

SALVATION IN SYMBOLS & SIGNS

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Corresponds to Program 47

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the NKJV and KJV.

THE THIRD WOE STUDY GUIDE

INTRODUCING THE SEVEN SEALS

Revelation 4

This lesson introduces us to the seven seals of Revelation. In the previous study of the seven churches, we noticed that Jesus walked among the seven candlesticks, which pointed us to His ministry in the Holy Place as our High Priest. As we turn our focus to the seven seals, we will find that Jesus is still ministering in the Holy Place, but our focus now will be toward the table of showbread, which was found on the north side of the sanctuary.

Revelation 4:2 tells us that John was pointed to a throne in Heaven, in the heavenly Sanctuary, God's throne room. We know that Jesus is in the Holy Place in the Sanctuary because of the reference to the seven lamps. They were found in the Sanctuary. Since Jesus is ministering in Heaven in the Sanctuary, in the Holy Place, where is this throne?

In Exodus 26:35 we read the following: "You shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand across from the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side."

The Bible used the terms "north side" and "sides of the north" interchangeably. In Psalm 48, we find the following: "Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King." Psalm 48:2

Where does a great king sit? On his throne.

In Isaiah 14:13, we read about the fall of Lucifer from Heaven. "For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heav-

en, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation, on the farthest sides of the north.' "

The sides of the north refers to a place that the Jews believed to be God's throne, on Mount Zion.

In the sanctuary, the north side was where the table of showbread was located. On the table were the twelve loaves of bread, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, the congregation of God. The table of showbread on the north side of the sanctuary is a picture of God sitting in rulership on the sides of the north as ruler of His congregation Mount Zion, the 12 tribes of Israel.



Biblical evidence points to the third woe as the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ to this earth as a Bridegroom to rescue His bride from nations of the world.

Why is this important? The loaves of bread were to be changed, and ministered to, every week on the seventh day Sabbath. The focus of the table is to point us to the Creator God ruling over His people, and His Sabbath. The Sabbath is God's sign that He is the Creator God of Genesis 1, and that the congregation before Him worships Him as opposed to false gods, by keeping His Holy Day.

Deuteronomy 5:14, 15 explains this point in this way: "but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox,

nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day."

KEY SCRIPTURES

Revelation 4:2 THRONE OF GOD IN HEAVEN

Ephesians 4:8 JESUS FULFILLS PROPHECY

1 Corinthians 6:20 WE ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE

Revelation 5:10 KINGS AND PRIESTS REIGN ON EARTH

The Sabbath command shows the world that we worship the God of creation, who made all things in six days, and rested on the seventh, but He is also the God who redeemed us from the bondage of sin. Throughout the seven seals, we will see Jesus pictured on a white horse, working tirelessly to redeem His people who honor Him. We will also learn, based on the biblical principle of “repeat and enlarge” that the seven seals are synonymous with the time periods of the seven candlesticks!

The 24 Elders

In Revelation chapter 4, we see that twenty-four elders were gathered around God’s throne, twelve and twelve. There were the twelve tribes of Israel in the Old Testament, and the twelve Apostles in the New Testament. God works in all ages to redeem His faithful followers.

John is shown in chapter 5 that the elders are:

- 1) Redeemed (verse 9).
- 2) By the blood of the Lamb (verse 9).
- 3) From the nations of earth (verse 9).

With that in mind let’s do some digging and see what we can find out from the Bible about these elders:

1) In the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, Jesus led a large group, “many” of the “saints” to heaven with Him (Matthew 27:52-53).

Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men” (Ephesians 4:8; Psalm 68:18).

2) The throne room visions in the Old Testament never include the 24 elders. This is significant because we know from the book of Job that representatives from other worlds have gathered together “before the Lord” (Job 1:6, 2:1). Apparently the 24 elders are a new group not noted in Heaven until after the resurrection of Jesus. This indicates that the elders are the captives led to Heaven by Christ at His ascension. Not until Jesus led the captive saints to Heaven from their graves is this group of 24 elders seen in Heaven! This is a beautiful picture in relation to our redemption and inclusion in Heaven by this group of first-fruits or elders (Isaiah 6:1-4; Ezekiel 1:1-28; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

3) The term elders is used approximately 175 times in the Bible to describe leaders among God’s people. There appears to be no biblical reference that the word is used to describe angels or other created beings. On this point alone we have a strong biblical basis in favor of the 24 elders representing people.

