

## CHAPTER 6

# Sealed and Delivered

We saw in the last chapter that before anything is released to achieve the purpose of God, there is a cry that goes up: "Hold your horses!" In chapter 7 this pause is pictured for us in another way:

*After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree (Revelation 7:1).*

The angels that are spoken of back in Zechariah are also called the four winds, and they are held back now until God does something of extreme importance. This is what happens.

*Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to*

*the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel (Revelation 7:2-4).*

### *The True Israel*

Now this is another one of those happy hunting grounds for all kinds of speculation. This is the ground upon which many people believe that the Church will be removed and ethnic Israel will do the job of bringing in the Kingdom of God. But if we take time to read the letters to the seven churches in detail, we find that one of the churches is persecuted by a group of people who say they are Jews but are not (Rev. 2:9). He also refers to these as the synagogue of satan (Rev. 2:9; 3:9). Ethnic Israel rejected Jesus, and ethnic Israel took upon itself the curses of covenant breaking. Ethnic Israel is not God's answer. So what are we seeing here? Well, the New Testament tells us very clearly that not all who claim to be Jews are Jews. Not all who are descended physically from Abraham are true Israel, Abraham's children (Rom. 9:6).

Jesus Himself said to the Jewish leaders of His generation that they were of their father the devil (John 8:44). That is a pretty drastic statement. He is a Jew, says Paul, not who is one outwardly but who is one inwardly (Rom. 2:28-29). The church is the true Israel of God. We are the "the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God" (Phil. 3:3). There has always been a true Israel of God down through the Old Testament. Not every ethnic Jew was a true child of God. Not every ethnic Jew, at any time through history, was the real Israel. The real Israel were those who were not just circumcised in the flesh but

circumcised in their hearts, those who obeyed the Lord, those who followed the Lord. The biblical term for it usually in the Old Testament is “a remnant.” When the whole of the nation was moving toward apostasy, there was a faithful remnant: “Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in His presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored His name” (Mal. 3:16). The true Israel always present in the Old Testament comes into finer definition in the New. Jesus described His disciples at one time as “the little flock”—that is, those who were the remnant of the true Israel (Luke 12:32) and who became the foundation of the Israel of God that was destined to fill the whole earth. You and I are God’s spiritual Israel. We are children of promise and children born by the power of the Holy Spirit (see Gal. 4:28-29). So when we have this roll call of Israel here in chapter 7, we do not need to be worrying whether this is ethnic Israel. This is the true Israel of God.

### *God’s Military Muster*

The number twelve is significant, as we have also previously mentioned. It is the number of God’s government, or God’s Kingdom. It is used to describe those who belong to God, who live under the rule of God. Later on, when we look at the Heavenly city, we will see everything about it is in multiples of twelve. That is why Bible translators do us a disservice when they change it into meters or miles. That’s not the point. We are not to see *how big* it is, but rather to understand *what* it is. And it is not to tell us actually *how many* there are; it is to tell us *who* they are. Twelve times twelve is one hundred and forty-four, which is

then multiplied by one thousand to represent the completeness of all the redeemed people of God: 144,000.

This passage is actually a military muster. You may recall those passages in the Old Testament when God calls His people to war, taking a census of the people in order that the leadership will know what their military strength is. They are always mustered in thousands. Their military formations were in thousands. There are many references to the thousands of Israel. That is how they were recognized. That is how they were numbered. God's people were recorded in thousands and mustered under leaders of thousands. God is calling His people together for war. When we look at the second half of the chapter, we see that great multitude that nobody can number standing in the presence of God; it is the same people, but now they are at worship. God sees us differently when we are at war and when we are at worship. The church militant is God's thousands, ready, as we see later in chapter 14, to follow the Lamb wherever He goes. But the church at worship is represented as this innumerable multitude dressed in white and standing before the throne of God. So, this is a military muster.

### *A Living Seal*

They are sealed with the seal of the living God. Now, that is interesting for this reason: because He is the living God, they are sealed with a living seal. When the writer to the Hebrews is talking about the Scriptures, he says, "The word of God is living and active" (Heb. 4:12). Therefore, when we read the Word of God, it should produce life and action because it is a living and active word. When we are sealed with the seal of the living God, it produces life in us because God is the living God. Now, the other thing we need to take note of is that when we meet this company again in chapter 14, it is immediately after the passage that deals

with the beast and the mark of the beast. The mark of the beast is just a satanic, knee-jerk reaction to the mark of God. Satan did not invent this. He did not come up with the good idea to put a mark on all the wicked ones. God puts a mark on His people, and satan has a knee-jerk reaction because he has no creativity in him at all. He is not an initiator, just an imitator. When God does something, satan reacts. God seals His people so satan goes and seals his people. But God seals His people first. It is His idea. It is His initiative.

