



MESSIAH

JOHNS CREEK

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Christian Worship Lectionary		
FIRST LESSON	Joshua 4:1-9	Twelve rocks told the story God's grace and preservation to generations of his people.
SECOND LESSON	Revelation 7:1-8	God doesn't just hold back rivers, but he even holds back the winds of destruction until every one of his elect is safely sealed.
GOSPEL LESSON	Matthew 16:13-20	Who do people say the Son of Man is?
PSALM	34	

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Almighty and everlasting God, give us an increase of faith, hope, and love; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY:

Alleluia. Jesus Christ has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Alleluia. (1 Timothy 1:10b)

THEME OF THE DAY:

The Church will stand forever. Nothing can keep our Redeemer from upholding his promised salvation. Neither false expectations nor the gates of hell, neither an Egyptian army nor a flowing river, not even the great tribulation of the end times will keep our God from preserving his Church.

LAST SUNDAY'S SERMON:

[Your fate is sealed.](#)

BACKGROUND:

- John is on the island of Patmos when he is given this vision. He is the last man standing. all the other apostles have been tortured to death. He and he alone remains. It is a lonely existence to have the desire to share your faith with all nations but to be banished to exile on an island. What I am saying is it must have been frustrating discouraging unsettling anxious for John. Jesus gives him this vision to comfort him.
- He gives it to us for the same reason. People get so caught up in the fantastic imagery of Revelation that they miss the point of the book. it is not to entertain us with mysterious beasts and natural phenomenon. it is to comfort us.
- *The apostle John tells us he received this vision from God on Patmos, a small island off the coast of Asia Minor, southwest of the city of Ephesus. There he had been exiled "because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ" (1:9). Most scholars agree that this occurred during the widespread persecution that took place during the reign of Domitian (ca. 95-97). At the direct instruction of Jesus, John wrote to comfort the seven young churches in the province of Asia that, while they could expect such things as persecution, God assured them of final victory through Christ. Apocalyptic literature was often written during periods of persecution and suffering. Therefore, it is especially concerned about the end of history and the ultimate triumph of God's people over evil. It is rich in pictures, images, symbols, colors and numbers. Revelation often parallels the apocalyptic styles of Daniel, Ezekiel and Zechariah. Martin Franzmann observes: "No other New Testament book can compare with it in the number of allusions to the Old Testament; Revelation is saturated with the Old Testament" (The Word of the Lord Grows, p. 272). The book presents a general outline of the struggle of Christ and his church against Satan and the world throughout history. -ILCW*

Exegesis of Revelation 7:1-8¹

¹ 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.

7 Μετὰ τοῦτο εἶδον τέσσαρας ἀγγέλους ἐστῶτας ἐπὶ τὰς τέσσαρας γωνίας τῆς γῆς ,
After this I saw four messengers having stood on the four corners of the earth

κρατοῦντας τοὺς τέσσαρας ἀνέμους τῆς γῆς ἵνα μὴ πνεῖ ἄνεμος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς μήτε ἐπὶ τῆς
holding the four winds of the earth that not might blow wind on the earth neither on the

θαλάσσης μήτε ἐπὶ πᾶν δένδρον .
sea nor on all tree

- “After this” -
 - right before our text the horsemen of the apocalypse have been sent to ride across the earth. The earth is quaking, the sun turned black the moon turned blood red the stars fall from the sky. The terrified people of the earth are hiding in caves.
- ἄγγελος: a supernatural being that attends upon or serves as a messenger of a superior supernatural entity —‘angel.’ - LN
 - *They are restrained by the ministry of angels, standing on the four corners of the earth, intimating that the spirit of error cannot go forth till God permits it, and that the angels minister to the good of the church by restraining its enemies.* - MH
- ἵσταμαι: to be in a standing position—‘to stand.’ - LN
 - perf. act. pt. - ongoing result from a past action
- “four corners of the earth” - We don’t often think of our world having corners but we understand the imagery to mean all the earth.
 - “Four corners of the earth” (7:1). This phrase was used in the ancient Near East to mean “the whole world.” It does not imply a belief that the earth is flat, anymore than our use of “sunrise” indicates we believe the sun revolves around the earth. - BRC
- κρατέω: to hold on to an object—‘to hold on to, to retain in the hand, to seize.’ -LN
 - pres. act. pt - ongoing action. This gives us the sense of being in the moment. it invites us to be part of the action. We are invited to see the angels holding on to the winds as if the event were happening now.
- “four winds” -
 - *Here we have, I. An account of the restraint laid upon the winds. By these winds we suppose are meant those errors and corruptions in religion which would occasion a great deal of trouble and mischief to the church of God. Sometimes the Holy Spirit is compared to the wind: here the spirits of error are compared to the four winds, contrary one to another, but doing much hurt to the church, the garden and vineyard of God, breaking the branches and blasting the fruits of his plantation. The devil is called the prince of the power of the air; he, by a great wind, overthrew the house of Job’s eldest son. Errors are as wind, by which those who are unstable are shaken, and carried to and fro, Eph. 4:14. Observe, 1. These are called the winds of the earth, because they blow only in these lower regions near the earth; heaven is always clear and free from them - MH*
- ἄνεμος: air in relatively rapid movement, but without specification as to the force of the movement—‘wind, blowing, to blow.’ - LN
 - pres. act. subj. - the subjunctive mood has potential. here it is preceded by a negation. the subjunctive mood is like a cliffhanger - who knows what is going to happen dun dun dun...