4) The number is significant. Twelve is the kingdom number represented by 12 tribes of the Old Testament and 12 disciples of the New Testament. God represents His kingdom or organized people on planet earth by the number 12. So these 24 elders likely represent the redeemed OT and NT. This idea is also seen in the 12 foundations and 12 gates of the New Jerusalem city, the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:2,12, 14). Both points here suggest that the number 24 is representative

of the redeemed who have a place in the city of God and in the throne room of God.

5) This next point shows a close connection between chapters 4 and 5 and the previous two chapters. The 24 elders possess things promised to the overcomers in the seven churches. The crowns, the white raiment, sitting on thrones, all correspond to the promises to the seven churches. Having just finished writing to the churches, urging each one to overcome, John is then taken into a vision in Heaven where he is shown 24 elders who have the very crowns, white raiment and thrones promised to the churches.

a)—Crowns

The crowns are Stephanos not diadems. Stephanos implies victory over sin rather than leadership over territory. The Bible indicates that they are worn by those who overcome, endure temptation, who are faithful to resist the devil unto death, those who are part of God’s church on earth:

“Henceforth there is laid up for me a **crow**n of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” 2 Timothy 4:8. (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10; 3:11).

b)—Thrones

Jesus promises the Laodicean church a place on His throne (Revelation 3:21). Jesus also told the disciples that they would sit on thrones “judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28). Following Christ’s connection between thrones and judgment, Paul indicates that God’s redeemed will “judge angels”. Therefore the picture in Revelation 4 indicates the earnestness of this reality (1 Corinthians 6:3).

c)—White Raiment

All the verses that identify “raiment” or “garments” in Revelation are applicable to believers who have not defiled themselves with apostasy: those who have overcome and whose names are written in the Book of Life. It also refers to believers who “buy” garments from Jesus to be clothed with His righteousness, and those who keep watch over them. Raiment also describes the robes of Christ, whose garments are dipped in blood. (Revelation 3:4, 5, 18; 16:15; 19:13, 16).

6) The phrase in Revelation 5:9 “Thou hast redeemed (agorazw agorazo-*to buy in the marketplace, purchase*) us to God by Thy blood” is unique to mankind. It suggests the need for cleansing from sin and only this fallen world has that opportunity through the gift of Jesus Christ.

“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” 1 Corinthians 6:20. (1 Corinthians 7:23; Revelation 14:3, 4).

7) The next phrase, “redeemed...out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation,” mentioned in verse 9 is repeated in several ways throughout Revelation. It further indicates that the elders represent those who are redeemed

from the earth, from among the nations of this world (Revelation 7:9; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6).

“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).

8) Now looking at verse 10 of Revelation 5, the elders state: “And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

This phrase and a variation of it in the Bible are also applied to redeemed human beings:

“And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” Revelation 1:6. (1 Peter 2:9).

9) The phrase, “reign on the earth,” is also worth considering: “And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:10).

This is a promise that has been made to redeemed humans: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” Matthew 5:5. (Revelation 22:5).

The biblical evidence, especially from the book of Revelation, makes a strong argument in favor of the 24 elders being the resurrected representatives taken to Heaven with Christ at His ascension. The crowns, thrones, and raiment of the elders all speak of the promises to the overcomers in the previous two chapters as well as to their inclusion in the judgment process taking place in Heaven. The fact that they are redeemed from the earth and made kings and priests speaks loudly to their being human beings. Their inclusion in this eschatological picture of the throne room also makes sense when compared with their exclusion from previous throne room pictures as a group of humans numbering 24 had not been taken to heaven until the ascension of Jesus Christ. Our conclusion is that the 24 elders present to us a beautiful picture of an earnest of the human race redeemed by the grace of God. Praise God!

As we prepare to study the seven seals, we shall continue to see a picture of Jesus carrying out His plan of redemption throughout the ages of His church, till He comes to take them home. ★