through trial because they have been sealed by God (see on 7:1ff. and 7:9ff). Accordingly, the following interpretative rendering is best here: ‘I will keep you *safe* from the spiritual harm of the coming tribulation period.’”²⁵
- Might these Philadelphia people be a link with the sealing prophecy in Revelation 7?

*“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will **write upon him** the name of **my God**, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name”* (Revelation 3:12).

- There will be no temple in heaven (Revelation 21:22).
- The *“pillar”* is a metaphor for the saints having a permanent place in the kingdom.²⁶
- *“My God,”* spoken by Christ reveals the oneness between Christ and the Father.

Now comes the wonderful sealing promise of having three names written on them:

1. The name of God – adoption theology (Romans 8:14-17).
2. The name of the City – New Jerusalem. This announces their citizenship.²⁷
3. The mysterious “new name” of Christ – likely made known at His coming.

Summary

As the final period of earth’s history approaches, a divine strategic plan unfurls that will divide earth’s inhabitants into two classes. This is addressed in many ways in Biblical illustrations:

²⁴ Osborne, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-193.

²⁵ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

²⁶ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

²⁷ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

- Wheat and tares
- Sheep and goats
- Right and wrong
- Righteous and unjust
- Holy and wicked
- Purified and filthy

In that great separation saga, God permits Satan to assemble his people into a coalition of evil and hatred. Their insignia will be the *“mark of the beast.”* It becomes their “calling card” to persecute and harm. Contrasting (part of God’s “final purpose”) will be His people, represented by the symbolic spiritual number of 144,000. Their mission is First-angel’s-message specific (Revelation 14: 6-7)! Their “mark” or *“seal”* provides power, protection and eternal security!

- God’s character is to be defined by the Cross of Calvary to the world.
- Equally important, the dual picture of His justice and mercy is to be revealed.

Associated with these, that “first” message invites great honor and respect based upon His creatorship. He is the beginning and the ending of redemptive history between two creations! That defines His authority to be over all and seal whomever He chooses.

- As history’s final months come, Satan, with his antichrist, will do everything possible to prevent that divine sealing process.
- But, in a deliverance portrayed in divine promise, freedom and peace will finally come to all who have faith in Jesus.

Franklin S. Fowler, Jr., M.D.
 Prophecy Research Initiative – non-profit 501(c)3 © 2018
EndTime Issues..., Number 216, August 2, 2018