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Frank W. Nelte

THE SEALING OF THE SPIRIT IN MAN

God the Father and Jesus Christ are spirit beings. They have always existed, and at some point They decided to create the Family of God. The challenge They faced was not only to create other spirit beings who would be the same kind of spirit beings as They Themselves are. They also had to give those created spirit beings **free independent minds**. And then They had to ensure that these created spirit beings would always accept the same philosophy, the same way of thinking and using their minds, as the way in which God the Father and Jesus Christ use Their minds.

So God created all the spirit beings, which we collectively refer to as angels. From all indications it was a **one-step creation**. By that I mean that the angels were apparently all created as instantly mature spirit beings. They didn't start out as "baby angels" and then over time develop into fully mature angels. No, all the angels were created as fully mature spirit beings.

But since the angels all had a mind with the freedom to choose how to live and how to think and what standards they would adopt in their minds, therefore **God tested all of them** over a period of time. The purpose of the tests was to establish how their minds would function over time. Specifically, would they freely and spontaneously also embrace unquestioning obedience and submission to God's will, or would they perhaps reject God's way of thinking in favor of a selfish me-first way of thinking instead?

We are not told how the two-thirds of all the angels who proved themselves to be faithful to God were tested. But we are told that one third of the angels was placed under the leadership of the individual we know as Satan, and they were sent to this earth for their period of testing.

As it turned out, it was Satan who first started to think selfishly. He had been created as a splendid, extremely beautiful spirit being. And Satan became extremely vain. He began to compete with God, and he wanted to take over God's position as the supreme ruler over all spirit beings, and over all of creation. He coveted God's status and position. Isaiah 14:13-14 tells us:

For **you have said** in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; **I will be like the most High**. (Isaiah 14:13-14)

The result of Satan's selfish way of using his free mind was that all the angels under his authority followed his leadership and rebelled with Satan against God. They have all become demons. Thus one third of the angels had used their free minds to embrace **a selfish way of thinking**, which way of thinking is by definition in opposition to God. A selfish way of thinking competes with God.

God the Father and Jesus Christ learned from that experience.

For one thing, They learned that when it comes to creating beings with free independent minds, then it is not good to immediately create the final product, as They had done with the creation of the angels.

They learned that it is better to create such beings, who will have a free will of their own, in an immature form, so that the free will could already be trained and tested before full maturity is achieved. The advantage of creating beings with a free will in an immature form, which would require further development before full maturity is achieved, was that the free will of such individuals will always be

much easier to guide and to influence in the right ways than a free will in a fully mature individual.

Also, the wrong selfish way of thinking can be confronted and dealt with far more effectively, **as long as that selfish mind is still immature**. Children will change much more readily than adults. Correct a child, and in many cases tomorrow the child has forgotten the matter of having been corrected. Receiving correction is not that big a deal for a small child. But correct an adult, and decades later he will in many cases still remember in a resentful way how you corrected him. Adults take correction far more personally than children.

But God also learned something else from the experience with the angels. And that "something else" is that once a free mind has been thoroughly tested and proved itself to be right before God, then **there also has to be a way of making that state of mind**, which has been achieved as a result of serious testing, **permanent**. Once testing has shown that the free mind readily and eagerly embraces God's standards and God's way of thinking, then **that free mind has to be "sealed" in some way**.

How God goes about "sealing" a mind that has proved itself to be true and faithful to God is not revealed. And I believe that the method by which God achieves this is surely above our comprehension at this point in time. But what is revealed is that God has indeed developed a way of fixing a tested mind so that it can never switch over to the opposite way of thinking. The proof for this is that for all the holy angels of God their minds have been "sealed", i.e. permanently fixed in the godly, selfless way of thinking. The holy angels of God will never rebel, as the angels with Satan had done. The holy angels willingly obey God and always seek to please God.

