

The 144,000 of Revelation



And “The Great Multitude”

6 in a series

Introduction

Those who believe in Jesus are excited at the thought of Christ's "Second Coming". It will be the fulfilment of all our hopes and desires. Yet for those who haven't accepted Jesus as Saviour - and have shown little or no interest in spiritual matters - it is described as a day of fear. As individuals we must ask ourselves the question: "Which group will I be in on that climactic day?" The question asked by those who are lost in *Revelation 6:17* is: *"For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"* In Revelation chapter 7 we see the answer to this question - the group who can stand at the end of time and welcome their Lord.

There is a story in the Old Testament (Daniel chapter 3) of three young Hebrew men who refused to bow to an idol at the order of a powerful king. For their disobedience they were thrown into a burning fiery furnace – yet they did not perish. The king was amazed as he saw the men walking in the fire with One who the king described as having the appearance of the Son of God. The men exited the fire without any harm, not having even the smell of smoke on them. This is the quality of those saved in the day when Jesus returns. They will stand for Him and be true to Him no matter what. As a result of their faithfulness and allegiance to Him, they will be counted as overcomers on this amazing day.



Overview for Session #6 (Revelation chapter 7)

1. The sealing of the 144,000
2. The link between the 144,000 and the "Great Multitude"
3. Introducing the Great Tribulation at the End Time

1. The Sealing of the 144,000

*Revelation 7:1-4 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.** 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, saying, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” 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.*

Question 1: What did the angel from the east possess that was so important to God’s servants? _____

Question 2: What does the wind represent in this verse? _____

Here we see four angels holding back destruction in the earth until the time for God to act is right. **The winds represent strife on the earth** which is not allowed to happen until God’s servants have been sealed. This leads us to ask: “What is the seal of the living God?”

In Revelation, ‘being sealed’ (or being marked) by God means that you belong to Him – and you demonstrate this “seal” by a loyal faith in Him. God has placed a seal on His faithful, obedient followers throughout history. We have an example of this in *Ezekiel 9:1-5* where the messenger clothed with linen was instructed to put a mark on the forehead of the genuine believers to distinguish them from the unbelievers and to spare their lives. A similarity exists in Revelation where the seal of God is contrasted with the mark of the beast, which is Satan’s seal (Rev. 13:16-17). This battle is ongoing between God and Satan – with each wanting to place their mark on you. The study on the mark of the beast will be included in a future lesson.

You can have the assurance of God’s seal being placed on you by your own personal choice. When you choose allegiance to Jesus, He will set His seal on you and protect and guide you today and always, and save you from the wrath which is to come.

*2 Corinthians 1: 21-22 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has **anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.***

Question 3: What three assurances has God given us to guarantee our salvation? _____

2. The Link Between the 144,000 & the “Great Multitude”

Many have been concerned about the number of 144,000 being saved, which seems to make salvation available to a limited number when compared with the billions of people who have been born into this world. Many ask whether this number is literal or symbolic.

There is evidence that the number 144,000 is symbolic. For example, we have seen how the number 7 represents completion, perfection or totality - likewise the number 12 in the Bible represents God’s church. God’s church in the Old Testament had 12 tribes. In the New Testament church we see the church formed by Jesus had 12 disciples. Then the church at the end of time is said to consist of 144,000 members which is a multiple of the number 12. Finally, we see God’s church in His everlasting Holy City which has 12 gates made of 12 pearls and the measure of the city is all in multiples of 12. This is God’s church in glory.

We have also noted previously that most of the book of Revelation uses symbols (e.g. *Revelation 1:20*) to portray greater spiritual truths. It’s important to note that the names of the twelve tribes of Israel in Revelation (Rev. 7:5-8) are different from the original twelve tribes (see Exodus 1:1-4, 1 Chron. 2:1-2). This is an indication that “Israel” in New Testament times is not literal/geographical Israel but all those who belong to Christ from all nations. The Apostle Paul explained this clearly in *Galatians 3:26-29* where Paul reveals that the followers of Christ are recognised as “spiritual Israel” made up of people from all nations on earth.

Galatians 3:26-29 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Question 4: How does Paul explain that we all are spiritual Israelites?

Verses 5-8 tell us that the ‘sealed’ are 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. However, the original twelve tribes of Israel no longer exist. The ten northern tribes were taken into captivity as a result of a lost war and became amalgamated with other nations (see *2 Kings 17:5-41*). After this, the remaining two southern tribes were taken into captivity by the Babylonians for seventy years after which a remnant was allowed to return to Israel to re-establish the nation. Then in 70AD when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, the temple records of which families were a part of what tribe were

destroyed - leaving just “one nation”. Add to this the fact that many modern-day Jewish people have descended from converts in Europe during the Middle Ages. So, the end-time people known as the “144,000” represent all of God’s people throughout the ages who are entitled to the promised reward through being accepted as spiritual Israelites through Jesus.

The Great Multitude

Revelation 7:9-10 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 in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

Question 5: What are the qualities of the “great multitude”?

The
144,000



The true followers of Jesus are in their promised land at long last. No wonder they are standing before the throne of God and praising Him in worship. They rejoice in their white robes, and in triumph and victory they wave their palm branches in grateful praise to the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Seeing this number as symbolic it becomes clearer when we see the saved coming from all walks of life and that the great multitude of the saved from all ages, are also included. The kingdom is offered to any who will come. It is available to you today and for eternity when you commit yourself to Jesus Christ.

3. Introducing “The Great Tribulation” at the End of Time

Revelation 7: 11-17 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders of the four creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honour and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.” Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?” 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. “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. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; 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.”

Question 6: Who are those arrayed in white robes? _____

Question 7: What have they washed their robes in? _____

Question 8: Where will the Lamb lead them? _____

Question 9: What beautiful thing will God do for their eyes? _____



The Great Multitude

We notice in this reading that these who are dressed in white robes as a symbol of victory have come out of “the great tribulation” – a term referring to a final significant conflict between God and Satan. This is a spiritual battle involving those sealed by God and those marked by Satan (see also (Rev. 3:10, Matt. 24:21). We’ll look at this in detail in a future lesson.

There is an important lesson in Revelation chapter 7- when we stay faithful to God, even during difficult times, there is a wonderful promise in store for us. God has an eternal kingdom of peace and happiness waiting for us which will be enjoyed forever. If times are difficult for you, just hold on and take the white robe of Christ’s righteousness and you will be forever thankful.

Question 10: Do you sense God asking you to make a stand for Him today?

*“And God will
wipe away
every tear
from
their eyes”*