### *A Mark of Ownership*

What does it mean when it says that He seals them? We find a company of people with Jesus' name or the Lamb's name written on their foreheads. They are marked as His property. I am a bibliophile. I love books. I love holding books. I love smelling books. I love reading books. I love books! And every book I have has a label stuck in the front. It says, "From the library of Tony Ling." They have a mark of ownership on them. Now you too have a mark of ownership on you. You belong to God.

### *A Mark of Preservation*

Let me say a little about this mark that is on every true child of God. The first time we encounter God putting a mark on anybody is actually not in a good situation. Cain has murdered his brother and has been sent from the presence of the Lord. His fear is that if he leaves the presence of the Lord, anyone who finds him will kill him. And so to preserve Cain's life, God puts a visible mark on him. Although he is a wicked man, an evil and rebellious man, God, for His own reasons, wants to preserve his life and to do so puts a mark on him. The first time we encounter God putting a mark on anybody is for this specific reason—that his life

will be spared. That helps us to understand what the mark of God on us will do. It will keep us safe. The mark of God will spare our life. The mark of God will keep us from being killed by the enemy. I do not mean it will prevent martyrdom. I hope we have already established that. But it is a mark of preservation. It is a mark that says, "We belong to God."

Now that picture in Revelation 7 actually comes from the Book of Ezekiel. In Ezekiel it is God coming to judge Israel. It is God bringing justice where there has been rebellion. In chapter 9 of Ezekiel, when Israel is in Babylonian captivity, the prophet goes back to Jerusalem, in the Spirit, and sees what God is up to in judging the people who still remain in the city:

*Then I heard Him call out in a loud voice, "Bring the guards of the city here, each with a weapon in his hand." And I saw six men coming from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with a deadly weapon in his hand. With them was a man clothed in linen who had a writing kit at his side. They came in and stood beside the bronze altar. Now the glory of the God of Israel went up from above the cherubim, where it had been, and moved to the threshold of the temple. Then the Lord called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing kit at his side and said to him, "Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it" (Ezekiel 9:1-4).*

Here is a city that has almost totally apostatized, that has rebelled against God. That is why His great judgment has come upon it. That is why the people have been taken into captivity, and now God's judgment will fall upon those who still remain in the city. For as we look at this city through Ezekiel's eyes, we find

them worshipping the stars of Heaven, erecting idols in the temple, and involving themselves in all kinds of abomination. They are corrupting and defiling the very house of God, and yet there is still this remnant who grieve over it, who weep because of it, who are hurt by all the corruption that is going on in the City of God. When God comes down in judgment, He sends one of His angels out and says, "Put a mark on the forehead of everybody who is grieved at what is happening here." Now the only people who are grieved when unrighteousness runs unchecked are those who are righteous. So it is the righteous who are being marked, and when God's judgment falls on the city, it is the righteous who will be preserved. So there is a mark on God's people that distinguishes them from every other inhabitant in the city. There is a mark on a remnant that shows that they belong exclusively to God, that they have not sold themselves to idolatry, that they have not given themselves to adultery. Here is a preserved, righteous remnant, and God says, "They will be Mine," and He puts His mark on them. Just as His mark on Cain preserved his life, so this mark on the people of Jerusalem preserved them from the judgment about to fall. The Book of Revelation is a book of God's judgments moving through the world, but God puts a mark on those who are His own.

### *A Mark of Separation*

In Exodus God instructs Moses about the making of the garments for the High Priest:

*Make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it as on a seal: Holy to the Lord. Fasten a blue cord to it to attach it to the turban; it is to be on the front of the turban. It will be on Aaron's forehead, and he will bear the guilt involved in the sacred gifts the Israelites consecrate, whatever their gifts*

*may be. It will be on Aaron's forehead continually so that they will be acceptable to the Lord (Exodus 28:36-38).*

The High Priest Aaron, when he went into the presence of God to minister, had a seal on his forehead. He wore a gold plate that distinguished him from everybody else; and on this gold plate this seal was engraved: "Holy to the Lord." What distinguishes God's people from every other people is that God's people are holy to the Lord. God's people recognize that they belong to Him. God's people understand that the world has no power over them, no influence upon them. You are not your own, you are bought with a price. On your forehead is written in indelible letters, sealed as on a gold crown, "Holy to the Lord." We are those who are preserved because of our righteousness. We are those who bear the holiness of God as a testimony upon our foreheads.

