The “Seal of the Living God” in Rev 7:1-8: An Exegetical Study

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Abstract

This study deals with the meaning of the “Seal of the Living God” in Rev 7:1-8. Several scholars interpret this seal as Baptism, while others suggest that this is the Holy Spirit. Others say, it is the name of God and the Lamb and is simply a seal of ownership and protection. Only very few biblical scholars have written an in-depth study on this issue. A dissertation has been published on this issue. The author suggested that the “seal” is the names of God and the Lamb. He also insisted that the “acts of sealing” are externally manifested through Christo-theological confession which clearly identifies the true Jews from all nations. However, the author does not see Rev 7 and 14 in the context of obedience or disobedience to God’s commandments in the end-time issue of worship in decoding the meaning of the “seal of the living God.”

Another article dealt with the “Mark of the Beast as a ‘Sign Commandment’ and ‘Anti-Sabbath’ in the Worship Crisis of Revelation 12-14.” The author identified the mark of the beast as a direct parody of the Sabbath. Consequently, he suggests that the Sabbath is the eschatological sign and seal of covenant loyalty to the God of creation and redemption. However, the author failed to deal with, the relation of Rev 7 and Rev 14 in decoding the meaning of the “seal of the living God.” This study focuses on the meaning of the “seal of the living God” of Rev 7:1-8, which may also link it with Rev 14. The historical-grammatical method was employed in this exegetical study.

Introduction

One of the issues in the book of Revelation that needs attention is the phrase “σφραγίδα θεοῦ ζώντος” (the seal of the living God, Rev 7:2). John Osborne notes that some scholars interpret “the seal of the living God” in Rev 7:2 as a metaphor for baptism, while others say it is the Holy Spirit, or simply a seal of ownership and protection. On the other hand, Robert Mounce just says that the “mark it leaves on the forehead is ‘His name [the Lamb’s] and His Father’s name’,” but he never explained further what the seal really means. Furthermore, there has been a scarcity of an in-depth study of the “Seal of the Living God” in Rev 7:1-8. So far, a dissertation has been published entitled, “Sealing of the Slaves of God: Revelation 7 in the Stream of Biblical-Christological Interpretation.” The author concluded that the “seal of the living God” here represents the “Names of God and the Lamb,” which has a metaphorical meaning of divine eternal ownership and protection, the proof and

3Craig S. Keener seems to do the same. He suggests that the seal or mark is the name of God and the Lamb which attests ownership. Craig S. Keener, Revelation, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 235.
guarantee of their (the 144,000) eternal salvation. In addition, he insisted that the “acts of sealing” are externally manifested through Christo-theological confession which clearly identifies the true Jews from all nations. The author does not see Rev 7 and 14 in the context of obedience or disobedience to God’s commandments in the end-time issue of worship in decoding the meaning of the “seal of the living God.”

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The historical-grammatical method will be employed in this exegetical study. Since this is only a short paper, hence some details which are not so relevant will be left out. This paper will do an exegetical analysis of the passage using some exegetical steps which are directly pertinent in suggesting an interpretation of the “seal of God” in Rev 7:1-8.

Exegetical Analysis

The book of Revelation is one the controversial books in the NT scholarly interpretations. There are at least four major approaches in interpreting the book. This paper will not engage in the debate on these approaches. The Historicist approach will be employed in this research.

This study deals first with the historical background (OT, and extra-biblical literature) of the seal of the living God of Rev 7:2-3. Second, the literary-contextual analysis will follow which includes the genre and structural analyses; the immediate context of Rev 7:1-8; and the broader context that is the link between Rev 7 and Rev 13-14, and the rest of the book of Revelation, and the NT.

Historical Background

The OT background of the “seal of the living God” or the imagery of sealing of 144,000 in Rev 7:1-8 and Rev 14:1-5 will be scrutinized in this section. Then the extra-biblical background on the imagery of sealing/marking or seal of God will be considered.

The most probable allusion to the sealing in Rev 7:1-8 is found in Ezek 9:1-11. The book of Ezekiel mainly focuses on “judgement and restoration, grounded in Day

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5This study accepts that the author of the book was John the disciple of Jesus (Rev 1:1), and was written as many scholars propose, during the reign of Domitian on A.D. 95-96.

