"GRACE IN THE MIDST OF JUDGMENT
Revelation 7:1-17
3/25/90

INTRODUCTION:

Often the only thing that comes to mind when we hear the phrase "The Great Tribulation" is judgment - war, signs, dread and terror, etc.

Having described such events in chapter 6, God now inserts a parenthesis, an interlude or episode, that unveils His acts of redemption (salvation) during the Tribulation.

Chapter 7 gives us a ray of light against the backdrop of gloom . . . Here we see the grace of God int he midst of judgment. Even in wrath, God remembers mercy. The scene of judgment in Rev. 6 is interrupted by the scene of grace in Rev. 7 (SEE Epp, p. 73).

After revealing in rapid-fire succession the consecutive events of doom to befall planet earth (chapter 6), God gives us a breather--a sigh of relief--a glimpse of hope (in chap. 7).

Having described the doom of the wicked (Rev. 6:12-17), God unveils the deliverance of the righteous (Rev. 7).

***God is a God who manifests grace even in the midst of judgment!**

In Revelation 7:1-17, God unveils a gracious ray of light against the backdrop of gloom:

I. **<u>SOVEREIGN</u> Grace (v. 1-8)**
(The <u>Sealing</u> of 144,000 <u>Jews</u>)

V. 1

"After these things" = this phrase does not mean that the events seen by John in chapter 7 come chronologically after what was previously described (6:17), but simply express that John saw this scene after what he saw in chapter 6.

*Remember that throughout the book of Rev. God will often give an overview of the events to take place and back up and describe details later - a technique used in journalism.

"Holding the four winds" - stopping the winds implies a lull (calm) before the storm (Wiersbe, p. 590). A "heavenly hush before the holocaust."

This corresponds with the suspense indicated by the silence in heaven that occurs when the 7th seal is opened (8:1).

V. 2

"The seal of the living God" - "seal" = an emblem or mark of ownership and security (permanence).

In Roman times, a seal referred to the impression made with a signet ring.

V. 3

"till we have sealed" - now four angels join the angel from the east to seal God's servants

Who are the servants?

1. Who are the 144,000?

   ANSWER: They are Jews (not Jehovah's Witnesses, not a spiritual representation of the church).

   Proof:

   a. V. 4 - "of all the tribes of the children of Israel"

   b. v. 5-8 - the specific tribes are listed

   c. God promised to redeem His people Israel during the Tribulation (see the O.T. prophets - Zech. 12:8-14, 13:9; Ezek. 20:33-44, 34:13-17, 36:25-29; Jer. 31:1-2; Is. 59:9-15, 43:1-7, 11:11-12:6)

2. How do the 144,000 come to Christ?

   ANSWER: They are apparently redeemed during the mid-point of the Great Tribulation (after 3 1-2 years_. Evidently, they are converted in response to the preaching of God's "two witnesses" (Rev. 11:1-7). These two witnesses are then killed by the Antichrist (11:7-10), then 3 1-2 days later are resurrected (v. 11-12).

   After an earthquake that follows this rising to life, the Bible describes a remnant that feared and "gave glory to the God of heaven" (11:13). Possibly this remnant is the 144,000.

3. How could God preserve the Tribes through the centuries from mixing through intermarriage?

ANSWER: In the Law, the tribes were commanded by God to marry only those within that tribe (Num. 36:6-13).

The nation of Israel (its preservation) is a miracle that is mind-boggling.

4. Why is the tribe of Dan missing?

ANSWER: Joseph replaces Ephraim. Levi replaces Dan.

Why?

Possibly because the tribe of Dan was guilty of leading the nation of Israel into idolatry on many occasions (Lev. 24:11; Judg. 18; I Ki. 12:28, 29) (Ryrie)

In Deut. 29:18-21, God said He would blot out the name of any idolatrous man or tribe.

NOTE: Dan is the only tribe missing in the record of the genealogical tables of the tribes of Israel given in I Chron. 2:3-9:44.

While Dan is not sealed (Rev. 7), it must not be through that this tribe will be made extinct. On the contrary, God's grace will extend to Dan, as evident by the fact that Dan heads up the list in the division of the land in the Millennial kingdom (Ezek. 48:1-2).

V. 3

"Sealed . . . in their foreheads" - contrast this mark with the mark of the Beast (Rev. 13:16-18).

"Seal of the living God" - in contrast to the false, spiritually dead god, the Antichrist, who will seal those who serve him with his mark - 666 (Rev. 13).

Compare Rev. 14:1-5 - the mark identified the 144,000 with God the Father (cp. Rev. 3:12 - to the overcoming saint, Jesus said: "I will write upon him the name of my God.") In Rev. 22:4, John describes God's servants in the New Jerusalem as having "his name . . . in their foreheads."

What is the purpose for the 144,000 being sealed with such a mark? Protection

Protection from the plagues that the four angels (v. 1-3a) will unleash upon the earth
Other examples of protective marks:

1. Mark on Cain (Gen. 4:15)
2. Mark on those who wept over the sin of Jerusalem (Ezek. 9:2-5)

The seal does not necessarily have to be visible. Evidently it is not! NOTE: the seal is not put on their foreheads but "in" their foreheads.