### *A Seal of Approval*

When Jesus came into the world, He bore the seal of God. Talking about Himself as the Son of God, He says, "On Him God the Father has placed His seal of approval" (John 6:27). Jesus is sealed. He has a seal of approval on His life. The Church is sealed. Listen to what Paul says: "Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness'" (2 Tim. 2:19). You have a seal, and it is a seal of ownership, for the Lord knows who are His. You have a seal, and it is a seal of approval because we turn away from wickedness.

### *A Seal of Holiness*

So the seal of God that comes upon us is a demonstration of the life we live. We are not like everybody else. The church



needs to wake up and realize that it is supposed to be different from the world. The first way it demonstrates its difference is by living differently. This does not mean going to meetings, carrying Bibles, or being miserable. The church is different from the world by its lifestyle, and its lifestyle is a lifestyle of holiness. We need to rediscover what it means to be holy. It is not in the old concept of holiness, whereby the holier you are, the more miserable you become; the holier you are, the bigger your Bible gets; the holier you are, the darker the suit you wear. That has got nothing to do with it. In fact, holiness and happiness are two sides of the same coin, because Psalm 45 says, "You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." The holier you are, the happier you are supposed to be. That is how it works. There is a seal on us that distinguishes us, and it is a seal of holiness.

But of course, you and I both know that we cannot create a real sense of spiritual holiness in our own lives. If we try to do that, we are like Israel when they set out to establish their own righteousness. They just became legalistic. And sometimes our concept of righteousness is a list of dos and don'ts: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!" (Col. 2:21). Those are the kind of things that often Christians try to adopt to present themselves as holy. It has nothing to do with that. The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Now, we cannot create those things. We can create lists, we can create rules, and we can create regulations—and these were very much the essence of Old Covenant religion. But God has called us to something much different. God has called us to something much more glorious, and the holiness that we enjoy is not something that we create;

it is something that God imparts. Of course, it affects the way we live, but it is imparted to us, and so it motivates us.

### *The Seal of the Spirit*

Let me take you to some New Testament Scriptures now.

*Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).*

Paul says every true believer has a seal. What is it? It is the Holy Spirit. What distinguishes you from everybody else on the face of the earth is this: God has anointed you and sealed you with His Spirit. What is the mark on the true church of Jesus Christ? What is the mark on the true believer? The Holy Spirit. Not the Holy Spirit who dwells in you in some theological way, not the Holy Spirit to whom you give some theoretical acknowledgment, but a demonstration. The seal is to be seen. The seal is to be read and recognized, and what God wants in your life and mine is a life so dominated by the Holy Spirit that He is the sole characteristic that we demonstrate to people. Here is a man full of the Holy Ghost. Here is a man upon whom the Spirit is resting. Here are the Lord's anointed ones. That is what the Church is supposed to be. That is what we as individuals are called to be, men and women marked out as different because of the anointing that is on us, the powerful, demonstrative anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is only the anointing of the Holy Spirit that will make you holy with the true holiness of Heaven; not in human holiness, but in divine holiness. Because He is the *Holy Spirit*, He will make you holy. What makes God's people different from

every other people? It is the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, somehow demonstrated through your life.

God said to John the Baptist that the Anointed One was coming. John asked how he was going to recognize him. God replies that it was the one upon whom he saw the Spirit descending and remaining (John 1:33). We are to be a people who were not just once baptized in the Spirit, but upon whom the Spirit remains, upon whom the Spirit rests, upon whom the anointing continually flows. We have been sealed. It is His mark of ownership on us. That is how you demonstrate, how you display, how you understand that you belong to God. You are full of the Spirit. You are moving in the Spirit. You are sensitive to the Spirit. You are at home when the Holy Ghost breaks out on every hand. It does not faze you. It does not frighten you. You are at home. And here is the wonderful thing. In all the manifestations, in all the dynamic diversities of the Spirit who moves among us, do you know it is only a deposit of what is yet to come? That is all it is. That which thrills you, which moves you, which stirs your heart and excites your spirit, is just the down payment. There is so much more to come!

