

Rev 7:4-8 (NIV)

- 1) We concluded last time discussing exactly who these 144,000 were.
- 2) The obvious answer is that they were Jews from the 12 tribes of Israel.
- 3) The difficult part requires some assumptions.
 - a) Today, for many reasons, not the least of which is the tribal records were lost when the Romans sacked Jerusalem in 70CE, the lineage to the various tribes is unknown to Jews.
 - b) God, of course, does know and if, at the time of the tribulation, he desires to identify 144,000 as indicated he can and will.
- 4) Arguments can be and are made that this listing symbolically represents the new Israel – the church.
 - a) In this case, the 144,000 simply represents completeness.
- 5) In my opinion, what is important is what context tells us these folks are.
 - a) Context in this case being other passages in Revelation which further explains these being sealed.

Rev 12:17 (NIV)

Rev 14:1 (NASB)

14 And I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. 3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. 4 These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb. 5 And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless. NASB

- 6) MacArthur takes the stand that these are actual Jews from the given tribes.
- 7) The specificity of the list says that not all original tribes that are being considered.
- 8) MacArthur breaks the list down as follows (READ):
 - a) Although Reuben was the firstborn (Gen 46:8), Judah is listed first.
 - i) Reuben forfeited his birthright as punishment for his sexual misconduct with his father's concubine (1 Chron 5:1).

- b) The omission of the tribe of Dan in favor of the priestly tribe of Levi is also unusual.
- c) Dan was evidently omitted due to the tribe's penchant for idolatry (cf. Deut 29:18-21) — which was even worse than that of the rest of the nation (cf. Judg 18; Amos 8:14).
 - i) While Dan will share in the millennial blessings (Ezek 48:1-2,32) the tribe will not be selected for this duty nor protected during the Tribulation.
- d) Similarly, the name of Ephraim is omitted in favor of his father Joseph because Ephraim defected from the ruling house of Judah (Isa 7:17).
 - i) Also Ephraim, like Dan, was consumed with idolatry (Hos 4:17). His brother Manasseh is included because he was the faithful son of Joseph.

9) He goes on to comment:

This critical passage reinforces the biblical truth that God is not through with the nation of Israel (cf. Rom. 9-11). Though Israel failed in its mission to be a witness nation in the Old Testament, that will not be the case in the future. From the Jewish people will come the greatest missionary force the world has ever known. The result of their effort will be a redeemed Israel, as promised by God, and innumerable redeemed Gentiles.

- 10) Bottom line is, Revelation Jewish believers and evangelists are the first fruits of Israel, which as a nation will be redeemed before Christ returns (Zech 12:10-13:1,8-9; Rom 11:26).
- 11) The 144,000 are not all the Jewish believers at that time, but a unique group selected to proclaim the gospel in that day (cf. 12:17; 14:1-5).
- 12) Making the choice between the complete church or an actual (literal) 144,000 people from the 12 select tribes is not as important as the fact that these are special followers of Jesus.
 - a) I believe that MacArthur is correct in that they are a special missionary force.
 - b) And that they are especially chosen by God for this purpose.
- 13) As we will see next, they are not the only ones who are redeemed and part of the heavenly bride of our Lord – the church.
- 14) We see this clearly in comments we will read next regarding the multitude of believers.

Rev 7:9-12 (NIV)

- 1) As mentioned before, the opening phrase “After this” or “After these things” indicates the start of a new vision.
- 2) John looks and before him is a multitude – so large it could not be counted.

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- 3) So, what can we say about this multitude?
 - a) It is not the 144,000.
 - i) They are counted and only come from the tribes of Israel.
 - ii) These come from every nation, all tribes, and all tongues – including Israel.
 - b) They are from the earth, so they are not angelic beings.
 - i) They are standing around the throne with angels.
 - c) Their robes are white.
 - i) The word used here describes dazzling, brilliant, shining white.
 - ii) With regard to clothing is normally used to describe that worn for festivals and celebrations.
 - d) They held palm branches.
 - i) This is also associated with celebrations, deliverance, and joy.
 - ii) Recall the triumphal entry into Jerusalem by Jesus in John's gospel.
- 4) They are standing before God, His throne, and the Lamb and they are worshiping!
- 5) So who are they?

Rev 7:13-17 (NIV)

- 6) The elder was not asking for information.
- 7) He was asking so that he could underscore to John and the readers of this description who they were.
- 8) And the descriptions he gives shows clearly who they are by what they will not have to endure any longer.
- 9) To me, that very list says they came from the tribulation.
- 10) Now, if one subscribes to the pre-tribulation Rapture then these would be folks that were converted during the tribulation.
- 11) If not, then, these would be those that entered the tribulation and overcame along with any that were converted during the tribulation.
- 12) Now, a question may arise here – is the tribulation ended?
- 13) One indicator may be the structure of the sentence describing these folks - have come out of the great tribulation.
 - a) There is a present tense implied by this statement about the great tribulation.
 - b) Young's Literal Translation has it:

Rev 7:14 (YLT)

'These are those who **are coming out of the great tribulation**, and they did wash their robes, and they made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb; YLT

1) So, the short answer is NO, the tribulation is not ended.