6These approaches are the following: Preterist, Idealist, Futurist, and Historicist. The Preterist proponents insist that the book of Revelation primarily deals with the situations of the Christian churches in Asia Minor during the first century A.D., hence the book does not contain predictive prophecies. The Idealist approach suggests that the symbols in the book do not have historical significance. It cannot be applied to any historical time period or place. The emphasis is on the timeless truth and principles, rather than on historical events. The Futurist approach

of Atonement themes.”

Looking at chapter 9 in the light of this bigger picture is enlightening in unravelling the meaning of the “seal of the living God” in Rev 7:1-8. Now, looking at chapter 9:1-11, it is explicit that in this vision-narrative, the LORD is about to judge the city of Jerusalem with destruction (vv. 1-2).

Before the judgment of death was to begin, the LORD commanded one clothed with linen, to “put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done in it” (v. 4). Immediately after the sealing, the LORD commanded the destroyers to kill everyone in the city who does not have the mark on his/her forehead (v. 5). The execution started at the sanctuary (v. 6), then to the rest of the city (v. 7). The reason for the execution was given: (1) the iniquity of Judah was exceedingly great; (2) the land was full of bloodshed; (3) the city was full of perversity (v. 9). It is interesting to note that only those who sigh and cry over the abominations were marked and consequently were spared. Thus, here marking on the foreheads had the purpose of protection from God’s judgement against sin. Furthermore, presumably, those who were marked were the remaining righteous who remained obedient to the covenant of Yahweh. In addition, Daniel I. Block suggests that in ancient custom the mark “taw” in v. 4 served as a mark of ownership. There is a “possibility that this mark represented Yahweh’s signature, His claim on those who were citizens of the true kingdom of God.”

Block further mentions that “in Job 31:35, the taw represents a shorthand symbol for one’s signature. By Ezekiel’s time, ownership was more commonly expressed by inscribing lamed plus the name of the owner.”

Seventh-day Adventist Commentary (SDABC) also cited David Diringer. It noted that in antiquity in Ancient Near East, seals were used just like a signature today. It authenticated ownership of a given object to secure it from being opened or molested.

Comparing Ezekiel’s vision (9:1-11) with that of John in Rev 7:1-8, we can find several thematic and structural parallels: (1) both people are God’s obedient people (Ezek 9:4; Rev 7:3); (2) in both visions, the seal or mark is put on the foreheads (Ezek 9:4; Rev 7:3); (3) both sealing were done before the a judgment or crisis (Ezek 9:4-6; Rev 7:1,3); (4) the purpose in both sealing seems to protect those who were sealed from God’s wrath that will destroy the wicked (Ezek 9:6-10; Rev 7:3,14 cf. Rev 14:1-5; 9-11; 17-20); (5) those who were slain are wicked (Ezek 9:9; Rev 14:9-11; 17-20).

It should be highlighted that, looking at the bigger picture of both passages, we could see the underlying issue. In both contexts there is an issue on worship. In Ezekiel, the apostate children of Judah built an image of jealousy at the entrance of

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8Ezekiel was taken captive to Babylon in 597 B.C., he was called to the prophetic ministry while he was in exile. See Andrews Bible “Title, Author, and Date” (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press), 1040.
9Andrews Bible, 1042.
10During this period, Zedekiah was the vassal king in Judah who was under the Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon most likely before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city in 587/86 B.C.
Horace D. Hummel, Ezekiel 1-20, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2005), 276. He further adds, “in Ezek 9:4-6 the taw probably is best interpreted as Yahweh’s signature, or a mark that designates people who truly belong to him through faith and who are faithful to his kingdom.”
12Ibid. He adds, “in Isa 44:5 those who claim to be the property of Yahweh have their hands stamped with lywhw, “belonging to Yahweh.”
13SDABC, 7:782. Cited from David Diringer, The Biblical Archaeologist, XII [1949], 84
the gateway facing north of the inner court of God’s temple (Ezek 8:3,5). At the inner wall in some rooms inside the house of the Lord, they also engraved all kinds of beasts and they worshipped them (8:10-11). At the entrance of the north gate, there were also women who weeping for Tammuz (8:14). Then, other men with their backs to the temple worshipped the sun toward the east (8:16). Thus, the Lord’s wrath was upon them (8:18). In Revelation, the wicked will be destroyed by God’s wrath because they worshipped the beast and his image (Rev 13:11-17; 14:9-11). It should be pointed out that, in both visions, the bottom line of the issue is obedience/loyal or disobedience/disloyal to God’s Ten Commandments. It is also worth noting that in both visions/books, the sanctuary theme was central (e.g., Ezek 8:6,11,14,16; Rev 7:10,11,15; 11:19, 14:1-5; Rev 15:5-8).