So God has a way of "sealing" a tested mind that is controlled by a free will, so that this free mind will never depart from the right way of thinking. Even though it is sealed, it is still a free mind. And **this ability to seal a free independent mind** is a monumental achievement by God. It is an essential ingredient in the process for leading human beings to salvation.

So when after Satan's rebellion God was ready to proceed to the next stage of His plan, to create human beings in the image of God, amongst many other things God did **two specific things**.

First, God created human beings to start out as babies, knowing nothing at birth. Then there is **the gradual development** of the body, growing towards maturity, and also the gradual and progressive acquisition of knowledge and understanding as the mind develops. This is important because all the angels, and also Adam and Eve, had been given mature minds at the time when they were created. But starting with Adam and Eve's children human beings would have to go through a maturing process of around two decades. That process provided **more time** to develop the human mind before full maturity would be achieved.

The spirit which controls the free will we refer to as "the spirit in man". As a matter of interest, it was the young man Elihu in the Book of Job who said "there is a spirit in man" (see Job 32:8). That spirit was also given the opportunity to develop gradually.

Now it was **God's intention** that all parents would guide and direct and channel and steer the minds of all of their children in the direction of rejecting the selfish way of thinking. Parents diligently teaching and training their small children in the way of acting without selfishness, in that way nurturing them to adulthood, were a major key to making this process work. This is the principle which Solomon expressed in Proverbs 22:6.

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

The expression "when he is old" refers to "when he reaches full maturity". It is the spirit in man that must already be trained in God's ways before full maturity is achieved by that human mind.

When God created Adam and Eve, I believe God had high expectations. Speaking as a person with a mind that will always think selfishly, given half a chance to do so, and knowing quite clearly that my own mind will spontaneously view everything from a selfish point of view, I believe that God's expectations at that point in time were not realistic and far too optimistic.

God has never entertained a selfish thought, whereas my mind will think spontaneously along selfish lines. It really takes no effort at all for me (and I assume also for you?) to think selfishly. Speaking in general terms, the reality was that the parents themselves followed a selfish way of thinking, and their children retained a selfish way of thinking from birth onwards. And even when parents set a good example of behaving without selfishness, and teaching their children this way of outgoing concern for others, that still didn't guarantee that the children would accept this way of thinking from their parents. They might, or they might not. That's because "the prince of the power of the air" was always there to promote the selfish way of thinking "in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). And so very, very few people accepted a selfless way of thinking before the flood.

As a result of man's totally selfish and perverse way of thinking and reasoning and conducting his life, God then destroyed all but eight people in the flood at the time of Noah. After the flood God made some modifications to His plan and then started again to work with human beings.

The second thing God did was create **the human spirit**, which enters every baby with the first breath the baby takes. We might keep in mind that the Hebrew word for "spirit" is "ruwach", and this Hebrew word also means "breath" and "wind". So in biblical Hebrew you can say that a baby takes "its first breath", and that statement can also mean that the baby takes "its first spirit". By identifying the Hebrew word for "spirit" with the meaning of "breath", God is showing us that the spirit in man enters our minds with the first breath we take, and it leaves our minds after we have taken our last breath.

The implication of this is that any babies that are aborted in the womb will not have a part in the second resurrection. Why? Because God does not give the spirit in man to any foetus in the womb; God only gives the spirit in man to every baby when that baby draws its first independent breath. And without a spirit in man there is nothing to resurrect.

[Comment: When someone was resurrected, as was the case with Lazarus, then the spirit in man returned to that mind. But the spirit was not somehow "waiting" in the dead body in the hope of being resurrected. No, at death the spirit had returned to God, who had given it at birth. And if someone is for any reason resurrected by God, then God also returns the spirit in man to that resurrected person. See Ecclesiastes 12:7 regarding the spirit in man leaving at death.]

