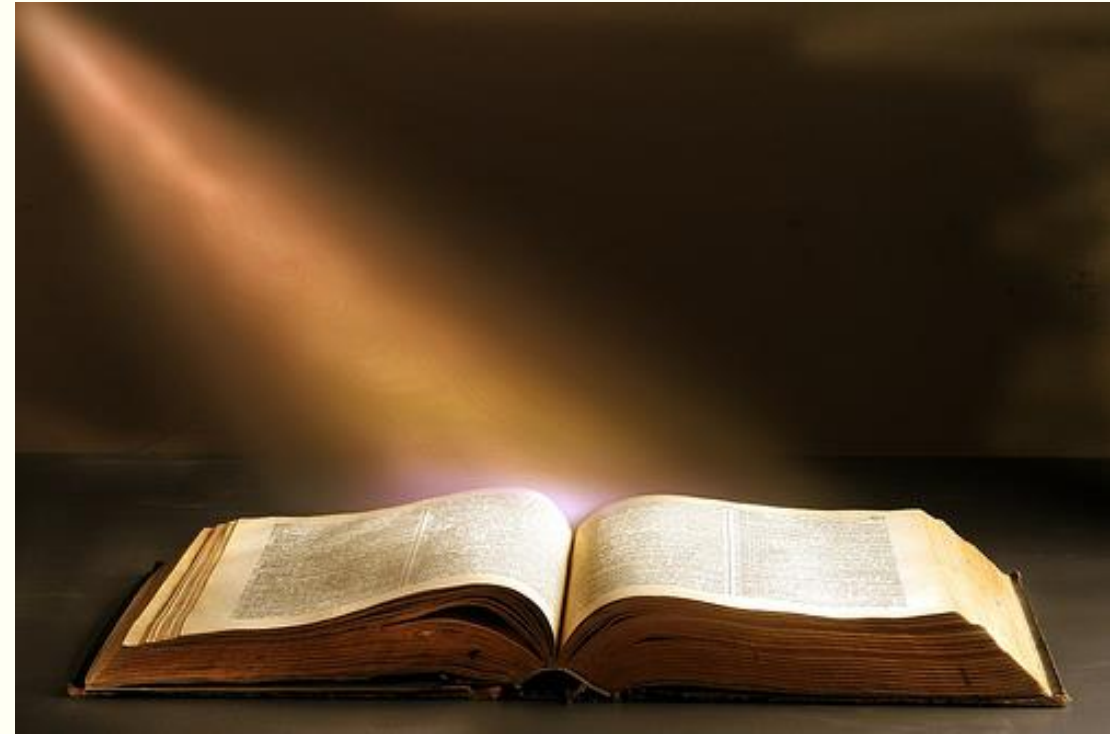




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# Exploring the Book of Revelation: Verse by Verse

## Chapter 7





# CHAPTER 7 – THE INTERLUDE

Sealing of God's people - 144,000 and the Great multitude

# Chapter 7

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Primary purpose of our Bible study is to understand each message as it applied to the church to which it was given AND its personal application for us today

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The Sealing

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The 144,000

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A Great Multitude

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Before the Throne

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Reflections

# Touchpoints

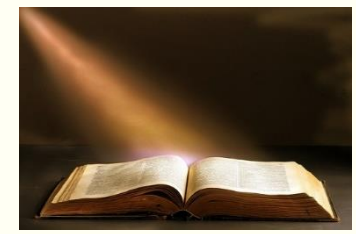
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- Who are the 144,000?
- Is the number literal or symbolic?
- Who do they represent?
- What does the sealing of the 144,000 mean?
- What is the relationship between the 144,000 and the Great multitude?
- Why are the tribes of Dan and Ephraim missing from the list?
- How can I be a part of this privileged group?



# Revelation 7:1-4

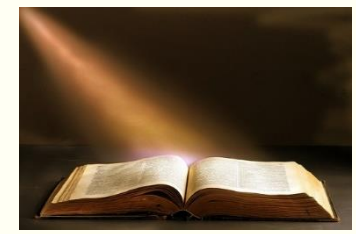
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1 After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, 3 saying, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” 4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed:

# Revelation 7:5-8

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5 of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed;  
of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed;  
of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed;  
6 of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed;  
of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed;  
of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed;  
7 of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed;  
of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed;  
of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed;  
8 of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed;  
of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed;  
of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.