Another event in the OT that may further shed light to issue of sealing/marking in Rev 7:1-8/Rev 13:11-14:20 is in Exodus 12. In Exod 12, when God was about to execute judgement against Egypt’s gods and to strike the firstborn in Egypt, He commanded the Israelites to eat the Passover Lamb and put some blood on the two doorposts of their houses (vv. 7-8). The blood was a sign so that the destroying angel may pass over the Israelites and the plague will not destroy them (v. 13). Here are some thematic/structural parallels between the Exodus 12 event and Rev 7:1-17 (cf. Rev 14:1-5, 9-11, 17-20: 15:1-16:20): (1) the marking was done before the judgement was executed; (2) the mark/seal was for protection (3) those who were marked by God’s people/servants, and those who were not marked were not God’s covenant people (4) a Sanctuary motif is also prominent, both in Exodus and Revelation—it is the blood of the Lamb (Exod 12:3-13; Rev 7:14) that saved God’s people.

In extra-biblical literature, there are some documents that mention the concept of Divine marking citing the passage in Ezekiel. One is found in Damascus Document of Qumran community. It speaks about the escape of those who keep the commandments during the visitation of the Messiah because they had a mark on their foreheads (alluding to Ezekiel 9). Presumably, those who did not have the mark were handed down to the sword. In a psalm of Solomon 15: 6-9 (a first century B.C. document), he alludes also to Ezekiel. The author said that God will put a mark on the righteous (for salvation), and they will be spared from famine, sword, and death; whereas the wicked will not escape the Lord’s judgement because they have the mark of destruction on their foreheads. The Talmud also mentioned the taw mark on the foreheads of the righteous so that the destroying angels may spare them, but the taw mark of blood on the wicked may mean their destruction (b. Sabb. 55a).

The Immediate Context: Who Is Able to Stand?

It is evident in the context that the sealing of “servants of God,” the 144,000 in Rev 7:2-3, is the answer to the question “who is able to stand?” in Rev 6:17. Looking at the literary structure of the seven seals, it is clear that the sixth seal’s events happen

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14 Leslie C. Allen also points out that the “account in chap. 8 consists of four scenes of aberrant worship observed in the area of the temple (vv. 3-6; 7-13; 14-15; 16-18). Leslie C. Allen, Ezekiel 1-91, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 28, ed., David Hubbard and Glenn W. Baker (Dallas, TX: Word, 1994), 130.

15 God’s marking of Cain for his life’s protection (Gen 4:15) will not be dealt with here because of its contrast theme with the one in Rev 7:1-8. Another event that will not be tackled is the destruction of Jericho where Rahab was saved because she has faith and obeyed what they told her to do by binding a scarlet cord in the window of her house (John 2:18; 6).

16 Block, 305, 310.

17 Ibid., 311.

18 Ibid.
at the *eschaton* up to the second coming. Rev 6:17 is the conclusion of the opening of the sixth seal (6:12-17). Looking at the larger picture, it seems that the events of the sixth seal happen at the *eschaton* up to the time of the second coming. This interpretation is relevant to the question “who is able to stand?” before the great day of the Lamb in Rev 6:17. The question is answered in Rev 7:1-17. The 144,000 or the Great Multitude will be able to stand in the great day of the wrath of the Lamb (6:16-17). Thus, here, as in the OT background, the sealing/marking has the purpose of protecting God’s faithful people from the wrath/judgment of Lamb/God.

Now, what is the seal of the living God in the light of the immediate context? It is evident that the seal\(^{19}\) of the living has the purpose of protecting God’s servants from the wrath of the Lamb in Rev 6:16 or the blowing of the winds in Rev 7:1 (which symbolizes Lamb/God’s judgement on the wicked—seven plagues). Looking further, if the great multitude (7:9-17) and the 144,000 (7:1-8) refer to the same group, then the “winds” of 7:1 and the “great tribulation” in 7:14 are also the same. If this is the case, then 7:9-17 may shed light also as to the meaning of the seal of the living God. It should be pointed out that there are some reasons why the 144,000/Great Multitude survived the great tribulation (7:14), and are standing before throne of God and the Lamb (7:9,10): (1) they were clothed with white robes (7:9), (2) the were holding palm branches (7:9), (3) they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (7:14). It should also be highlighted that the saved exclaimed that “salvation belongs to our God . . . and to the Lamb” (7:10).

