**April 1, 2021**

**Blessing to all and hoping all is well with you and your love ones. Let’s give thanks to Our Lord and Savior for what we are about to celebrate soon – Easter Sunday,** the foundation of our Christian faith**. Before I discuss this month Bible Scripture Letter, I would like for us to take a moment and read Isaiah 53, prophecy of Our Lord Jesus Christ. *(I underscored some verses so you can pause a few seconds and re-read what Our Savior had to go through for us).***

* 1 Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
* 2 For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.
* 3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
* 4 Surely, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken,
    smitten by God, and afflicted.
* 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.
* 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
* 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
    so he opened not his mouth.
* 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?
* 9 And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.
* 10 Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.
* 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.
* 12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

**This month Bible Scripture Letter is “Who are the 144,000 in the Book of Revelation?” I used two sources and the sources name is found at the end of each article.**

Your Brother in Christ, Tony Gonzalez

**1Peter 3:15**

but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, **always being prepared to make a defense** to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

**"Who are the 144,000 in the Book of Revelation?"**

The book of Revelation has always presented the interpreter with challenges. The book is steeped in vivid imagery and symbolism which people have interpreted differently depending on their preconceptions of the book as a whole. There are four main interpretive approaches to the book of Revelation: **1)** **preterist** (which sees all or most of the events in Revelation as having already occurred by the end of the 1st century); **2)** **historicist** (which sees Revelation as a survey of church history from apostolic times to the present); **3)** **idealist** (which sees Revelation as a depiction of the struggle between good and evil); **4)** **futurist** (which sees Revelation as prophecy of events to come). Of the four, only the futurist approach interprets Revelation in the same grammatical-historical method as the rest of Scripture. It is also a better fit with Revelation’s own claim to be prophecy *-* [***Revelation 1:3***](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%201.3)*;* [***22:7***](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Revelation%2022.7)*,* [***10***](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Revelation%2022.10)*,* [***18***](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Revelation%2022.18)*,* [***19***](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Revelation%2022.19)

* ***1:3****Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.*
* ***22:7*** *“And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.”*
* ***22:10*** *And he \*said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.*
* ***22:18*** *I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book;*
* ***22:19*** *and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.*

So, the answer to the question “who are the 144,000?” will depend on which interpretive approach you take to the book of Revelation. With the exception of the futurist approach, all of the other approaches interpret the 144,000 symbolically, as representative of the church and the number 144,000 being symbolic of the totality—i.e., the complete number—of the church. Yet when taken at face value: *“Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel”*- [***Revelation 7:4***](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%207.4)

nothing in the passage leads to interpreting the 144,000 as anything but a literal number of Jews—12,000 taken from every tribe of the “sons of Israel.” The New Testament offers no clear-cut text replacing Israel with the church.

These Jews are “sealed,” which means they have the special protection of God from all of the divine judgments and from the Antichrist to perform their mission during the tribulation period [***Revelation 6:17***](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%206.17), in which people will wonder who can stand from the wrath to come.

* ***6:17*** *for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”*

The tribulation period is a future seven-year period of time in which God will enact divine judgment against those who reject Him and will complete His plan of salvation for the nation of Israel. All of this is according to God’s revelation to the prophet Daniel - [***Daniel 9:24–27***](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan%209.24%E2%80%9327)***.***

* ***24*** *“Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place*
* ***25*** *So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.*
* ***26*** *Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.*
* ***27****And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”*

The 144,000 Jews are a sort of “first fruits” -[***Revelation 14:4***](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%2014.4)

* ***14:4*** *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*.

of a redeemed Israel which has been previously prophesied [***Zechariah 12:10***](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zech%2012.10)

* ***12:10*** *“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, [h]the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.*

and their mission seems to be to evangelize the post-rapture world and proclaim the gospel during the tribulation period. As a result of their ministry, millions—*“a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language”* -[***Revelation 7:9***](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%207.9)

* ***7:9*** *After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;*

—will come to faith in Christ.

Much of the confusion regarding the 144,000 is a result of the false doctrine of the [Jehovah's Witnesses](http://www.gotquestions.org/Jehovahs-Witnesses.html). The Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that 144,000 is a limit to the number of people who will reign with Christ in heaven and spend eternity with God. The 144,000 have what the Jehovah’s Witnesses call the heavenly hope. Those who are not among the 144,000 will enjoy what they call the earthly hope—a paradise on earth ruled by Christ and the 144,000. Clearly, we can see that Jehovah’s Witness teaching sets up a caste society in the afterlife with a ruling class (the 144,000) and those who are ruled. The Bible teaches no such “dual class” doctrine. It is true that according to - [***Revelation 20:4***](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%2020.4)

* *Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

there will be people ruling in the millennium with Christ. These people will be comprised of the church (believers in Jesus Christ), Old Testament saints (believers who died before Christ’s first advent), and tribulation saints (those who accept Christ during the tribulation). Yet the Bible places no numerical limit on this group of people. Furthermore, the millennium is different from the eternal state, which will take place at the completion of the millennial period. At that time, God will dwell with us in the New Jerusalem. He will be our God and we will be His people - [***Revelation 21:3***](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%2021.3)***.***

* ***21:3*** *And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.,*

 The inheritance promised to us in Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit - [***Ephesians 1:13-14***](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%201.13-14)

* ***13*** *In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,*

***14****who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.*

will become ours, and we will all be co-heirs with Christ - [***Romans 8:17***](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.17)

* **17** and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

***Source***gotquestions.org

**The 144,000 - The Greatest Revival**

**the World has ever Seen.**

“Who stands fast?” Those words are similar to the closing question in - [***Revelation 6:17***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev%206.17): “who is able to stand [the wrath of the Father and of the Lamb]?” When the unbelievers asked this question, they had no idea that two groups of believers would be able to answer. One group would stand on earth throughout the remainder of the tribulation, having been sealed with God’s personal protection. The other group would stand in heaven, in victory and joy, even though they had lost their lives during the tribulation. We see this take place in Revelation 7.