So here is the thing we need to understand:

Every single human being who eventually ends up as a spirit being in the Family of God must develop and nurture **a selfless godly way of thinking**. This is true for all those who will be in the first resurrection; this is true for all those who will be born during the millennium; and this is also true for all those who will come up in the second resurrection. We call the spirit with that way of thinking "**a repentant mind**". If an individual ends up in God's Family, it will be because he developed a repentant mind. And that means that he also rejected Satan's spirit of fear, a spirit Satan manages to install in almost all human minds.

While there are certainly some exceptions, in most cases such repentant minds are tested by God over a number of decades for people in the first resurrection, and over many centuries for those born in the first

800-900 years of the millennium, and over a period of 100 years for the people in the second resurrection. Thorough testing requires a lot of time.

Now once God's testing of our spirits has been concluded, and God has established that we do in fact have repentant minds that have stood good through whatever trials we were exposed to, **then our repentant minds** (i.e. our spirits) **must be sealed**. To have coped with all the trials that had come our way certainly includes very emphatically rejecting and casting out Satan's spirit of fear.

We have done our part in embracing and maintaining a repentant attitude throughout our lives. Then it is God who has to do something so that our minds are sealed with that repentant attitude.

The purpose for sealing something is **to prevent what is sealed from being changed**. Repentant minds need to at some point be sealed, so that they no longer can be changed.

The point is:

As long as a righteous mind, a repentant mind, is not sealed, there is always the possibility that at some point in the future it could still depart from the godly way of thinking, and accept a selfish way of thinking in its place.

That is not a good situation.

This is something that has happened many times throughout history. People come to the point of submitting their lives to God, and they are deeply committed and dedicated. With an honest motivation they seek to please God in every way they can. This may be true for years or even for decades. **And then something in their lives changes**, and they begin to lose their commitment to God. And by the end of their lives they have totally departed from God's way of thinking.

This is what happens to the people who are represented by "the seed in stony places" and "the seed among thorns" in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13. People start out sincerely, but **they don't stay with that commitment** for whatever reasons. And God needs to find out if we will stay with the commitment we made at baptism, or if changed circumstances later in our lives lead us to depart from God's ways, and to reject God's way of using our minds.

For example, after Mr. Armstrong's death in 1986 people in God's Church began to face completely different circumstances. Many beliefs were turned upside-down. And those changed circumstances unfortunately led many people to let go of the commitments they had made many years earlier, when they had first come into contact with God's Church. Those changed circumstances told God a great deal about our commitment and about our character.

God explained this situation in the Book of Ezekiel.

When I shall say to **the righteous**, *that* he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, **all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered**; but for his iniquity that he has committed, he shall die for it. (Ezekiel 33:13)

This is an apt description of a member of God's Church who later voluntarily leaves all of God's teachings behind, and just goes back into the world. God made this statement in Ezekiel 33:13 because that is exactly what has happened many times throughout human history.

My point here is this:

Unless the repentant human spirit is sealed, there is always the possibility, however slight, that the human spirit could still be attracted to the selfish way of thinking. **That would be true for future eternity**, if that repentant spirit is not sealed in some way. There would always be an element of uncertainty with a spirit in man that has not been sealed.

For example:

Satan may well have been faithful to God for thousands or even millions of years, before God sent him to this earth with one third of all the angels. Nobody knows how long that was. But Satan had, after all, been installed by God the Father as "an anointed cherub" at the very throne of God. See Ezekiel 28:14. Why had God given Satan this great honor? Because of Satan's good looks? No. God had given this honor to Satan because Satan **at that time** had proved himself to be very faithful and loyal to God. But **later**, when the circumstances had changed, Satan also changed, and then rebelled against his own Creator!

So I suspect that it may have been the experience with Satan and his demons that showed God that **God had to devise a way of sealing a free mind** that has accepted the right way of thinking after thorough testing. And God has indeed established a way for sealing a free mind.