Looking at these evidences, it seems to suggest that the seal of the living God is salvific, which signifies that this is not so much about physical protection but rather a spiritual one. It is not about protection against the death decree by the beast and his image (Rev 13:11-18; Rev 15:2; Rev 20:4), but it is about protection from spiritual falling when their loyalty/faith to the Lamb is tested (Rev 13:11-18); from seven last plagues (Rev 16), from the destruction at the *Parousia* (Rev 6:12-17; Rev 19:14-21), and from eternal destruction after the 1000 years (20:9-10; Rev 20:11-15). If this is the case, then the “seal of the living God” in the immediate and broader contexts of Rev 7:1-8 has something to do with their spiritual preparation that will spare the servants of God from the seven last plagues, from the destruction at the *Parousia*, and from the eternal destruction in the after the 1000 years.

In the immediate context of Rev 7:1-8, the most significant evidence in relation to the “seal of the living God” is the “white robe” that the servants of God washed in the blood of the Lamb. This is, I suggest, the equivalent of the sealing of the 144,000/Great Multitude\(^{20}\) on their foreheads. This is thematically parallel with those who were sealed in Ezek 9:4 who “sigh and cry over the abominations” of Jerusalem. This is also a significantly parallel with the Exodus event when the Israelites firstborn were spared from the destroying angel on account of the blood of the Lamb being on their doorposts (Exod 12:3-13).

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\(^{19}\)The Greek word for seal is *σφραγίς* which means *seal, signet*—I. literally—a. seal Rev 5:1f, 5, 9; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 12; 8:1.—b. the instrument with which one seals, a signet Rev 7:2.—c. the mark or impression of a seal 2 Tim 2:19; Rev 9:4.—2. figuratively, that which confirms, attests, or authenticates, certification Rom 4:11; 1 Cor 9:2. Bibleworks, s.v., “*σφραγίς*.”

\(^{20}\)This study assumes that the 144,000 and the Great Multitude are the same. See Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Berrien Springs, MI, Andrews University Press, 2002), 265.
The Broader Context: His Name and His Father’s Name

It seems that the analysis of the verbal, thematic, and structural parallel passages will also shed light to the issue at hand. Rev 14:1-5 also mentions the 144,000 who, in this context, are now standing in heavenly mount Zion with the Lamb (v. 1, cf. Heb 12:22). At this juncture, a table may show the overwhelming parallel between Rev 7:1-17 and Rev 13:11-14:20.\(^\text{21}\)

**Table 1: Parallel between Rev 7:1-17 and Rev 13:11-14:20**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The wind is about to blow (7:1,14)</td>
<td>1. Death decree, seven plagues, and destruction at <em>Parousia</em> (13:15; 14:10-11; 14:19-20; cf. chapter 16; 19:17-21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sealing with the “seal of the living God” on the foreheads of 144,000 servants of God from the twelve tribes of Israel (7:3-8)</td>
<td>2. The 144,000 with the Lamb’s and His father’s names on their foreheads (14:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. They came out of the great tribulation (blowing of winds) (7:14)</td>
<td>3. They were threatened with death, escaped the 7 plagues, and the destruction at the <em>Parousia</em> (13:15; 14:9-11; cf. Chap. 16; Rev 19:17-21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. They were clothed in white robes; and they have washed their robes and made them white with the blood of the Lamb (7:9,14)</td>
<td>4. They have not defiled themselves with women; they were virgins; they follow the Lamb; no lie in their mouth; they are blameless (14:4,5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. They are standing before the throne, after the tribulation, serving God day and night in His temple, and the Lamb will shepherd them (7:9,15,17)</td>
<td>5. They are standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb, after they passed through tribulations on earth, they sing a new song before the throne (14:3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the table shows overwhelming verbal, thematic, and structural parallels between the two passages, it is therefore contextually right to analyze this parallel passage/s (Rev 13:11-14:20, or even up to 15:2). Now, looking at the table above, it seems that the “seal of the living God” on 144,000 on their foreheads is parallel with the names of the Father and the Lamb on their foreheads. This seems to suggest that the “seal of the living God” in 7:2 is the same with the names of the Father and Lamb in 14:1. Louis Brighton concurs to this idea when he pointed out that “the seal of God that the 144,000 bore when in warfare (7:1-3) is now identified as ’his [the Lamb’s] name and the name of his Father (14:1).’\(^\text{22}\)