In this passage, we see an angel carrying the seal “of the living God” - ***Revelation 7:2.*** This is a title that is used whenever God is about to intervene on behalf of His people. In this case, God’s seal not only indicates ownership ([***2 Corinthians 1:22***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Cor%201.22)***)*** and authenticity ([***John 6:27***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%206.27)***),*** but also protection - [***Ephesians 4:30***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Eph%204.30)***.*** The “bond-servants” ***(***[***Revelation 7:3***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev%207.3)***)*** who are to receive God’s seal will be protected from divine judgment throughout the remainder of the tribulation and most likely from death.

The seal bears the name of the Lamb and of the Father ***(***[***Revelation 14:1***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev%2014.1)***)*** and will be placed on the foreheads of those who are chosen ***(***[***Revelation 7:3***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev%207.3)***)*** - the forehead being the most conspicuous and notable part of the body. There will be no mistaking who these people serve. In the same way, Antichrist will also mark his followers, either on their foreheads or on their right hands - [***Revelation 13:16–18***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev%2013.16%E2%80%9318); [***14:9***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Revelation%2014.9), [***11***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Revelation%2014.11); [***16:2***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Revelation%2016.2); [***19:20***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Revelation%2019.20).

[**Revelation 7:4-8**](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev%207.4-8) tell us that the “bond-servants” of Christ are 144,000 sealed people who come “from every tribe of the sons of Israel” - [***Revelation 7:4***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev%207.4)*.* There are no Gentiles among them. And what’s more, there is no mention of the church, because these are not representatives of the church.

Some people question, “If the rapture has already occurred, how will these 144,000 be saved?”  God’s Word doesn’t tell us. But God’s Word will remain and God’s Spirit will still be active on earth during the tribulation. He will convict these Jews to come to faith in Jesus as Messiah, and He will seal them with God’s signet ring. The sealing of the 144,000 Israelites indicates God’s special *selection* and *protection* during unprecedented global disaster.

Because the 144,000 will be protected from God’s wrath during the tribulation, God grants them power to fulfill the Old Testament calling of Israel—to be God’s witness of grace among the nations ***-*** [***Isaiah 43:1–12***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Isa%2043.1%E2%80%9312). God’s plan for Israel has always been for them to shine God’s light of love on the Gentiles ***-*** [***Matthew 5:14–16***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Matt%205.14%E2%80%9316) to be a blessing to the whole world ***-*** [***Genesis 12:1–3***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Gen%2012.1%E2%80%933).

During the tribulation, they will fulfill that mission, surviving to become the first fruits of Israel in the millennial kingdom.

We find the second group who will stand strong during the Tribulation in heaven. Beginning [***Revelation 7:9***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev%207.9), the scene shifts to heaven where we see the result of the ministry of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists.

Just as Revelation 7 opened with “After this,” to indicate a new vision ***-*** [***Revelation 7:1***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev%207.1), so [***Revelation 7:9***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev%207.9) opens with “After these things.” After the vision of the 144,000 Jewish missionaries, John is now given a new vision of countless Gentiles praising the Father and the Lamb.

 During the tribulation, countless numbers of people will come to faith in Christ from every political orientation, lineage, race, and language - “every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues” - [***Revelation 7:9***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev%207.9).  This means both Jews and Gentiles. And they will praise God and the Lamb for their salvation and subsequent victory over Satan and the Antichrist ***–***

[***Revelation 12:10***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev%2012.10)***;***[***19:1–2***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Revelation%2019.1%E2%80%932)***.***

 The 144,000 Jews are sealed and saved from God’s wrath during the tribulation, meaning they will not experience the judgments God pours out on the unbelieving of the earth.

 But that is not true of these new believers saved during the Tribulation. Some will no doubt become martyrs, like the ones in - [***Revelation 6:9–11***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev%206.9%E2%80%9311).  Others will die as a result of not having the basics of life—food, water, and shelter.

 These Gentile believers in heaven are also given long, flowing white robes as a sign of their righteousness and purity.  These believers carry palm branches and praise God for their salvation and victory

 As the 144,000 are sealed and go out on their ministry, people are responding to their message of salvation, coming to faith in Christ, and subsequently dying or being killed, where they are transported to heaven and join the heavenly choir in continuous praise to the Father and the Lamb.

 The sealing of the 144,000 teaches us that God keeps His promises. He may have set Israel aside for a time, choosing to work His plan of redemption through the church. But He never forgets us, and He never forsakes us. And nothing is ever lost to God. Although the world at large, or your world in particular, may seem out of control, God has a plan that He is working out and you can count on Him to keep His promises to you.

 That majestic scene of the Tribulation martyrs before the throne of God reminds us that God will ultimately—not immediately—reward the faithful. Writing to encourage the believers in Rome, Paul wrote: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” ***-*** [***Romans 8:18***](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%208.18).

 It is God’s will to keep His promises and to reward the faithful. In the end time, He will do both for Israel and the tribulation saints, but He will also do the same for you today.

***Source***Dr. Robert Jeffress – Can be heard on AM740