

Great Multitudes Revelation 7.4-17

November 24, 2024

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. ² Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, ³ saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” ⁴ And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

*12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed, 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,
12,000 from the tribe of Gad, 12,000 from the tribe of Asher,
12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali, 12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,
12,000 from the tribe of Simeon, 12,000 from the tribe of Levi,
12,000 from the tribe of Issachar, 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,
12,000 from the tribe of Joseph, 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.*
(vs. 1-8)

These are the number of the sealed. Differing understanding of who they are:

Most agree that the number 144,000 is symbolic:

- 12 depicts completion
- # of sealed saints is complete, see Rev.6.11

Identity:

1. Believing Jews remaining on earth **after** the rapture of the Church
 - 12 tribes specifically named
 - Prophecy bringing Israel to repentance in the final days
 - “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. Zech.12.10
 - God has always saved a remnant among the Jews for Himself
 - *But what is God's reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. Rom.11.5-6*
2. The Church, the redeemed
 - Not literal because order changed – Judah not Reuben first, sons of the bond servants listed before the sons of the wives
 - 2 tribes missing (Dan, Ephraim)
 - Final judgment of the 6th seal is delayed until **all** of God’s people redeemed
 - The church is seen as the true Israel:

- *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. Gal.3.29*
- *For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— Phil.3.3*

How ever we understand the 144,00, God had promised to seal His servants, and He did.

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” vs.9-10)

Again, a question of identity arises:

- Those who hold to pretribulation rapture:
 - 2 groups – converted Jews still suffering on earth (144,000) and raptured church rejoicing in heaven
 - Gentiles converted during tribulation through witness of 144,000
 - These are Jews and Gentiles coming to salvation through the tribulation after the rapture
- Those who do not hold to pretribulation rapture:
 - 144,00 and great multitude same group, having their suffering (1-8) turned to joy and reward (9-12)
 - Those washed in the blood of the Lamb, the true recipients of redemption
 - These are the saints who lived throughout the church age, the church militant on earth and the church triumphant in Heaven

Regardless of who they are they stand before the throne and before the Lamb

- Note contrast with those of Rev.6.15-17!
- These are those “who can stand!”
- They are people of every nation, tribe, language
 - *And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. Acts 13.48*
 - *All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. Ps.22.27*
- They are pure and sanctified (white robe)
- They are victorious (palm branches)
- They acknowledge from whence comes their salvation:
 - ***“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”***

¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.” (vs.11-12)

- The heavenly host joins in praise as the multitude acknowledges the Lamb for its salvation!

- *Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. Ps.95.1-3*

¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” ¹⁴ I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (vs.13-14)

- The great tribulation:
 - One specific era, final period of suffering, before Our Lord establishes his kingdom
 - The suffering of the church throughout all of history
 - (I.e., the sufferings of saints in North Korea, Sudan, Nigeria)
- Also identified as having washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb
 - *Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. Is.1.18*

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 shelter them with his presence.

¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (vs.15-17)

Because *they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb:*

- They are able to be in His presence
- They have the privilege of serving Him
 - Greek word translated “serve” = to minister, to serve, to worship
- They will receive from Him
 - Echoes Rev. and Psalms:
 - *“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God, He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” Rev.21.3-4*
 - *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Ps.23.1-3,6*

What do we take away from this passage?

God keeps His promises

- To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. 2.7
 - ***They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore***
- The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death. 2.11
 - ***a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb***
- To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it. 2.17
 - ***until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads***
- And I will give him the morning star. 2.28
 - ***For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd***
- The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. 3.5
 - ***clothed in white robes***
- The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. 3.12
 - ***Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple;***
- The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. 3.21
 - ***with palm branches in their hands***

His promises are brought about through the Lamb

“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

...for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Mt.26.28

Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. Rm.5.9

We will be with the Lord for all eternity

For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. Jn.14.3