Rev 8:1 (NIV)

- 1) If you look back over the visions to this point, you will find good deal of noise in heaven.
 - a) Emanating from God's throne were "sounds and peals of thunder" (4:5).
 - b) "The four living creatures . . . [did] not cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come'" (4:8)
 - c) The twenty-four elders added their song of praise (4:11).
 - d) And on it goes:
 - i) Praise when the Lamb is chosen to open the scroll
 - ii) The four living creatures saying come as the first 4 seals are opened.
 - iii) With the opening of the fifth seal came the cries of the martyrs for vengeance (6:9-10),
 - iv) While the breaking of the sixth seal brought the loud roar of a powerful earthquake (6:12).
 - v) In the interlude between the sixth and seventh seals, an angel "cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, 'Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bondservants of our God on their foreheads'"
- 2) Then silence falls on the heavenly scene.
- 3) The implication is that when the seventh seal is broken all of heaven is reduced to silence in anticipation of the judgment that is about to happen.
- 4) It is the silence of foreboding, of intense expectation, of awe at what God is about to do.

Rev 8:2 (NIV)

- 1) In the Greek, there is a definite article which appears to set these angels apart.
- 2) Some call them the "presence angels."
- 3) The usage verb stand indicates they were in the presence of God and had been there for some time.
- 4) Scripture describes various ranks and orders of angels:
 - a) cherubim (Gen 3:24)
 - b) seraphim (Isa 6:2)

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- c) archangels (1 Thess 4:16; Jude 9)
 - i) And for a little trivia, according to one of the apocalypses known as the Jewish pseudepigrapha, 1 Enoch, the names of the archangels are: Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Sara Gael, Gabriel, and Remiel
- 5) These angels appear to be one such order of high-ranking angels.
- 6) Throughout the Old Testament, trumpets had a variety of meanings and purposes.
- 7) Moses was instructed to make two silver trumpets that would:
 - a) call the people together
 - b) move the tribes forward on their journey
 - c) sound an alarm
 - d) or signify the feast days
- 8) The trumpets here are to herald the arrival of the day of God's wrath.
- 9) Apparently, the events of 8:3-5 occur immediately following this time of silence.

Rev 8:3-5 (NIV)

- 10) Another angel here is just that – an 8th angel.
 - a) Some have commented that they thought this was Jesus, but other parts of the vision do not bear this out.
- 11) The altar is the heavenly counterpart of the altar of incense in the temple.
- 12) In the Old Testament era, the priests would twice daily (morning and evening) take hot coals from the altar where sacrifices were offered and transport them into the Holy Place to the incense altar (Ex 30:7,8; 2 Chron 29:11; cf. 1 Kings 7:50; 2 Kings 25:15; Jer 52:18-19)
 - a) They then ignited the incense, which rose toward heaven, emblematic of the prayers of the people.
- 13) The consensus is that these are the prayers of all saints for the great judgment of God to come swiftly.
 - a) They are being added to the prayers of those who have been martyred as indicated in chapter 6 verse 10.
- 14) We are not told what was happening on the earth during this half hour of silence, but we do know that it is about to get another wakeup call.
- 15) The fire from the altar being thrown to the earth symbolizes the prayers of the saints on earth being answered.
- 16) God was about to act on their behalf.
- 17) The peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake are the beginning of his answer to their prayers.

Rev 8:6 (NIV)

- 1) The seven trumpet judgments are going to call forth a series of God's plagues on his enemies.
- 2) These judgments affected every part of the world: the earth, the sea, rivers and lakes, the sky, and the "people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads".
- 3) Unlike the bowl judgments we will see in chapter 16, the first six trumpets are targeted on just a third of the cosmos and were intended to produce repentance.
- 4) The LABC draws a striking parallel between these trumpet judgments and the plagues of Egypt.
- 5) The trumpet and the bowl judgments symbolically reenacted the plagues of Egypt recorded in Ex 7-12. The plagues had two purposes:
 - a) The ***first purpose*** of the plagues against Egypt was to prove the powerlessness of the Egyptian gods.
 - i) Every plague was directed at a force that the Egyptians thought was on their side because they worshiped that force.
 - (1) For example, the Egyptians worshiped the sun, so God sent a plague of darkness (Ex 10:21-29);
 - (2) they worshiped the Nile River, so God sent a plague to turn the sacred river to blood (7:14-24).
 - b) The ***second purpose*** of the plagues was to show the Egyptians that God controlled nature and that Egypt's gods controlled nothing.
 - i) The plagues were oriented to the cycle of nature.
 - ii) The Egyptians worshiped many gods representing the various forces of nature so that nature would feed and take care of them.
 - 6) The plagues showed the helplessness of the people of Egypt, who worshiped false gods.
 - a) In the same way, through these trumpet and bowl judgments, God will show the people of this world their helplessness and hopelessness without him.
 - 7) One other note before we get into the actual trumpet results.
 - 8) As we continue, I will mention some of the theories of what the actual mechanisms are for the catastrophic events BUT, the mechanisms are NOT IMPORTANT!!
 - 9) What is important is that these catastrophic events are God's rath and that they are intended as such on the remainder of sinful mankind.
 - 10) Though these event parameters, again, cannot be taken literally, we will look at them as such just to get an idea of the magnitude.
 - 11) These are the end times and the fulfillment of God's promise and warnings which He has given us in scripture throughout the ages.