# The Sealing of God's people

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The vision of the Seven seals is interrupted. Revelation 7 is an interlude between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> seal

“Who is able to stand on the great day of His wrath?” – Rev 6:17

Revelation 7 gives a response to that question: only the 144,000/great multitude will be able to stand

John's view shifts to another vision where he sees four angels, standing at the four corners of the earth (four points of the compass)

“And you, son of man, thus says the Lord God to the land of Israel: ‘An end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land’ – Eze 7:2

**Winds** symbolize war, strife, commotion - God's judgment (Jer 23:19-20)

**Earth** and **sea** denote universality and origin of the two beasts of Rev 13

**Trees** symbolize life on earth

These exalted angels are assigned by God to restrain the destructive forces (winds of universal disaster) coming upon the earth

There is work to be done in God's people and by God's people before the destructive winds can be released. When this happens, probation closes.



# The Sealing of God's people

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God is clearly in charge and in control of the timing of the last events

Another angel of greater authority ascends from the rising of the sun (east)  
with the seal of the living God

The “East” is often associated with God. The glory of the Lord came to the temple from the east (Eze 43:2). The magi saw the star in the east announcing the newborn King (Matt 2:2). The coming of the Son of Man is likened to the flash of lightning from the east (Matt 24:27). Jesus is called the morning star (Rev 22:6)

**The sealing of God's faithful people for protection is paramount and must be completed before the final destructive events of the end-time**

When we receive Jesus and surrender our lives to Him, we receive the seal of God's ownership. **We are sealed by the Holy Spirit**

“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were **sealed** with the **Holy Spirit** of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. - Eph 1: 13-14

Every true Christian through the ages has received the seal of the Holy Spirit





# The Sealing of God's people

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God's seal and name authenticates us (Rev 3:12)

- Ownership – belong to God (His property)
- Destiny – citizenship in New Jerusalem
- Character – possesses the character of Jesus

The basic ancient idea of sealing is ownership and protection

Sealing denotes identification of God's faithful people as His possession

A mark of God's protection on His people

Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. – Isa 8:16

# The Sealing of God's people

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God's seal is a symbolic sign of who is a real, genuine follower of Jesus

The seal of God consists of the name of God written upon the mind (forehead). God's name signifies His holy character (Ex 34:5-7)

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having **His Father's name written on their foreheads**. – Rev 14:1

They shall see His face, and **His name shall be on their foreheads**. Rev 22:4

The forehead is where the conscience resides, and decisions are made

But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put My law in their minds**, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Jer 31:33

As the wax takes the impression of the seal, so every faithful person will have the impression of the Christ character written in the mind

The sealing encompasses all the redeemed, not just those in the end-time



# The Sealing of God's people

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The sealing has been going on through the ages. It includes all who have died with faith in Christ as well as those who will be alive at His coming. It concludes just before the time of trouble.

The sealing is drawn from Ezekiel 9 which portrays in symbolic language the destruction of Jerusalem before the exile to Babylon

Prophet Ezekiel heard the Lord instructs a heavenly messenger clothed in linen with a writer's inkhorn at his side to go through the city and put a mark on the forehead of those who are faithful (sigh and cry over the abominations) before the slaughter of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.



The executioners with battle-axes were instructed to begin at the sanctuary and kill all **except those with the mark** (Eze 9:6)

The marking of God's people in the city of Jerusalem represents the sealing of the church of God in the last days before the time of trouble

Those without the mark of protection will receive the judgments of God

The sealing parallels the blood on the doorposts to protect the Israelites from the Exodus plagues (Ex 12: 21-23). It is the final ratification of God's people to strengthen them to stand for God in the final crisis

# The Sealing of God's people

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End-time sealing will take additional meaning as a sign of protection

Revelation 7 is the final closing of the sealing process when the preaching of the gospel will come to its close and grace will no longer be available

Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the **hour of trial** which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. – Rev 3:10

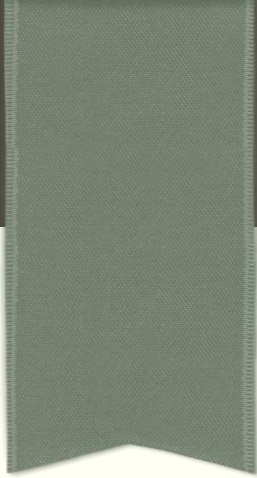
“At that time, Michael shall stand up, the Great Prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a **time of trouble**, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book.” – Dan 12:1

The seal protects the saints during the time of trouble and from the seven last plagues (Rev 16:2). However, they will still experience the great tribulation (Rev 16:14) and the wrath of the beast (Rev 13:15,17)

The mark of the beast protects its followers from the persecution of the beast (Rev 13:15), but not from the wrath of God (Rev 14:9-11)



