

The Sealing of the Saints in Glory

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 February 2017

Preacher: Mr Ian Murdo Macleod

[0 : 00] I'll turn back with me then to Revelation and chapter 7. I can read verses 13 and 14.

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, Who are these clothed in white robes, and from where have they come? I said to him, Sir, you know.

And he said to me, These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes, and they have made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

One thing sure that we know about ourselves is that one day each of us is going to die, and the Bible speaks to us continually about the necessity of having Christ in our lives.

And here we can consider aspects of God's promise and blessing of his covenant being fulfilled or realized.

[1 : 15] A covenant that originated with Abraham through Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and then David, which was then fulfilled in Christ in the New Testament.

And in this chapter, we have a picture of what those who are in Christ, who are believers, were given a picture, almost a snapshot, of what they will experience in eternity.

And this was a vision that John was given, and we must keep that in our minds at all times. In many respects, it's symbolic.

But here we are given an insight into the peace, that real peace, and the wonderful state that all believers will inherit. And in many ways, it's very difficult for us to understand, but perhaps it's good to cling to that word that Paul gives us in 1 Corinthians 2 and verse 9, where he tells us, That no eye has seen nor ear heard, no mind has imagined, and no heart has conceived, but God has prepared for those who love him.

That in itself gives us much to look forward to when each of us is called to be with Christ. So what John was shown was unique, and it was very special.

[2 : 53] And it just gives us a glimpse. Read there, just as we began reading, part of the end of chapter 6.

And chapter 6 ends on a very solemn note. Altogether, there are seven seals which are to be opened. And the sixth seal that we read off the air is one of the most readily identifiable items in that scene.

And it covers the events accompanying the return of Christ. And with it, the history of the world comes to an end. And the cry goes out, Who can stand before the wrath of the Lamb?

And as we move into chapter 7, this is very clearly a chapter of comfort. And it's here that we learn that the wrath of the Lamb is not directed against all people.

Those who are his own, they are spared that wrath. He has prepared a place specially for them. And we need to perhaps be careful in our understanding here as well.

[4 : 16] Because it's just, I think it's dangerous to assume that the order in which John writes these things is the order in which these things will happen. Chapter 7 may follow chapter 6 in John's vision.

But it doesn't seem to follow it in the actual order of events. We cannot say that in some mysterious sequence of events that it will be humanity that will suffer first, as we have in chapter 6, and then that the church will be sealed.

John doesn't say, after six unsealings of the book comes the sealing of the servants of God, and after that the harming of the earth. What John actually says is, after the six unsealings I saw.

John shifts the focus in chapter 7, and we now view the care and the love that God has for all of his people, as well as the control he has over everything that happens in his sovereignty.

And we read there of four angels that have gathered at the four corners of the earth. And no one outside of God's own people will escape this judgment.

[5 : 47] Everything is ready. And then suddenly, as we start moving through the words of the chapter there, there's an interruption, there's an interlude, if you like.

And in verse 3, God calls out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the earth. And he says, Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.

John had been watching the four angels in anticipation, waiting to see that wrath unleashed. But instead of seeing wrath, he saw loving concern.

And instead of seeing destruction, he saw protection. And in the Old Testament, we have a parallel to this in the prophecy of Ezekiel, chapter 9, and in these first four verses, where a man clothed in linen is told with a mark upon the foreheads of God's faithful people before the six executioners of the city, smited with his wrath.

And in Ephesians and chapter 1, Paul reinforces this, particularly of the sealing of God's people.

[7 : 27] And in verses 13 and 14, Paul tells us this and gives us more understanding about this sealing. And he says, In him, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance, until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

There we have that confirmation that when a person comes to faith in Christ, when they place their faith, their hope, their confidence in him, and in his finished work at Calvary, that immediately, when they receive grace, they receive the promised Holy Spirit, who is that guarantee.

So, in other words, there is a very special spiritual mark, a seal, on all Christians.

And this mark, this seal, it signifies a number of things. It signifies authenticity, it's authentic, and it's legitimate, and it's genuine.