Most likely a seal will be placed on them which physical eyes cannot see; but visible to the eyes of the spirit world (angels, demons, etc.)

Just as God protected Noah from the flood, Israel from the plagues of Egypt, and Rahab and her household in Jericho, so will He protect His elect 144,000 (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

SEE: Rev. 9:4 - when the fifth trumpet sounds, only the redeemed 144,000 will be protected from the five-month torment inflicted upon the unbelieving world by the demonic locust-like army.

SEE Isaiah 43:1-7 for God's supernatural protection of His 144,000 elect.

144,000 Jews protected ("saved out of") during Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:5-7).

[Cp. Rev. 12:6 - the imagery of a "woman" (representing redeemed Israel) flees into the wilderness and is supernaturally protected by God during the last 3 1-2 years of the Tribulation (v. 14-17)]

Practical Application:

Nothing can happen to God's elect today (like then in the Tribulation) unless God allows it.

God sets a protective hedge around us today like He will do in the future with His 144,000. We as believers today have been sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13).

"...the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His..." (II Tim. 2:19).

When God puts His label on someone, it means "hands off" to those who would seek to ruin God's property.

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). Never forget that God is in sovereign control of His property (those who belong to Him).

II. SAVING Grace (v. 9-17)

(The Salvation of multitudes of Gentiles)

A. The Scope of Salvation: "All nations. . ." (v. 9)

"A great multitude" - apparently, this harvest of people is the result of the testimony of the 144,000 redeemed jews who are called "the first fruits unto God" (Rev. 14:4. Being the first fruits, they are the forerunners of all who will be saved after them.

"No man could number" - God knows the number, but no man would be able to count the multitudes that god will redeem during the Tribulation.

Nations - God saves a remnant from all countries

Kindreds - God saves a remnant from all families

People - God saves a remnant from all cultures

Tongues - God saves a remnant from all languages

We need a global outlook. Christ died for the sins of the world (I Jn. 2:2) (cp. Rev. 5:9). We are to go into all the world (Mk. 16:15).

"Stood before . . . the Lamb" - "...to be absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord" (II Cor. 5:8).

Included among these who are clothed in "white robes" are those who will be martyred during the Tribulation (cp. "white robes" - 6:11). Jesus described the betrayal and slaughter to occur during the Trib. (Mt. 24:9, 10).

"Palms in their hands" - reminiscent of the rejoicing that occurred during the 7-day feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:40).

"Palms" denote victory and rejoicing - cp. Jn. 12:13 - Triumphal entry.

B. The Source of Salvation: "God . . . Lamb" (v. 10-12)

V. 10

"Salvation to our God. . . and unto the Lamb" - this means that salvation belongs to God the Father and God the Son. The LORD is the source of salvation.

V. 11

The shout of praise from the grateful saints (v. 10) tips off or incites the praise of the angelic realm (cp. 5:11).

The believers are praising God for what He has done for them (salvation); and the angelic realm in response falls down and says a big, hearty "Amen"! (v. 12)

V. 12

". . . be unto our god" = belongs to God. God is the source (the well spring) of all blessing . . . glory . . . wisdom, etc.

C. The Means of Salvation: "The blood of the Lamb" (v. 13-14)

V. 14

"Great tribulation" = lit. The Great Tribulation

"Washed their robes" - Man's only responsibility is the yield himself; Christ's finished work is that which does the actual cleaning.

The hymnwriter said: "And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains."

"White in the blood" = whitened in the blood

The shed blood of Christ is God's bleach for the soul!

Ps. 51:7 - "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

Normally, when a garment is washed, it is washed using pure, clear water as the cleansing agent.

The saints garment, however, is paradoxically made white by the shed blood of Christ!

ILLUS: Hymn "There is Power in the Blood"

D. The Rewards of Salvation: (v. 15-17)

1. Service (v. 15)

"Therefore" - Because of their cleansing (v. 14), then, like the Old Testament priests, can now serve God acceptably and continually ("day and night") in his temple (in heaven) [cp. Leviticus 8:30, where Aaron and His sons had the blood of the burnt offering sprinkled onto their garments so that they could be consecrated to perform priestly service (chap. 9)]

2. Satisfaction (v. 16)

"Hunger and thirst" - results of the famine and food rationing to occur during the Tribulation (cp. Rev. 6:5, 6)

"Sun" = will scorch men during the Trib. (Rev. 16:8 - "And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire"

3. Sufficiency (v. 17)

"Lamb. . . in the midst of the throne" - NOTE: the oneness and intimate relationship between the lamb (Christ) and the throne sitter (v. 15 - the Father).

"The Lamb" is the "good Shepherd" described in Ps. 23:1-2.

Rev. 21:6 - Jesus said, "It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

"Wipe away all tears" -

"Tears" = singular in Greek. God is concerned about every tear that is shed for righteousness sake!

Isaiah prophesied of this: "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Is. 25:8).

SEE Rev. 21:4

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