The “left behind” doctrine which teaches that God’s people will be raptured before the great tribulation/time of trouble is unscriptural



# SEAL OF GOD vs MARK OF THE BEAST

“The reception of the mark of the beast and the seal of God consisting of the names of the beast and of God denotes conformity to the character of Satan or God. In the final conflict, everyone will bear the image of the demonic or divine”

# Who are the 144,000?

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John hears the number of those who are sealed **out of** every tribe

The 12 original tribes all came from the 12 sons of Jacob, whom the Lord had later renamed Israel

Joseph, sold to slavery by his older brothers was reunited with his father, Israel who compensated him for the years of separation by adopting Joseph's two sons: Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen 48:5)

Technically, there were 13 tribes. However, the tribe of Levi were excluded from receiving any specific territory as inheritance. Instead, they were chosen to be the priests for all Israel (Num 1)

The tribes are not always listed in a consistent order in the Old Testament. There are about 18 different orders there are listed

The list in Rev 7:4-8 varies from the original list in Gen 49:1-28

Judah is presented first on the list, and Reuben (technically the first born) is presented second on the list.

Dan and Ephraim are excluded and were replaced by Levi and Joseph



# Who are the 144,000?

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The tribes of Dan and Ephraim are described as apostates

Jacob, on his death bed spoke of **Dan** as a serpent or viper on the path that bites the horse's heels so that the rider falls backwards – Gen 49:17

The tribe of Dan set a graven image for themselves – Judges 18:27-31

During Israel's divided monarchy, Dan became one of the centers of idolatrous worship competing with worship at Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:28-30)

**Ephraim** also became symbol of Israel's apostasy and idolatry - Hos 4:17

The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. They did not keep the covenant of God; they refused to walk in His law. - Psalms 78:9-10

Ephraim joined Syria against Judah, siding with God's enemies (Isa 7:1-7)

**Unfaithfulness and apostasy** will have no place among God's faithful people who are about to pass through the great tribulation (Rev 14:4-5)



# The Twelve Tribes of Israel

Gen 49: 1-28	Rev 7:4-8 and meaning of names
Reuben	Judah - I will praise the Lord
Simeon	Reuben - Behold, a son
Levi	Gad - Given good fortune
Judah	Asher - Happy am I
Zebulun	Naphtali - My wrestling with God
Issachar	Manasseh - Making me forget
Dan	Simeon - God hears me
Gad	Levi - Joined to God
Asher	Issachar - Purchased
Naphtali	Zebulun - Dwelling
Joseph (Manasseh & Ephraim)	Joseph - Will add to me joy and blessings
Benjamin	Benjamin - Sons of His right hand





# Who are the 144,000?

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The 144,000 could not be literal 12,000 Israelites from the 12 tribes

Because the 10 northern tribes gave themselves completely over to idolatry, God allowed the Assyrians to carry them away in 722 BC.

“In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes” - **2 Kings 17:6**

When the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were later carried off to Babylon, after spending 70 years in captivity, thousands returned. Not so with the 10 tribes.

“And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof” - **2 Kings 17:24**

The 10 exiled tribes intermarried with the Assyrians, therefore losing their distinct identity. Today, you will be hard pressed to find one pure descendant from the tribe of Gad, Asher, Naphtali, or Manasseh, much less 12,000!



# Who are the 144,000?

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Spiritual Israel in the New Testament applies to born again Christians, followers of Jesus  
“And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29)  
“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad,  
greetings” (James 1:1)

James and Paul addressed their letters to the spiritual Israelites (Rom 2:28-29, Gal 3:26-29)

The specific number “144,000” is mentioned twice: Rev 7:1-8 and Rev 14:1-5

The “great multitude” is mentioned twice: Rev 7:9 and Rev 19:1-8

An additional reference to the 144,000 appears in Rev 15:2-4

Revelation	Backdrop and Identity of the 144,000 and the great multitude
7:1-8	Sealing for protection during the Great tribulation
7:9-17	Jubilant celebration before the throne of God and blessings
14:1-5	Characteristics and the orchestra of praise
15:2-4	Victory over the beast, his image and his mark
19:1-8	Triumph because the harlot has been judged and God’s people have been avenged

# Who are the 144,000?

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Revelation 7 tells us that the number of those who will receive the seal of living God just before the time of trouble is 144,000 (12,000 from each of the 12 tribes)

God's sealed people, the church militant in the final battle, under Christ leadership is represented using the ancient Israel army military unit consisting of 1,000 soldiers from each of the 12 military units of the 12 tribes of Israel (total of 144 units) - Num 31:4,5