What comfort/warning does this image of the four angels holding back the four winds give us?

- it is quite... too quite like being in the eye of a hurricane. Even though the sun is shining, you just know it is fixed to get ugly.

¹ For ease of study among non-Greek students we will use Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, 27th Edition with GRAMCORD(™) Greek New Testament Alpha Morphological Database and McReynolds English Interlinear

2 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: 3 “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.”

2 Καὶ εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον ἀναβαίνοντα ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς ἡλίου
 And I saw other messenger coming up from east of sun

ἔχοντα σφραγίδα θεοῦ ζώντος, καὶ ἔκραξεν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ τοῖς τέσσαρσιν ἀγγέλοις οἷς
 having seal of God living and he shouted in sound great to the four messengers to whom

ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς ἀδικῆσαι τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν 3 λέγων· μὴ ἀδικήσητε τὴν γῆν μήτε τὴν
 were given to them to do unright the earth and the sea saying not do unright the earth nor the

θάλασσαν μήτε τὰ δένδρα, ἄχρι σφραγίσωμεν τοὺς δούλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν.
 sea nor the trees until we might seal the slaves of the God of us on the foreheads of them

- **ὁράω**:—‘to see, sight, seeing.’- LN
 - aor. act. ind. - the aorist gives us a snapshot of a past action.
- **ἀναβαίνω**: to move up—‘to come up, to go up, to ascend.’ The upward movement may be of almost any gradient, for example, in going up a road to Jerusalem (Ga 1:17) or in going up into a tree (Lk 19:4) or in ascending into heaven (Ac 2:34).- LN
 - pres. act. pt - ongoing action. This gives us the sense of being in the moment. it invites us to be part of the action.
- **ἔχω to hold on to an object—‘to hold on to, to retain in the hand, to seize.’- LN**
 - pres. act. pt. - ongoing action
- **σφραγίς**: an engraved object used to make a mark denoting ownership, approval, or closure of something (normally done by pressing into heated wax and usually attached to a document or letter)—‘seal, signet.’ LN
- **ἔχοντα σφραγίδα θεοῦ** ‘an angel ... who had God’s signet’ In some languages the closest equivalent to ‘seal’ or ‘signet’ is the mark made by the seal, for example, ‘the symbol of his name’ or ‘the mark of his ownership.’ In certain contexts one may employ a phrase such as ‘the instrument by which a mark is made.’ - LN
- **σφραγίδα θεοῦ** - seal of God
 - *The seal served as a legal protection and guarantee in many ways, esp. in relation to property.¹⁴ All objects suitable for sealing could be marked as the property of the owner in this way. Sealing was part of everyday life in Babylon, cf. esp. Hdt., I, 195, 2: “Every Babylonian carried his handmade stick and also a seal.” Anything in the house could be set under a seal ἐπὶ σφραγίδων, chests, jugs (usually sealed on the handle), and of course wills, P. Oxy., I, 106, 12 (135 a.d.), cf. BGU, I, 98, 15 f. (211 a.d.) An intellectual possession could also be safeguarded by a seal, i.e., by inserting a section with the author’s name. Sealing to mark ownership probably goes back to a much older custom, namely, the marking of objects, animals and men, esp. slaves,¹⁸ by notching, slitting, or branding,¹.... The seal belonged to its owner alone; no one else had the right to it. Tac. Ann., 16, 19, 3 bears witness to the practice of breaking one’s seal just before death to prevent fraudulent use. The seal also serves as proof of identity.²³ It is put with a signature or in place of it in letters, agreements and private or public instructions. Another way in which it protects property is by sealing the contents of a container, purse, vessel, sack, bale, or packet.²⁵ Houses and graves can be sealed. The seal is a guarantee against violation. The same applies to texts, hymns, and records.... From early days and throughout the cultures of antiquity in all times and places seals and signet-rings bear the images of gods or signs of the god. These link the holder and user of the seal with the deity. Many roll seals from Babylon (→ 939, 21 ff.) have scenes from divine history and the cultic sphere as well as figures of the gods.... -TDNT*



Some see this as a mark claiming possession, others see it as a mark that provides protection. What do you see?