If our (i.e. all those who will be in God's Family) minds are not sealed at some point, we would be unreliable spirit beings for all future eternity. This state of uncertainty would continue. Only a sealing of the spirit can remove this uncertainty. Recall what Paul explained in Romans 7:18.

For I know that **in me** (that is, in my flesh,) **dwells no good thing**: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. (Romans 7:18)

Paul is here talking about the human mind. It is the mind that "dwells in the flesh". The body is a house for the human spirit. To bring this situation of Romans 7:18 to an end, the spirit in man must be sealed at a certain point in time.

Righteous human beings can change, even as Satan had changed. That's what Ezekiel 33:13 is focused on. And that is why it is so profoundly valuable and important that God has created **a way for repentant minds to be sealed**.

Such a sealing of repentant minds creates confidence and certainty, and I mean confidence and certainty for God the Father. When God changes a repentant human being into a spirit-born son of God, then God is imbuing that person with staggering, mind-boggling powers. Such powers will be on a far higher level than the powers Satan had at his disposal when he in his rebellion sought to destroy this entire universe. Before God will give such staggering powers to anyone, God must be absolutely certain that the individual who is given these powers will never misuse them to cause chaos and destruction, as Satan had done. That's where the ability to seal a repentant mind enters the picture.

Having created a way to seal a repentant mind, without restricting that mind's freedom in any way, is something of enormous importance before God. **It gives God full confidence** that God can absolutely trust every person to whom God gives immortal life in His Family, having first sealed their spirits.

Now here is something else we need to grasp. Let's look again at Ecclesiastes 12:7.

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and **the spirit shall return unto God who gave it**. (Ecclesiastes 12:7)

At death the spirit in man returns to God, who had given it with the first breath. But here is something we

need to understand in this regard:

When the spirit in man returns to God at death, then nothing happens to that spirit!

To be specific, that spirit is at that time **not "sealed"** in any way! At death nothing happens to that spirit. In analogy, at death **the spirit in man goes into cold storage**, so to speak. In other words, at that point in time God does nothing more to that spirit in man than **preserving it in the exact state**, in which it is at that time.

That is all that happens at death. At the time of death apparently no further actions are taken by God.

So if God chooses to create a new body for that mind, be that new body composed of flesh and blood, or be it composed of spirit, then nothing will have changed for that spirit in man. Nothing will have changed for that mind. **That mind will be identical in every way to the way it was at the point of death.** Nothing has changed.

It **must** be in exactly the same condition! A resurrection **to physical life** is not intended to give that individual some kind of advantage! Such a person resurrected to physical life would continue his existence from the split-second when he died. **There must be continuity in the way his mind works.** As far as the mind is concerned, no advantage of any kind has been given to that resurrected person.

So the people in the second resurrection, all of whom were unrepentant when they died, will come up with **an unrepentant spirit in man**. Nothing is done for them. Now some of them may repent pretty quickly, like on the same day. That's the way it was at Pentecost in Acts 2 ... very many people repented spontaneously when Peter laid the facts before them. Others may take longer to repent. And some of them may never repent? They all start their new existence with the exact same mind they had when they died.

Why is that so?

Because God has not done anything to their spirit in man. God simply pulled their spirit in man "out of cold storage" and then placed it into a new physical body. Oh yes, they may very well look differently than when they died. People today can undergo plastic surgery and dye their hair to a different color, so that they also look very different from their earlier appearance. But their minds will be unaffected by those outward changes. And such people most certainly know their own identities. So likewise, people in the second resurrection will look differently than when they died, but they will know exactly who they are. And their minds will function in exactly the same way they functioned when they died. So a rebellious mind at death will still be a rebellious mind in the second resurrection.

Now let's look at God's servants who come up in the first resurrection. They will be given a spirit body, and they will also receive the exact mind they had when they died, albeit with a very much enlarged capacity for knowledge and understanding.

But the minds of all these people in the first resurrection were repentant when they either died, or when they are changed "in the twinkling of an eye". So what about them and their minds?