But the question is: what is the meaning of the names of the Father and the Lamb on the foreheads of the 144,000 servants of God? Is this literal or symbolic? Definitely, this is not literal as the Name of the Beast on the foreheads of the wicked is not literal either (Rev 13:16-17). Brighton argued that the “similarity of the theology between Matt 28:19 and Rev 14:1 strengthens the interpretation that both the seal of God in 7:1-8 and the name of God in 14:2 are applied to Christian baptism.”\(^\text{23}\)


\[^{22}\text{Louis Brighton, *Revelation*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1999), 368.}\]

\[^{23}\text{Ibid.}\]
However, this may be forcing Matthew on Revelation because the theme of baptism
seems to be absent in Revelation.\footnote{24}

What would be the possible symbolic meaning of the Father’s and the Lamb’s
names on the foreheads of the 144,000? The Greek word for name is “ὄνομα.”
Generally, (1) it means a literal “name” of persons whether of man (Matt 10:2; Mark
14:32; Luke 8:30, 41; 10:20; Heb 1:4; Rev 9:11), and of God or Jesus (Matt 6:9;
Mark 9:38; Luke 1:49; 10:17; Rom 2:24; 2 Thess 1:12); (2) it also means “title” or
“category” (Matt 10:41,42; 1 Pet 4:14,16); (3) “person” (Acts 1:15; 18:15; Rev 3:4);
(4) “reputation” or “fame” (Mark 6:14; Rev 3:1).\footnote{25} James Strong says, literally or
figuratively, it means “authority or “character.”\footnote{26} Names in the OT often have
significance in relation to person’s character. For example the name Nabal means “He
is just like his name—His name means Fool, and folly goes with him” (1 Sam
25:25).\footnote{27} The change of name in the Scripture also has important significance as a
reflection of a change of a person’s character, work, and role. For example, Abram’s
name was changed to Abraham, “father of many nations” (Gen 17:5); Jacob (which
means supplanter). It was changed to Israel because he has fought with God (Gen
32:28).\footnote{28} Furthermore, Moises Silva pointed out that through the name of Yahweh,
the godly people could experience Yahweh’s protection and help (cf. Ps 54:6; Prov
18:10; 89:24; 118:10-12).\footnote{29} A name in the OT also carries authority, and sometimes
was used by a representative who carried the authority of the owner of the name, for
example, the prophet of Yahweh (Exod 5:23; Deut18:18-19).\footnote{30}

Analyzing the immediate context of Rev 14:1-5 may shed light as to the
symbolic meaning and function of the name of the Father and of the Lamb on the
foreheads of the 144,000. In the passage, the 144,000 are now standing on heavenly
Mount Zion (cf. Heb 12:22; Rev 7:9) with the Lamb. Standing on Mount Zion with
the Lamb may signify victory over the enemy—the Beast and its Image (Rev 13:11-
18; Rev 15:2). It seems that the name of the Father and the Lamb on their foreheads
protected them and gave them victory over the Beast and its Image.\footnote{31} It is interesting
to note that the second Beast force the inhabitants of the earth to worship the first
Beast and its Image (13:12,15). They also impose a mark—that is the name of the
Beast or the number of its name (13:17). It is now clear that there are two forces here
engaged in a world-wide eschatological controversy over the issue of worship. The
first force is represented by the Beast and its Image that will demand worship
(13:12,15). However, the bottom line is that the Dragon—Satan is the leader of these
forces (Rev 12; 13:4). However, God also calls the inhabitants of the earth, through
the three angels’ messages, to worship Him (14:6-11).

Now, looking at the bigger picture (or context) may shed more light as to the
symbolic meaning of the “name” (seal) of the Father and the Lamb on the foreheads.