- תָּו (tāw). (Job 31:35; ASV, RSV “signature”), **mark**. The tāw, the last letter (consonant) in the Hebrew alphabet, was shaped like an “x” in the most ancient script. Job 31:35 uses the word in the sense of a man’s signature or mark of attestation, as the context shows. In Ezk 9:4, 6, it is used of a divinely authorized mark placed on a person’s forehead for protective purposes. ... In ancient Mesopotamia, a cross-shaped mark on the forehead was called ishpalurtu(m) in Akkadian, written sometimes with the Sumerian logograph BAR which looks exactly like the older forms of the tāw. God’s special marks of protection will be placed on the foreheads of his people in the eschatological future (Rev 7:2f.; 9:4; 14:1). J. Finegan, in his recent historical novel entitled Mark of the Taw, notes

that in the early Church the believers would use and think of the tāw as a sign of future salvation (because of the *Ezk 9* references); of the Messiah (because it resembled the first letter of the Gr. word for Christ, “the Anointed One, the Messiah”); and, because of its shape, of the crucifixion of Jesus (see especially pp. 145f.). - TWOT

Tav

Early
Hebrew



Middle
Hebrew



Late
Hebrew



Modern
Hebrew



- God is in the genitive case. Here it is used as a genitive of possession to let us know who's seal this is. it belongs to God.
- our God is described here as the “**living God**”. This might not be a notable description for us who are used to seeing our God as living. However, for John who had seen his Savior crucified dead and buried this is a very comforting description.
- **κράζω**: to shout or cry out, with the possible implication of the unpleasant nature of the sound—‘to shout, to scream. - LN
- **φωνῆ μεγάλη** - “voice great”
 - Dative case to let us know how he cried
- **δίδωμι**: to assign a person to a task as a particular benefit to others—‘to appoint, to assign (on behalf of)-LN
 - aor. pass. ind.- passive voice points out that this task was not taken but given
- **ἀδικέω**: to hurt or to harm, with the implication of doing something which is wrong and undeserved—‘to harm, to hurt.’ - LN
 - earth and the sea - we typically think only of how sin effects us. here we are reminded that sin has effected all creation. thought the earth and the sea did nothing to deserve it they will be harmed because of the sin man brought into the world.
 - **“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” Romans 8:22** - All creation feels the effects of our sin
- **μὴ ἀδικήσητε** - “not do harm”.
 - aor. act. subj.
 - with a negation up front for emphasis.
- **σφραγίζω**: (derivative of σφραγίς ‘mark, seal,’ 33.483) to put a mark on something, primarily to indicate ownership but possibly also to mark group identity—‘to mark, to seal. - LN
 - aor. act. subj.
 - of note - this is in the first person plural “we”. there is not one angel tasked with this responsibility. The angel’s helpers are not identified.
- **δοῦλος, η, ον**: pertaining to a state of being completely controlled by someone or something—‘subservient to, controlled by.’ - LN
 - All the words in this group serve either to describe the status of a slave or an attitude corresponding to that of a slave...οἰκέτης is almost exactly synonymous, but in δοῦλος the stress is rather on the slave’s dependence on his lord, while οἰκέτης emphasizes the position of the slave in relation to the world outside and in human society. This shows us again how strong is the passive element in δοῦλος, and in the whole word group to which it belongs - TDNT



How do you feel about being God’s slave?

- **μέτωπον**: the front part of the head above the eyes—‘forehead.’ -LN



What significance do you see in the seal being placed on the forehead?

4 Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

4 Καὶ ἤκουσα τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῶν ἐσφραγισμένων, ἑκατὸν τεσσαράκοντα τέσσαρες χιλιάδες,
 And I heard the number of the ones having been sealed, hundred forty four thousands

ἐσφραγισμένοι ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ.
 having been sealed from all tribe of sons Israel

- ἀκούω; ἀκοή, ἤσ, ἤσ f—‘to hear, hearing’ - LN
 - aor. act. ind.
- σφραγίζωb: (derivative of σφραγίζωc ‘mark, seal,’ 33.483) to put a mark on something, primarily to indicate ownership but possibly also to mark group identity—‘to mark, to seal.’ - LN
 - perf. pass. pt.
 - Perfect points out that being sealed is a past action that has ongoing results
 - passive tells me being sealed is something that is done to us and not something that we do to ourselves. The passive voice is used four times in connection with our being sealed to make sure that we get the point.
 - **“You did not choose me, but I chose you” John 15:16**
 - **“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, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.” Ephesians 1:13–14**
 - **“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God” 1 Peter 2:9**



What comfort do the “having been sealed ones” (you) have in the perfect passive verb?