And it signifies ownership as well, just as cattle are often branded just to show that they belong to a particular person.

[9 : 09] So, also, items of value were marked with a seal to clarify their legal ownership. Here, we're told that Christians are owned by Christ.

They are his special possession. And the seal also signifies protection. It was used by, it was a seal used by Pilate to protect the tomb of Jesus.

That seal of Rome was placed on the entrance to the tomb, and it could only be broken by someone who was of higher authority than the Roman governor.

and also, and perhaps especially, this seal signifies authority. The seal gives real security to all of God's people who receive that promise when, by grace, they put their faith in Christ.

And only God himself has authority to put that seal on his people. from that moment onwards, from the moment a person comes to faith in Christ, the ultimate safety of each and every believer is guaranteed.

[10 : 32] So when these searing four winds of destruction begin to blow, every one of God's people, they are sealed, and they are protected against their power.

And when these horsemen ride out on their task of destruction, the church that is the people of God, the church is indestructible.

And John then hears the roll call of those who are sealed. And we might ask the question, well, who are these 144,000?

Well, it's clear that this number is not to be taken literally. It's symbolic. There is much debate about it, of that, there is no doubt.

But we have already been told in verse 3 that it is God's servants who are sealed. And we have no reason to limit this in any way.

[11 : 46] We're told about the tribes there, the representative tribes. And we might ask the question, well, are they some select group of Jewish people?

well, not really know it. It signifies much more than that. There are 24 elders around the throne.

We believe and understand they are representative of the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles of God's New Testament Church, his New Testament Covenant.

And these 144,000 that are mentioned here, they are representative of all of God's people, all the new covenants, this innumerable number that we're told of in verse 9 of this chapter.

this is a number we look at, and from God's perspective, it's a perfect number of all of his people, a perfect number that he sees of all of his people, that innumerable number.

[13:08] From our perspective, it's unquantifiable, as Jordan saw it in the vision there, just that there were so many people, it was totally impossible for him to number them.

All of God's people from all of the ages, all gathered together as one. All of Abraham's children, Abraham who was given that promise, that from him and from his son, that there would be a people that would number more than the sand on the shore, and number more than the stars in the sky. And we understand that in coming to faith in Christ, and believing him as our Lord and Saviour, then we are adopted into that family, into that number.

And that number consists of all people, of all nations, and of all tribes, and of all creeds, from all parts of this earth.

One church, there are not two churches of God, there is not an Old Testament church and a New Testament church as such, but that people, that gathered people in glory, they are one in Christ Jesus.

[14:51] Christians are as one in one community, one people, all of the seed of Abraham. And each of these Christians, each of these believers, they have individual identity, people, because their names are written in the palms of his hands.

And we're also told in scripture that their names are written in the Lamb's book of life. It confirms to us that the Lord indeed knows those who are his.

And so the plain fact that we have here is that if you are a Christian, if you are someone here who loves the Lord, if you are someone whose faith and hope and trust is in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and you are safe in the arms of Jesus.

Jesus. A question is asked as we look at verses 13 and 14.

A question is asked about this multitude that we've been speaking about in white robes in terms of what has brought them to where they are.

[16:22] And we're told that these are the ones who are coming out of the great tribulation or those who have come through the great oppression. They are the one who have washed their robes and that is why they now have their place before the throne and around the throne.

And again with this phrase, the great tribulation, there are different views on it, but we wouldn't be wrong for us to put ourselves in that situation because in this world all Christians go through trials and tribulations in some way.

The church in every age has suffered. Believers in every age have suffered. But this is our current situation now in this world as well.

We all fall short of the glory of God. We all have to suffer. And we know and believe that scripture, that all things will indeed work together for our good.

Jesus died to take our sins away. and when a seal is set upon us, then he takes away our filthy garments of sin that we previously wore, and in their place he gives us pure white robes of righteousness.

[18:07] And perhaps one way of understanding this is once again to relate to Paul and to remember the way Paul was before Jesus stopped him on that road, that Emmaus road, and before Jesus gave him his grace.