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes:

*And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13).*

You did not only get saved, you were included in Christ. That is wonderful. If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. You were included in Christ but not just included in Christ; you were marked and sealed by the Holy Spirit. This is not just theology or

theory. It is demonstrable relationship. The Holy Spirit comes, and it is evident that He has come. The Holy Spirit comes, and it is observable that He comes. The Holy Spirit comes and abides, and you live from this moment on in the power of the Holy Spirit. You live under the anointing of God. You live in signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Spirit. You live from this moment on speaking in tongues and prophesying because it is the mark of God that is on you. We are called to be God's Holy Ghost people. There is no alternative. It is the only way. It is what God wants for us.

Paul also writes to the Ephesians, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30). He is there, and so many have grieved Him, and as they have grieved Him, He has departed. So many have upset the Holy Ghost and in upsetting Him have lost the sense of His presence. We need to be those who do not grieve the Holy Spirit. We need to be those who do not despise prophecies. We need to be those who are open for all the manifestations of God because that is the effective mark of God that is on His people. We do not have to picture someone with a rubber stamp marking you on the forehead. This is the sign that you are a true child of God—you are full of the Holy Ghost. This is the sign that you are a true child of the King—you have been sealed with His Spirit. The anointing has come upon you and remains with you.

We are the people of God. This is not a sign for God's Pentecostal people. This is not a sign for God's charismatic people. This is a sign for all God's people. This is not a denominational thing. It is an ownership thing. You see, it is the Spirit and only the Spirit who makes Jesus real to you. You cannot even say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who takes the things of Christ and reveals them to you. He is

the great teacher. You have an anointing that abides and teaches you all things (1 John 2:27). You cannot live, you cannot exist, and you cannot make any progress outside of the Holy Spirit. You must seek Him earnestly. You must obey Him completely. You must follow Him sensitively. We must rediscover in everything we do that we must be God's Holy Spirit people.

### *Overcoming by the Spirit*

Now we are going to discover in the Scriptures that the Book of Revelation is not only encouraging us to be overcomers, but it is also teaching us *how* to be overcomers. We overcome because the Spirit of God is with us and the Spirit of God empowers us and the Spirit of God leads us.

A lot of the images that come into the Book of Revelation come from the prophet Zechariah. We have already looked there at the picture of the horses that he first presents in the opening chapters of his book. One of the great pictures and images, which we will discover later on is repeated in the Book of Revelation, is of those two olive trees in chapter 4. Do you remember the great picture of the two olive trees and the seven-branched lampstand and the oil that flows into them? He said the angel woke him up and he was like a man awakened from sleep. He is getting a night full of visions, so you can understand he is a bit weary, and the angel comes and wakes him up. He wakes him up in the middle of the night and asks what he sees. If he had done that to me, I'd probably have said, "Not much, actually. Nothing. Let me get a couple of cups of coffee and then ask me again." But he asks what he sees. He replies that he sees two olive trees and a lampstand. Then he asks the angel what it means. I like that about this prophet. Some people think prophets have all the answers. They actually don't,

but they do know how to ask the right questions. He asks what it means. It's a very complicated vision. It's about olive trees and pipes and bowls and a lampstand. Actually the interpretation is quite simple. The angel says, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6). The whole of this complicated vision is interpreted with a simple statement. It is "by My Spirit, says the Lord." How are we going to overcome? "By My Spirit," says the Lord.

One of the things we are going to discover in the Book of Revelation is that there is a lot of mountain-moving going on. The Bible describes it in dramatic ways like, "the mountains flew away," and there are the disaster merchants who are looking for continents to disappear and nations to sink into the ocean and all kinds of stuff to be literally fulfilled. But that is just a dramatic way that God uses to show the removal of everything that opposes Him. When God speaks to Zechariah He says that it is not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit, and then He continues by saying, "What are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground" (Zech. 4:7). You see, it is when the anointing comes that the mountains fall. The Holy Spirit comes upon you and equips and empowers you to be God's people in a hostile world, not so that you can survive but so that you can overcome. Not just that you overcome, but that you actually invade the enemy territory. You tackle the mountain. You speak to it. Faith that moves mountains comes by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us it is one of the spiritual gifts that God operates in His Church. It is the anointing that is on you that marks you as the man or woman of God. It is the guarantee that you belong to the Lord.