Here is what we need to understand in this regard:

If their minds are not sealed before they are resurrected, then they would come up in spirit bodies with minds that could potentially still reject God's way of thinking, and instead accept a selfish way of thinking. **If their minds are not sealed before they are given a spirit body, then they would still be capable of sinning.**

Notice what the Apostle John said:

Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin; for His seed remains in him: and **he cannot sin, because he is born of God.** (1 John 3:9)

Now here is the point about John's statement in this verse:

It is not the birth that makes it impossible for us to sin! What makes it impossible for us to sin is the fact that the repentant mind is sealed before God will resurrect any human being to spirit life. God will never, under any circumstances, resurrect a human being to spirit life in His Family without first sealing that person's spirit in man. So when a human being is resurrected in the first resurrection, then God has already sealed that person's spirit in man before putting that spirit in man into a new spirit body. And it is the sealing of the mind, rather than the resurrection to spirit life per se, that will ensure that we "cannot sin".

So yes, anyone who is "born of God" cannot sin. But nobody can be born of God without his spirit first being sealed by God. The sealing of the spirit is a prerequisite for being born of God. What the Apostle John has said is correct, but it is helpful to clarify John's statement somewhat. I say this based on what we will see in Revelation 7, which was also written by the Apostle John.

So this is where "**the sealing of the 144,000** in the first resurrection" in Revelation 7 comes into the picture. We only need to look at verse 3.

Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, **till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.** (Revelation 7:3)

As I have explained in my article on Revelation 7, this sealing occurs right after the 6th seal has been opened, and before the 7th seal is opened. That will be about **one year before Jesus Christ will return.**

15 QUESTIONS

Now let's ask some questions about these 144,000 people in Revelation 7.

1) **Does Revelation 7 tell us where these people are?**

No, it does not tell us where these 144,000 are.

2) **Does Revelation 7 tell us whether these 144,000 are alive or dead?**

No, it doesn't tell us anything about these people. There is no reference to their status of existence. They could be alive, or they could be dead. We should be careful about implying or inferring something into this account that isn't actually stated.

3) **Does Revelation 7 tell us that they are all gathered together in one place?**

No, it doesn't tell us that at all. Perhaps people have **assumed** that all these people are somewhere together. But such assumptions are not even remotely supported by this chapter.

4) **Does the sealing in the forehead provide some kind of physical protection?**

No, it doesn't say that either. For example, Revelation 3:10 offers physical protection from "the hour of temptation". By contrast, **the sealing in Revelation 7:3 does not offer anything at all!** Read it! It is simply a statement of fact, that something is to happen before the first four trumpets are blown. But it does not indicate any specific consequences (i.e. physical or spiritual) for that sealing. **No benefits of any kind are stated** for this sealing. And neither are any consequences mentioned for this sealing. This chapter does not tell us what that sealing will achieve or do for these people.

5) Does the sealing refer to these 144,000 receiving God's holy spirit?

No, they are already "servants of our God" before they are sealed. This means that they already have God's spirit before this sealing takes place. So the sealing is most assuredly not a reference to these people receiving the holy spirit.

6) Does the sealing turn the 144,000 into spirit beings?

No, it certainly does not turn them into spirit beings. This is clear because this sealing takes place about one year before the first resurrection will take place. And no human beings are changed into spirit beings at any time before the first resurrection.

7) If the sealing does not give them God's spirit, and does not give them physical protection, and does not turn them into spirit beings, then **what does that sealing actually do to them or for them?**

The sealing will be "in their foreheads". The forehead is a codeword for **the mind**, or for **the human spirit**. To be sealed in their foreheads means that **it is their human spirit that is going to be sealed**. It will be their minds which are going to be sealed. The sealing of the spirit or the mind has no effect on physical protection or on their mortality. **The sealing makes the way their minds work**, the way they think and reason, the standards they accept and live by **permanent and unchangeable**. Their minds become sealed and incapable of accepting a different philosophy of life.