Remember how Paul was and summarized for us, especially I think in Philippians in chapter 3, where Paul was this good and upright and religious person, Paul was this person who thought that in all that he was doing, that he was earning his way into God's favor.

Paul thought that all that he was doing was right and proper for him to be doing. But then when he met Jesus on that road to Emmaus, and when grace came into his life, he realized immediately that everything that he had been doing before, it was worthless.

Everything was like a filthy rug. It was rubbish, and it was worth nothing to him, compared now to the righteousness that he had in Christ Jesus.

these robes of righteousness, they are robes that have been given to all believers.

[19:49] They don't earn them in any way, shape, or form. And you can look around you today and you won't see these Christians walking around, any Christians walking around in long white robes, but in spiritual terms, every single one is cleansed in that precious blood of Christ.

This is an inner cleansing, as well as an outer cleansing. And it indicates that all believers in God's sight are now pure and holy, and undefiled in Christ.

The filth of this world is washed away from each and every one. And they're not just washed clean, but they've been closed in the righteousness of Christ.

Just as we have it in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and 21, we're told there, a very short summary of the gospel that he who had no sin, he was made to be sin, so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

these robes come from God and depends on faith, this grace, this salvation.

[21 : 30] And it is a very spiritual significance because believers now in this world, they no longer live for themselves anymore. They no longer live for what this world can offer them, but they now live for Christ.

They are new creatures, new creations in Christ Jesus. All things are made new to them. And each one lives with that underlying longing to be taken home, to glory, to be with them.

And the reality is that when their time comes to die, they don't face death with any uncertainty whatsoever. They don't expect just to die and then there is nothing.

But they have, each and every Christian has full confidence that they will be taken to this glory to be with Jesus immediately.

They have no reason to doubt any of his promises. In fact, they have full confidence in each and every one of his promises. And we're told that in verse nine here, we're told that they have palm branches in their hands.

[23 : 00] They're clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands. We'll read first of the palm branches in the book of Leviticus in chapter three.

The people there, they carried palm branches during the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. Just as the people of Jerusalem they greeted Jesus with palm branches at his triumphal entry, so also all his people will one day greet him face to face.

Because here we see the fulfillment of that feast. Here we see that the final harvest has taken place. God's people have been gathered to himself having entered into their final rest of God.

Now they are gathered here in thankful, joyful worship of the Lord. And these palm branches they are symbols of triumph.

They have the victory. Christ has the victory. They have the victory. in Christ Jesus. And the one and only reason that all of God's people are in glory is because they have washed their robes and they have made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

[24 : 31] And again this is symbolic language relating to the atoning work of Christ on the cross in his giving of himself as a substitute in our place taking our sin upon himself and in dealing with that at Calvary.

And it's only because of their faith in Jesus, the Lamb of God, who gave himself on that cross of Calvary, only because of that and because they have been washed and cleansed in his blood, because that's the price that had to be paid.

It's all of Jesus. Cleansed in the precious blood of Christ and how this testifies of his grace towards each one of us.

And you and I will be there. The word trust and faith is in Jesus. Isn't that a wonderful thought? To be taken home, just to be with himself.

So there is a day coming when God's people will see him face to face. They will be like him and they shall be before his throne and they shall praise him and serve him forevermore, praising and worshipping.

[26 : 17] And the picture we're given here is that all of God's people are in the near and close presence of God and the throne.

We have this picture in verse 17 of the Lamb in the midst of the throne. And this gives us such a beautiful and intimate picture of God's watchfulness and God's care of all of his people.

And it gives us echoes of Psalm 23 and picturing the Lamb of God as our shepherd. He is our shepherd here on earth and he will be our shepherd in glory.

There will be no need to walk any further through the valley of the shadow of death. earth. There will be no need any longer to fear any evil.

That will all be past. And we will be sheltered and protected by his presence and in his presence.

[27 : 38] He dwelt among his own people here on earth and he dwells among them for eternity. Here on earth all of God's people serve God and the Holy Spirit dwells within them.