- **144,000**
 - 12 is the number of the church (12 tribes 12 apostles). This number seems to symbolize the believers of Old and New testaments. 10 is a number of completion or intensification
 - *“Since 12 is the product of 3, the number for God, and 4, the number for humanity, the number 12 and it’s multiples signify the completion of God’s covenant of grace with all people.” - PB*
 - *“It is often thought that the two halves of the chapter relate to two different companies of people, so that vs 1–8 show God’s care for Israel in the last times, or at least for Jewish Christians, whereas vs 9–17 depict the saved of the nations of the world. This is a doubtful interpretation. If the ‘sealing’ of the first vision portrays God’s protection from the destructive judgments coming on the earth, then all God’s people will need that, not a limited section of them (and that is done; see 9:4). Moreover, the expression the servants of our God, who are sealed (3) occurs elsewhere in Revelation, and regularly denotes the whole company of the redeemed (see 2:20; 11:18; 19:2, 5; 22:3, 6). It is likely that John was guided to employ a prophecy that originally was intended to assure Jews of the certainty of their inheritance in the kingdom of God. He applied it to the church as the new Israel, since its symbolism thereby comes to perfect realization (for the church as the new Israel see Rom. 2:28–29; Gal. 3:29; 6:16; Phil. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:1; 2:9)” - NBC*
 - *"The number of those that were sealed, where observe, ... A general account of those who were saved out of other nations (v. 9): A great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. Though these are not said to be sealed, yet they were selected by God out of all nations, and brought into his church, and there stood before the throne. Observe, [1.] God will have a greater harvest of souls among the Gentiles than he had among the Jews. More are the children of the desolate than of the married woman. [2.] The Lord knows who are his, and he will keep them safe in times of dangerous temptation. [3.] Though the church of God is but a little flock, in comparison of the wicked world, yet it is no contemptible society, but really large and to be still more enlarged” - MH*

From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, ⁶from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, ⁷ from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000, ⁸ from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.

5 ἐκ φυλῆς Ἰούδα δώδεκα χιλιάδες ἐσφραγισμένοι,
from tribe Judas twelve thousands having been sealed

ἐκ φυλῆς Ῥουβὴν δώδεκα χιλιάδες,
from tribe Ruben twelve thousands

ἐκ φυλῆς Γὰδ δώδεκα χιλιάδες,
from tribe Gad twelve thousands

6 ἐκ φυλῆς Ἀσὴρ δώδεκα χιλιάδες,
from tribe Aser twelve thousands

ἐκ φυλῆς Νεφθαλίμ δώδεκα χιλιάδες,
from tribe Nephthalim twelve thousands

ἐκ φυλῆς Μανασσῆ δώδεκα χιλιάδες,
from tribe Manasses twelve thousands

7 ἐκ φυλῆς Συμεὼν δώδεκα χιλιάδες,
from tribe Simeon twelve thousands

ἐκ φυλῆς Λευὶ δώδεκα χιλιάδες,
from tribe Levi twelve thousands

ἐκ φυλῆς Ἴσσαχαρ δώδεκα χιλιάδες,
from tribe Issachar twelve thousands

8 ἐκ φυλῆς Ζαβουλὼν δώδεκα χιλιάδες,
from tribe Zabulon twelve thousands

ἐκ φυλῆς Ἰωσήφ δώδεκα χιλιάδες,
from tribe Joseph twelve thousands

ἐκ φυλῆς Βενιαμὴν δώδεκα χιλιάδες ἐσφραγισμένοι.
from tribe Benjamin twelve thousands having been sealed

• “tribe of”

- “The 12 tribes are listed in this order nowhere else in Scripture, which reinforces the symbolic nature of this picture. The New Testament talks about a spiritual Israel that includes all believers (see 2:9). In this sense Paul writes, “So all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:26). Verse 9 removes any question that these are all the elect when it says they come from “every nation, tribe, people and language.” - PB
- Levi is included - they did not have a share of the promised land like the other tribes. they were priests.
- Dan is omitted - maybe because they were idol prone???
- Ephraim is called “tribe of Joseph”- Ephraim is one of the most important tribes. Joseph is a great guy but still it seems odd.
- Scripture often talks about what it means to be a true child of Abraham and it has nothing to do with DNA. Rather those who believe are the true Israelites.
- I feel like there is something to the choice to describe the church according to the tribes of Israel but I am not sure what it is. I feel confident it is not to exclude the gentiles from those who will be marked as possessions under the protection of God.