It is this sealing that makes it impossible for them to sin. The way they view life is fixed with this sealing. After that sealing they will be incapable of accepting Satan's selfish way of using their minds.

8) Does the sealing have any effect at all on their status of existence?

No, the sealing has no effect whatsoever in this regard. If the person whose spirit is sealed is a dead servant of God (e.g. Abraham, Moses, David, etc.), then that dead servant of God will continue to be dead. This means that all of God's servants who are dead at that point in time **don't know that something has been done to their spirit in man**, which is still waiting in "cold storage" for a new spirit body. And there is no need for them to know anything in this regard. They will find out when they have a part in the first resurrection. That will be soon enough for them.

And those servants of God who are alive at that point in time will continue to live as mortal human beings for another year. The one thing they will notice in time is that it has become very easy, in fact spontaneous, for them to reject all wrong thoughts ... should any wrong thoughts even come to their minds. But apart from that, they will not perceive or feel anything different.

9) So why does this sealing take place about a year before Jesus Christ will return?

This is important to understand!

It takes place a year before Jesus Christ will return in order **to ensure that God's plan will be achieved perfectly!** God's plan calls for exactly 144,000 people to make up "the Bride for Jesus

Christ". Not one person more, and not one person less. And God will not leave anything to chance.

Understand that God does not work with dribs and drabs. There is **no "gradually achieving God's goals"**. It is only when God has gotten exactly what He wants, that then God's plan can move on to the next phase, that next phase being "the Day of the Lord".

So at that point all 144,000 will have been thoroughly tested by God. And when God is absolutely certain that the exact number of 144,000 has been achieved, then God will lock into that number. **At that point God will seal all 144,000 individuals without doing anything else to them or for them.** Their minds can no longer accept Satan's selfish way of thinking. So no matter what happens over the next full year, the number of 144,000 for the first resurrection is guaranteed.

10) Why does God only seal the dead in Christ at that specific point in time?

God is absolutely fair, and God is absolutely not a respecter of persons. So even though Abel and Noah and Abraham qualified thousands of years ago to be in the first resurrection, they still have to wait until the very last member has been selected for the 144,000, before their future is sealed. And they will have to wait to the exact same minute to be resurrected as every other member of the 144,000.

Nobody is given any special treatment or any privileges. **All are sealed at the same time, and all are resurrected at the same time.** All of the 144,000 are given exactly the same treatment by God, in granting them immortal life, as is given to every other person in that group.

Furthermore, there is absolutely **no need** to seal the spirit in man for someone who has died as a faithful servant of God. The sealing does not do anything for those who are dead in Christ. There would be no benefit in sealing their spirits the minute they died, because they still would have to wait for the resurrection. Until the resurrection occurs, the fact that their spirit is sealed a year before the first resurrection takes place does nothing at all for them. And if their spirit had been sealed when they died over 3,000 years ago, that sealing would likewise not have done anything for them.

Let's understand this:

There is no benefit in sealing the spirit in man of any person before that person is actually resurrected. No benefit of any kind. The only reason for sealing those servants of God **who are alive** at that time, one year before the first resurrection, is to ensure that **their status before God can no longer be changed.** That is why the only reference to human beings being "sealed in their foreheads" is in this context of the 144,000 in the first resurrection. Nowhere else does the Bible speak about anyone being sealed in his forehead.

It is to ensure that God will indeed have exactly 144,000 people available for the Bride of Jesus Christ. We need to understand that **if the 144,000 were not sealed a year before Jesus Christ returns,** then there is a great likelihood that at the time of Jesus Christ's return **the exact number would be either more or less than 144,000.** And that is not acceptable to God.