“out of the” (Greek – ek) tribe implies that the 12,000 is part of and not the totality of all the redeemed through the ages

**The 144,000 is a metaphor to symbolize God's end-time faithful people**

The 144,000 is a symbolic representation of the last standing true and faithful followers of Jesus from every tribe, nation, tongue, who have Christ's righteousness character and dared to resist the beast in the final battle on planet earth between Christ and the devil

The 144,000 significance indicates the unity, perfection and completion of God's character in His people as an answer to the plea of the martyrs in the 6<sup>th</sup> seal

Just as the 12 tribes symbolically represent modern Israel, “**144,000**” is symbolic

The 144,000 will be alive at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ

The 144,000 are sealed to protect them from apostasy and from the righteous judgments of God about to fall on the wicked, and a sign that they have remained loyal to Christ



Upon the crystal sea before the throne, that sea of glass as it were mingled with fire,—so resplendent is it with the glory of God,—are gathered the company that have “gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name.” With the Lamb upon Mount Zion, “having the harps of God,” they stand, the hundred and forty and four thousand that were redeemed from among men; and there is heard, as the sound of many waters, and as the sound of a great thunder, “the voice of harpers harping with their harps.” And they sing “a new song” before the throne, a song which no man can learn save the hundred and forty and four thousand. It is the song of Moses and the Lamb—a song of deliverance. None but the hundred and forty-four thousand can learn that song; for it is the song of their experience—an experience such as no other company have ever had. “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.” These, having been translated from the earth, from among the living, are counted as “the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.” Revelation 15:2, 3; 14:1-5. “These are they which came out of great tribulation;” they have passed through the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation; they have endured the anguish of the time of Jacob's trouble; they have stood without an intercessor through the final outpouring of God's judgments. But they have been delivered, for they have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” “In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault” before God. “Therefore, are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.” They have seen the earth wasted with famine and pestilence, the sun having power to scorch men with great heat, and they themselves have endured suffering, hunger, and thirst. But “they shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

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“God's people will separate themselves from the unrighteous practices of those around them and will seek for purity of thought and holy conformity to His will until His divine image will be reflected in them. Like Enoch, they will be fitting for translation to heaven. While they endeavor to instruct and warn the world, they will not conform to the spirit and customs of unbelievers but will condemn them by their holy conversation and godly example. Enoch's translation to heaven just before the destruction of the world by a flood represents the translation of all the living righteous from the earth previous to its destruction by fire. The saints will be glorified in the presence of those who have hated them for their loyal obedience to God's righteous commandments.”

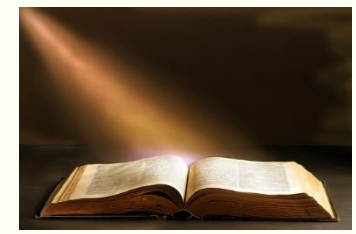


“I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven. An angel with a writer's inkhorn by his side returned from the earth and reported to Jesus that his work was done, and the saints were numbered and sealed. Then I saw Jesus, who had been ministering before the ark containing the ten commandments, throw down the censer. He raised His hands, and with a loud voice said, “It is done.” And all the angelic host laid off their crowns as Jesus made the solemn declaration, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”

Early Writings, page 279

# Revelation 7:9-12

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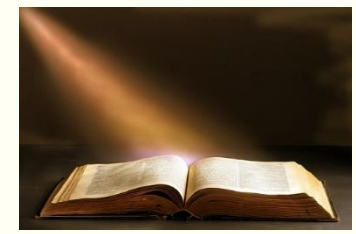
**9** After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

**10** and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” **11** All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, **12** saying:

“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

# Revelation 7:13-17

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**13** Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?”  
**14** And I said to him, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. **15** Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. **16** They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; **17** for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”



# Who are those that comprise the Great Multitude?

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John hears the number of them that are sealed from every tribe, **then** John sees a great multitude which no man could number standing before the throne and the Lamb

**Characteristics:** They are from every tribe and nation, holding palm branches of victory, who experienced the great tribulation and were victorious, dressed in white robes of Christ righteousness, worshipping and praising God

1

Two distinct groups

2

144,000 is part of the great multitude

3

Same group using two different names

Opinions vary on the relationship between the great multitude and the 144,000. Of the three main opinions, the Scripture seems to point to the 3<sup>rd</sup>.