*Overcoming by the Word*

There is another little insight here, too, that is important and interesting. When the beast, in his knee-jerk reaction to the Lamb, decides it is a good idea to have names written on things, he makes those who are under his control have a mark on their forehead or on their right hand. In some senses, that is a blasphemous travesty of what God required of His people, concerning His Word. For God told His redeemed people that they were to live by His Word, that His Word was not just a dusty moral code; it was a book to live by. If they walked in His ways, He would bless them. If they walked in His ways, He would keep them safe and they were to remind each other constantly of the Word. He said to talk about it together when you get up in the morning, when you go through the door, when you walk down the street, when you come home and lie down. Talk about the Word. Encourage each other in the Word. "Be so full of My Word," He says, "that you wear it as a phylactery on your forehead and on your hand because My Word will determine all of your thoughts and all of your actions. Have My Word on your forehead, have My Word on your hand, because I want you to be motivated in every situation in life by My Word." Of course, they turned that into an outward and legalistic thing, as they always did, but God wanted it to be a symbol of something that was going on in the inside.

Do you remember what He said to Joshua when Joshua was ready to take the people into the land of promise, when the Old Testament Jesus was about to bring the people out of the law?

*Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them. . . . Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so*

*that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful (Joshua 1:2,8).*

God says, "My Word is to dominate your thinking. My Word is to be the declaration of your mouth. My Word is to be the demonstration of your life." We are to live by the Word of God. That is why, when Jesus came to Earth, He was the Word made flesh who dwelt among us. God's Word is not just to be on your head and on your hand, God's Word was designed to be in your heart. "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" said the Psalmist (Ps. 119:11). John writes, "I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one" (1 John 2:14). We overcome him because the Word of God is in us. It is the Word of God that motivates us. It is the Word of God that gives us the ability and the strength and equips us for all that God has called us to do. So we are people whose minds are dominated by the Word of God and whose actions are motivated by the Word of God. We must fill ourselves with the Word of God that we might speak it. From out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks. We are to be a people of the Word.

Now satan brings an evil counterfeit and puts a mark on their foreheads and their hands so that he and his evil ways dominate their thoughts. We are not like that. That mark has no effect upon us. We do not have to live with fear that somehow we have been enticed to take on the mark of the beast. It is not your credit card. It is not the bar code on the book that you buy or whatever you come to purchase in the supermarket. It is nothing that is outward in that sense. It has to do with the



inner life. The mark of God is upon you. There is no room for the mark of the beast. The evil one has nowhere to place his mark. The mark of God on me is the anointing of the Holy Spirit who makes me holy. The mark of God on me is the name of Jesus that makes me live like Jesus lived. The mark of God on me is the inspiration of His Word that dominates my thoughts and determines my actions. This is how we know that we belong to God: we are full of the Spirit. This is how we know we belong to God: the anointing abides. This is how we know we belong to God: we perform the works that God sent us to do. The gifts of the Holy Spirit mark us as God's true sealed and delivered people, those who will not be touched by the power of the beast in his seduction to lead us away from the Lamb. He may put a mark on those who are his. He may, through them, pursue all kinds of persecutions against us, but we are sealed.

Before all the fury of judgment is released, God arises and sends forth His angel to seal you and to seal me, to say, "This one is mine; that one is mine. He belongs to me. She is My treasured possession, and this is how I will mark them: not by sticking a label on their inside, but by putting a flame of fire above their heads, by writing My name in big indelible letters across their foreheads. Sealed. Guaranteed. The deposit has been paid." There is more to come, more to see, more to experience, but this down payment is enough to keep you going through all the onslaught of the evil one, through all the opposition of the world, through all the cruelty of a fallen creation. You can stand tall. You can demonstrate the power of God because the Spirit of God is upon you. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, the opening of prison doors, the recovery of sight to the blind. We are marked with the Spirit of God! How do we know we belong to God?

## THE LION AND THE LAMB

Because no one can do the works you do unless the Father is with him; and “I tell you the truth,” says Jesus, “anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12), and “I am going to send the Holy Spirit, and He will mark you as My people and as My victorious ones in a hostile world.” (Author’s paraphrase).