Furthermore, **it is then in fairness to those who are the dead in Christ,** that the dead in Christ are then **also** sealed at the same time, meaning that their spirits "in cold storage" are sealed at that time. That is to ensure that the dead in Christ are not somehow placed in a lesser position. They don't need the sealing at that time, but this ensures that they don't fall behind those servants of God who are still alive at that point in time and are sealed. That is the fair way to treat everybody in the first resurrection.

For all future eternity there will never be the (totally hypothetical) argument "I'm actually older than you are" amongst any people in the first resurrection. For all future eternity everyone in the first resurrection

will know that he was born at exactly the same second as 143,999 other individuals. You've heard of twins and triplets and quadruplets and quintuplets, etc., right? But you've never before heard of "144,000-lets", have you? Well, that's what God will do at the first resurrection. Nobody, not even Abraham, is given any special advantage compared to anyone else, when it comes to being resurrected into the Family of God.

This absolute fairness by God covers both the sealing and then also the resurrection into God's Family.

And the same principle will about 1,100 years later also extend to the people from the millennium and from the second resurrection.

All of those people will make up "the great multitude" of Revelation 7. And all of them will likewise be **sealed at exactly the same time**, which will be at the moment that their physical lives will end. And then in the next moment they will all at the same time be **changed into spirit beings**. That will be the moment before the third resurrection takes place for the incorrigible dead, and this entire present universe is then turned into "a lake of fire" (see Revelation 20:14-15). That will then be followed by the new heaven and the new earth of Revelation 21:1.

God treats everybody with absolute fairness.

In our human families being born as the first or second or third child has nothing to do with "fairness". The firstborn didn't "deserve" to be born first, and neither did the other children "deserve" to only be born as the second or third or fourth child. The system of human reproduction has nothing to do with "fairness" or "deserving something". As far as our human birth order is concerned, "time and chance happens to us all" (see the principle of Ecclesiastes 9:11).

But the birth order into the Family of God does not depend on time and chance. The birth order into God's Family is based completely on merit. Those in the first resurrection "deserve" to all be born into God's Family as the firstborn ones at exactly the same moment as everyone else. And likewise, those in the great multitude "deserve" to be born into God's Family at the same moment as everyone else in that particular group.

That's absolute fairness.

11) Why does it specifically mention the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, if many of these people aren't actually members of those 12 tribes?

The 12 names mentioned in Revelation 7 are the names for the 12 "nations" into which God structures the 144,000 in the first resurrection. Together with God the Father and Jesus Christ the 144,000 will be the only permanent residents in the New Jerusalem. All the other sons of God from the millennium and from the second resurrection will come to the New Jerusalem as visitors, to worship God the Father and Jesus Christ, but they will have their permanent residences in other cities on the new earth, which earth by the way will be huge compared to our present earth.

Here is a key for these 12 names:

The naming of the 12 tribes in Revelation 7 is **not a matter of showing origin** for these groups of 12,000 each. **It is really a matter of showing the destinations** for everyone. It shows where everyone will be going. It doesn't tell us where these people have come from; it tells us **where they are going**. Dividing the people in the first resurrection into these 12 groups reveals **one of the rewards** for the people in the first resurrection.

12) How can one group for whom something is done possibly consist of some who are alive and some who are dead?

For us human beings it is a big deal whether we are alive or dead, right? But that's not how God views things. God sees things differently. As Jesus Christ plainly said:

I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. **God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.** (Matthew 22:32)

Clearly God does not make the same distinctions as far as death is concerned, as we do. The distinction God makes is: **is that human mind repentant or not?** Before God a living person with a totally repentant mind is in exactly the same standing as a person who died with a totally repentant mind. Both are accepted by God. And this verse plainly tells us that God already counts Abraham and Isaac and Jacob **as if they were alive right now.**

13) Do any other Scriptures include living people and dead people in the same group?

Yes! The Apostle Paul explained this to the Thessalonians.