And they are just given a glimpse of these unsearchable riches of Christ through his salvation, the salvation that he offers and the promise of this place that he has prepared for each one of them.

This place where we're told here that they shall hunger no more neither thirst any more the sun shall not strike them nor any scorching heat.

That's again symbolic language of persecution. All their needs are taken care of. The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd and he will guide them to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Singing the song of praise continually to God, being ever led to these springs of living water, ever learning of God's intimate and infinite knowledge and wisdom.

[29 : 23] We see from all these things of God's control and God's sovereignty over all that will happen, past, present, future, and eternity.

God is such a love for all of his people in Christ that he has given his promise of all these eternal blessings and glory.

From the moment they come to faith, they are sealed with the holy spirit of promise and not one of them can ever be lost.

And we have that confirmation from Paul in Romans chapter 8. He tells us in the opening of that chapter at the moment they come to faith, we're told there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

And Paul gives us this explanation at the end of chapter 8 in Romans verse 35 and he says, Who shall save the dust from the love of Christ?

[30 : 56] Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword as it is written for your sake we have been killed all the day long we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered but he says, No, in all of these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Once a child of God always a child of God for life and for eternity. you know there are many times that God's people think to themselves how can God love me the way I am and how can I be chosen to inherit all of these wonderful things.

The hymn writer puts it so well and he says I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene and I wonder how he could love me a sinner condemned unclean.

How wonderful how marvelous my song shall ever be. How wonderful how marvelous is my saviour's love for me.

[32 : 48] You see God the Father loves his own children because he sees that they are in Christ and they love Christ and because his own spirit dwells within them.

And he has put that symbolic seal on their foreheads and clothes them in the righteousness of Christ. It's all of Christ.

It may not be visible to the eye but God sees it and God knows those who are his each and every one of them.

But scripture also tells us something else. And this is what puts a hope out to every person who is still outside of Christ.

Scripture tells us that God so loved the world that he gave his only son Jesus Christ that whoever will believe in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

[34 : 05] And if you are not in Christ this evening if you don't have this saving relationship with Jesus Christ then the great gospel invitation to you this evening is come.

come and plead for the grace to repent of your sins the grace to believe to truly believe this word the grace to be able to place your faith and confidence and hope in Jesus Christ and in him alone.

And then you also will be able to look forward to all that God has set aside for all of his people.

You will then share in this wonderful inheritance as well an inheritance which is incorruptible which is undefiled and one that will never fade away.

May he bless these thoughts to us. Let's pray. our Father in heaven we truly thank you for all the promises of your word.

[35 : 28] We truly thank you for all that you have set aside for all of your people. We thank you Lord for the grace that is gifted in this life for the sealing of the Holy Spirit who indwells each one of your people and guarantees that inheritance.

We bless you and thank you that you are with your people each and every moment of this life and that you shall take them through the valley of the shadow of death to be with you for eternity. Keep us we pray all the days that we are on this earth because we cannot keep ourselves. May our eye of faith be constantly upon Jesus looking to him and to him only and may it be that we would have that longing to be taken home and to be with yourself when our time on this earth is done. For while we are here Lord may it be that your word would be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path each and every day.

We ask these things in Jesus name for his sake Amen. Well let's conclude. We'll sing the words of Psalm 72 from the Scottish Psalter.

[37 : 10] Psalm 72 and from the second part of verse 16 to the end of the psalm. It's on page 314 of the blue psalm books. The city shall be flourishing her citizens abound and number shall like to the grass that grows upon the ground.

His name forever shall endure last like the sun it shall men shall be blessed in him and blessed all nations shall him call. These last four verses of the psalm to God's please.

the rules upon the ground this gift forever shall endure last like the sun it shall men shall be blessed in him and blessed all nations shall flow and blessed be the Lord our God the God of Israel for for he our

Lord the wondrous world in glory God excel and blessed be his glorious name to to all eternity the whole earth is glory fill amen so may be now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with each one of you now and always amen a who.