\footnote{24}The theme of washing is present in Revelation, but it is associated with the blood of the Lamb
not with water (see Rev 1:5 [Byzantine text]; 7:14).
\footnote{25}Bibleworks 8, s.v. “ὄνομα.”
\footnote{26}James Strong, Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, repr., 1991), s.v.
“ὄνομα.”
\footnote{27}Moises Silva, New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis, vol., 3
(Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), s.v., “ὄνομα.”
\footnote{28}Ibid.
\footnote{29}Ibid.
\footnote{30}Ibid.
\footnote{31}In Ancient world, a mark upon a person may stand for at least five different things namely: (1)
ownership, (2) loyalty, (3) security, (4) dependence, (5) safety. William Barclay, The Revelation of
It seems that the bigger issue in this world-wide eschatological controversy is Obedience and Loyalty to God through His commandments. It should be pointed out that the vision of this eschatological controversy (11:19-14:20) begins with the heavenly sanctuary—throne room vision highlighting the “ark of the covenant” (11:19) where the 10 commandments (implied) may be located. The centrality of the 10 commandments in the eschatological controversy in this vision is clearly evident. In fact, the saints (144,000), who refuse to worship the Beast and his Image by accepting the mark of the Beast on their foreheads, are spoken as the ones who “keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (14:12). It seems evident here that keeping the commandments of God is tantamount to refusing the mark of the Beast. This suggests that the mark or “seal” of God has something to do with the keeping (obeying) His commandments. In fact, disobedient/obedient to God’s commandments is the central theme in this vision.

The worship of the beast, of the dragon, and image of the beast (13:5-10; 11-18), in contrast to the worship of Creator (first angel’s message, 14:6-12) is a defiance to the first commandment—you shall have no other gods before me (Exod 20:3 cf. 13:3,12). The worship of the Image of the Beast is a defiance of the second commandment: Image worship (Exod 20: 4-6; cf. Rev 13:14). The “blasphemy” against God is a transgression of the third commandment—you shall not take God’s name in vain (Exod 20:7; cf. Rev 13:1,5,6.). The principle of the fifth commandment is violated with the disrespect of the God’s authority as the Creator by the Beast (Exod 20:12; cf. Rev 14:6-11). The decree to kill those who would not worship the Beast and its Image is a violation of the sixth commandment: you shall not murder (Exod 20:13; cf. Rev 13:15). The great harlot—Babylon is guilty of spiritual adultery (14:8-11; cf. 17:2,4) violating the seventh commandment—you shall not commit adultery (Exod 20:14). The act of deception by the second Beast is a violation of the eighth commandment—you shall not bear false witness (Exod 20:16; cf. Rev 13:14). The acts of forcing the inhabitants of the earth to worship the Beast and its Image is stealing and coveting the Worship that belongs only to God as the Creator (Rev 13:15; 14:6-7,9-11). In this vision, it is fairly evident that the nine commandments are violated by the Beast and its Image together with those who received the mark of the Beast in this vision.

How about the fourth commandment? Is this violated in this vision? What I suggest is that it is transgressed too. It should be stressed that the main issue in this end-time controversy is “Worship” which shows Loyalty/Obedience either to God or the Beast. The allusion to the fourth commandment—the Sabbath in Rev 14:6-7 is very strong. Here are the verbal and thematic parallels between Rev 14:7 and the Sabbath/commandments passages in the OT (Exod 20:8-11; Isa 66:23; Ecc 12:13-14; Ezek 20:12,20).

Table 2: Verbal/Thematic Parallels between Rev 14:6-7; 7:3; 14:1 and Exod 20:8-11; Isa 66:23; Ecc 12:13-14; Ezek 20:12,20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rev 14:7; 7:3, 14:1 (BNT)</th>
<th>OT Sabbath Passages</th>
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</table>
| ● λέγων ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ· φοβήθητε τὸν θεόν καὶ δότε αὐτῷ δόξαν, ὅτι ἡλέθη ἡ ὥρα τῆς κρίσεως αὐτοῦ, καὶ προσκυνήσατε τῷ ποιήσαντι τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ θάλασσαν καὶ πηγὰς ὕδατον. | Exod 20:11 (LXX)  
| ● ἵνα ἐν ἀγαθόν ἡμέρας ἐποίησαν κύριος τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ κατέστησεν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἐβόδημι διὰ τούτο εὐλογήσαν κύριος τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ἐβόδημν |
- Theme: God is the CREATOR
- και ἡγίασεν αὐτήν
  - Theme: God is the CREATOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 66:23 (LXX)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>καὶ ἐσται μήνα ἐκ μηνός καὶ σάββατον ἐκ σαββάτου ἥξει πάσα σάρξ ἐνώπιον μου προσκυνήσαι ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ ἐπεν κύριος</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Theme: God should be worshipped on the Sabbath