For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and **the dead in Christ shall rise first:** Then **we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them** in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall **we** ever be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

Paul is speaking about **one unified group**, not two or three groups. It is one group. But that one group is made up of **two distinct components**. One component consists of living people, and the other component consists of dead people. And Paul refers to that whole one group as "**we**", not as "us and them", showing that they will be one group. Paul is here also speaking about the 144,000 in the first resurrection.

So yes, God at times counts the living and the dead in one and the same group.

14) Is there any other place in the Bible where a group of people were "sealed in their foreheads"?

No, there is not. What happens in Revelation 7:3-8 is absolutely unique. It refers to something that has never happened before. And it is especially unique in that **this sealing happens to some mortal human beings** a year before they will be changed into spirit-born sons of God.

15) Are there any consequences of this sealing that we should be aware of?

Yes, there are. One of the vitally important components for that end-time period is mentioned in Revelation 11:3-12. That is the reference to Jesus Christ's **two witnesses**. Those two men will be mortal human beings. And they must preach for 42 months. This means their ministry will span the whole length of the great tribulation, and then also span the one year of God's wrath on sinful mankind. It will be their responsibility to announce the penalties that God will pour out on this world, much like Moses announced all of the plagues to Pharaoh in Egypt.

Here is the point:

These two men will be under enormous pressure for the whole time of the great tribulation, even as Moses was under enormous pressure while God poured out the ten plagues on Egypt. Many of God's servants faced enormous mental and emotional pressures. That includes men like

Elijah and Jeremiah and John the Baptist and Paul. Typically we don't give a second thought to the enormous pressures those servants of God had to cope with.

As far as the two witnesses are concerned, theoretically either one of them or even both of them could give in to that pressure and fail to finish the job they have been given. They are still only human beings. Think of Aaron, Moses's assistant, making a golden calf after Aaron himself had walked on dry ground through the Red Sea. So yes, those two witnesses could theoretically still fail, because throughout their ministry they will be free moral agents.

Both men will be universally hated, because they will be seen as "tormenting people". That's a phenomenal pressure! The only people who will not hate these two witnesses will be the people in the place of safety. Coping with such universal hatred will be an enormous pressure. Yes certainly, God will strengthen both of them through His spirit. But they will still be human.

Now for the last one year of their ministry **this pressure will intensify greatly**. When the first six trumpets are blown and those penalties are poured out on this world, then things will get far worse. Let's understand that **"the wrath of God"** will affect this earth and all human beings in far more terrifying ways than **"the wrath of Satan"** will be able to do. The wrath of God is far more terrifying than the wrath of Satan.

So the mental and emotional pressure on those two witnesses is going to reach very high levels. Furthermore, they will know that they are going to be killed on a very specific day. That too is something that can cause great stress. So **when their spirits are sealed** a year before the end of their ministry, then that sealing will also ensure that they will indeed hold fast to their commitment to God, no matter what happens during those last 12 months of their ministry. **That sealing of their spirits will ensure that they will complete their ministry faithfully.**

They are not robots. Every day of their ministry they will have to use their own free minds to do what God requires of them. Every day they will have to make decisions. And they must of their own free will remain unwavering in their commitment to God. **The sealing of their spirits will be an enormous help for both of them.**

I hope that now we can understand why it is so extremely important for the spirit in man **in all of God's true servants** who are alive to be sealed a year before Jesus Christ will actually return. That sealing is to make absolutely sure that there will be exactly 144,000 individuals available for the first resurrection one year later. Without interfering with the free will of any human being, this sealing leaves nothing to chance.

Hopefully we can also understand why those who have died in Christ are not sealed when they die, why they are in fact also only sealed a year before Jesus Christ's second coming. It is to make them completely equal to those living people who are sealed a year before the first resurrection takes place.

The sealing of the spirit in man for the 144,000 in the first resurrection, as recorded in Revelation 7, is a profoundly important step in the development of the Family of God. And if you have not yet read the article "The Two Groups in Revelation Chapter 7", that article provides additional information on this subject.

Frank W Nelte