144,000 and the Great Multitude refer to the same group of people

# Who are those that comprise the Great Multitude?

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What John hears in a vision and what he subsequently sees is actually one and the same thing

- when John hears a voice like a trumpet, then he turns around and sees Jesus in the midst of seven golden lampstands (Rev 1:10-13)
- when John hears the Lion from the tribe of Judah, and he turns to see a Lamb (Rev 5:5-6)
- when John hears the bride of the church, He sees the Holy City Jerusalem (Rev 21:9-12)

John hears the number which are sealed (Rev 7:4), then he sees the great multitude (Rev 7:9)

**The former is a symbolic representation, the latter is the reality**

The great multitude and the 144,000 are one and the same group

The same word “**stand**” (histemi in Greek) is used in both Rev 6:17 and Rev 7:9

The **144,000** is a **symbolic number** representing the great multitude of the redeemed from every nation and tribe who would stand in that great day because soon they would stand before the throne of God and the Lamb

The great multitude represent God’s redeemed people who have come out of the great tribulation and are translated at the Second coming of Jesus



# Who are those that comprise the Great Multitude?

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The 144,000 are “servants of our God”. The great multitude **serve** God

The words “servant” – doulos in Greek and “serve” – latreuo in Greek are used to describe both groups in Rev 22:3

“And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His **servants** shall **serve** Him.” – Rev 22:3

The 144,000 are God’s end time church on earth. The great multitude are God’s end time church in heaven.

The 144,000 are God’s militant end time. The great multitude are God’s triumphant end time church.

**The focus in Revelation 7 is not the redeemed from all ages, but those who will stand in the great day from the face of the Him on sits on the throne**

The 144,000 are referred to as the first fruits, a subset of the universal harvest of the redeemed from all ages

“These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.” – Rev 14:4





“Those whom the Lamb will lead by the fountains of living waters, and from whose eyes He will wipe away all tears, will be those now receiving the knowledge and understanding revealed in the Bible, the Word of God. Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand.”

Volume 7, Bible Commentary, page 970

# Who are those that comprise the Great Multitude?

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The great multitude are dressed like conquerors, with symbols of triumph and victory - clothed in **white robes** with palm branches in their hands

“You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and **they shall walk with Me in white**, for they are worthy. **He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments**, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” – Rev 3: 4-5

One of the 24 elders highlights white robes of the great multitude and the experience of the great tribulation they have passed through.

“These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation and **washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**” – Rev 7:14

The blood of the Lamb (Jesus) provides deliverance as the blood of the Passover lamb on the door of the Israelites before the last plague

The shout of the redeemed acknowledges that their triumph is not of their own efforts, but because of Christ’s great victory on the cross





“The shout of the triumphant faithful ascribes salvation to God. It is God who has brought them through their trials and tribulations and distresses; and it is His glory which now they share. God is the great Savior, the great deliverer of His people. And the deliverance which He gives is not the deliverance of escape but the deliverance of conquest. It is not a deliverance which saves a man from trouble but one which brings him triumphantly through trouble. It does not make life easy, but it makes life great. It is not part of the Christian hope to look for a life in which a man is saved from all trouble and distress; the Christian hope is that a man in Christ can endure any kind of trouble and distress, and remain erect all through them, and come out to glory on the other side.”

Barclay, The Revelation of John, 2.27

# Before the Throne of God and the Lamb

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Before the throne of God and the Lamb stand the white-robed saints. Nearer the throne are the 24 elders. Still nearer are the 4 living creatures. In the outer concentric circle are billions of angels. All the heavenly host resonate with the praises of the great multitude and fall on their faces in worship

Their days of tribulation, hunger, thirst, pain, scorching heat, and tears are over (Isa 49:10, 25:8)

**Their reign as kings and priests begin** in the governing center of the universe

“God is forever with us” – **Immanuel, our Great Shepherd** (I Peter 5:4)

God has come to “**tabernacle**” (skenoō in Greek) with His people (Rev 21:3-4)

“My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed, I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”  
Eze 37:27

# Reflections

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- The seal of the God is the passport through the gates of the Holy City
- The seal will be placed upon those who bear a likeness to Christ in character
- God will soon wipe away every tear from our eyes
- “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” – Deut 29:29
- We do not know who would be part of the 144,000. So, we should be careful not to get caught up in details that are not important or try to interpret what has not been revealed
- Rather we should decide today to follow Jesus all the way, no matter the cost, and live our lives in such a way that we may be counted among the great multitude
- We need to get ready now for the final conflict. There is no time for delay
- It is only God who can protect us through the coming days of trial. Our victory will always be as a result of what Christ has done for us and not what we have achieved of ourselves





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