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecclesiastes 12:13 (LXX)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 τέλος λόγου τὸ πάν ἀκούεται τόν θεόν φοβοῦ καὶ τᾶς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ φύλασσε ὅτι τούτο πάς ὁ ἄνθρωπος</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 ὅτι σὺν πᾶν τὸ ποίημα ὁ θεὸς ἡξεί ἐν κρίσει ἐν παντὶ παρεωραμένῳ ἔαν ἁγαθὸν καὶ ἔαν πονηρὸν</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Theme: Fear God means—keep God’s comdts., because there will be judgment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecc 12:13-14 (LXX)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme: Worship the CREATOR</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>λέγον εν φωνή μεγάλης. φοβήθητε τόν θεόν καὶ δότε αὐτῷ δόξαν, ὅτι ἠλθεν ἡ ὄρα τῆς κρίσεως αὐτοῦ, καὶ προσκυνήσατε τῷ ποίησαν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ θάλασσαν καὶ πηγὰς ὕδατον.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Theme: Worship the CREATOR |

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<tr>
<th>Ecc 12:13-14 (LXX)</th>
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<td>Theme: the sealing of God’s people may mean the transformation of their character manifested in the keeping of His commandments</td>
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<tr>
<th>9 Ecclesiastes 12:13</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>λέγον: κἂν ἀδίκησητε τὴν γῆν μὴ τὴν θάλασσαν μὴ τὰ δένδρα, ἄχρι σφραγίσωμεν τοὺς δούλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἤμων ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν. (Rev 7:3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ξέροσαί το ὅνομα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ ὅνομα τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ γεγραμμένον ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν. (Rev 14:1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Theme: the sealing of God’s people may mean the transformation of their character manifested in the keeping of His commandments |

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>καὶ τὰ σάββατα μου ἔδωκα αὐτοῖς τοῦ εἶναι εἰς σημεῖον ἀνὰ μέσον ἐμοῦ καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον αὐτῶν τοῦ γνῶναι αὐτοὺς διότι εἰς κύριος ὁ ἁγιάζων αὐτοῖς (Eze 20:12 LXT)</td>
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<tr>
<td>καὶ τὰ σάββατα μου ἐπάνω ἂν καὶ ἐπάνω ἂν σημεῖον ἀνὰ μέσον ἐμοῦ καὶ ὕμων τοῦ γινώσκειν διότι εἰς κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν (Eze 20:20 LXT)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Theme: The Sabbath is a sign between God and His people (sanctification—transformation of character)

It is plausible to say then that the main issue in this end-time conflict is the worship of God as the Creator of heaven and earth. The fourth commandment is the keeping Holy the Day that commemorates God’s act of creation in six literal days. Most likely, a counterfeit day of worship is enforced by the Beast as a Mark of his own authority as the Sabbath is the seal/mark of God’s authority as the Creator of heaven and
earth.\textsuperscript{32} Furthermore, the Scripture presents the Sabbath as a “sign” between God and His people for a perpetual covenant (Exod 31:16-17); and a sign of sanctification (Ezek 20:12, 20), which implies that obedience to the Sabbath (including the rest of the nine commandments). This evidence, given specifically in the context of the end-time, is an outward manifestation of an inward sanctification (reproduction of Christ-like character) of His people. Thus, this study suggests that the name/seal of God and the Lamb is true obedience to the Sabbath which is an outward manifestation of a sanctified character (the symbol of God’s name and the Lamb’s)\textsuperscript{33} reproduced in the saints. SDABC also pointed out that the seal is likeness to Christ character.\textsuperscript{34} Stefanovic also concurs that “just as those serving the beast bear the symbolic mark with the name of the beast on their foreheads, so the 144,000 have the name of the living God on their foreheads. This reception of a name on the forehead signifies “conformity to the character of Satan or God.”\textsuperscript{35}

The context shows evidences for these (1) the 144,000 were not defiled by women (Rev 14:4a), in the context of the end-time. The women are the false churches—Babylon (Rev 14:8; chapters 17 and 18). This shows the spiritual purity of their character; (2) They follow the Lamb wherever He goes (14:4b)—may indicate a Christ-like character; (3) There is no deceit found in their mouth (14:5)—may indicate obedience to the ninth commandment. They probably honestly confess their faith in Jesus in the midst of persecution (Rev 14:12); (4) In symbolic language, they were clothed (περιβεβλημένους, a divine passive) with white robes (7:9)—this may suggest that this symbolized the righteous character of the Lamb given to them because they have faith of/in Jesus (14:12); (5) They washed (ἔπλυναν, active voice) their robes and made them white (ἐλεύκαναν, active voice) in the blood of the Lamb (7:14)—this may mean their active struggle against sin relying on the blood of Jesus for forgiveness, and their righteous acts in obeying God’s commandments (Rev 19:1-8). It is interesting that the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints (19:8), but this is still the product of divine grace (see the divine passive-- ἐδόθη “it was granted”).

**Summary and Conclusion**

The issue on the meaning of the “seal of the living God” in Rev 7:18 has been dividing Biblical scholarship. There are several views on this: (1) some say that the seal is Christian Baptism, (2) while others say it is the Holy Spirit, (3) another author says it is the Sabbath, (3) lastly, one scholar says, it is metaphorical—which means divine eternal ownership and protection, externally manifested in a Christo-theological confession of faith in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah.

The historical background shows that the most probable background of the “seal of the living God” in Ezek 9:1-11. This passage has thematic/structural parallels with Rev 7:1-8. There, the wicked were destroyed who do not have the mark on their foreheads. Those who were marked were the obedient remnant who sigh and cry over the abomination of the land. It was noted that the issue in the broader context was worship. The apostate devotees worship pagan gods. The underlying issue is

\textsuperscript{32} Ellen G. White pointed out also that “The seal of God, the token or sign of His authority, is found in the fourth commandment.” Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, Nov. 1, 1899. quoted from SDABC, 7:832.

\textsuperscript{33}It should be pointed out that the name of God—Yahweh, His title—the Creator, and His territory—the Heavens and the earth, are found in the fourth commandment (Exod 20:8-11).

\textsuperscript{34}SDABC 7:782, see also Ibid. 7:825.

\textsuperscript{35}Stefanovic, 438.
Obedience/disobedience to the covenant stipulations—the ten Commandments of Yahweh. In Exod 12, the Israelites were spared from destruction of the firstborn on account of the blood of the lamb on their doorposts. In extra-biblical literature, it was also noted that the Jews in the inter-testamental period believed that the Messiah would spare the righteous who keep God’s commandments—having His mark on their foreheads, while He would destroy the wicked who do not have the mark of destruction their foreheads.

In the immediate and immediate context of Rev 7:1-8, the seal of the living God is a seal of protection against the forth-coming wrath of God and the Lamb. It is not primarily a physical protection but spiritual and salvific. It would help the servants of God to remain faithful and loyal to Him during the onslaught of the two Beasts. It also protects the saints from the seven plagues, and the destruction occurring at the Parousia. Lastly, it will protect them form the final destruction in the lake of fire. It seems that it is related to the blood of the Lamb and the white robes that clothed the saints.

In the broader context, the seal of the living God and the names of the Father and the Lamb are tantamount to the seal of God. Those who had the names of the Father and the Lamb on their foreheads seemed to have been the ones who refused to accept the mark of the Beast. In the context of the mark of the Beast, the issue is worship and worship is related to God’s commandments. It is evident that the Beast and his followers are disobedient to God’s commandments, and the saints are obedient to God’s commandments. The OT parallel Sabbath passages and Rev 14:7 also seem to indicate that the Sabbath will also be one of the issues connected with worship in the end-time.

This study concludes that the seal of the living God in Rev 7:1-8 and Rev 14:1-2 has something to do with true obedience to the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment wherein God’s name is found, which represents His character/righteousness given to the saints and is reflected in their obedience and loyalty to the Sabbath commandment, and the rest of the nine. Specifically in the last-day issue on worship, the Sabbath loyalty could be an external sign of allegiance to God, since the Sabbath commemorates God’s creatorship. It is a seal of ownership and protection of God’s people against the great tribulation which includes: (1) spiritual protection from persecution instigated by evil forces, (2) seven plagues, (3) destruction at the Parousia, and (4) the destruction on the lake of fire.