

# **Revelation 7—The 144,000 Jewish Evangelists**

(Mercy in Judgement—Israel, God’s Light to the Gentiles)

## **Revision of Chapter 6—The Seal Judgements**

Last week we looked at Revelation chapter 6, which is the start of the tribulation.

Revelation chapter 6 is chronological, and tells us what will happen in order of the events. Chapter 7 is not chronological. It is a vignette, an explanation of who the 144,000 are, how and when they come to be sealed and saved, and what their ministry will be during the 7 year tribulation period. Their ministry will take place over basically the entire 7 year period. It also tells us that during the 7 year tribulation, there will be a multitude of saved people from every tribe, tongue and nation who end up martyred. The 144,000 will play an important role in evangelising the entire world, and causing a multitude that cannot be counted to come to know Christ.

Before we go into Chapter 7, I’ll quickly give a summary of the main events in chapter 6, the first 6 seal judgements:

- **First Seal Judgement:** The antichrist is revealed and comes to power. The last 7 years or the last of Daniel’s 70 weeks in Daniel 9:24-27 commences when the 7 year peace treaty is signed with Israel.
- **Second Seal Judgement:** He promises peace but the result is war, a world war
- **Third Seal Judgement:** The world war causes famine and disease
- **Fourth Seal Judgement:** As a result of the war, famine and disease and wild beasts a quarter of the world’s population is killed.
- **Fifth Seal Judgement:** During this time there is a massive persecution of the tribulation saints, those who believe during the tribulation. Many are martyred or killed for the word of God and for being faithful in their testimony.
- **Sixth Seal Judgement:** There is a massive earthquake and other cosmic disturbances and the people of the earth recognise that these judgements are from God, and they fear God’s judgements and God’s presence.

### **Who is able to stand?**

Chapter 6 closes with the question, “who is able to stand?”, in relation to the wrath of the Lamb. Chapter 7 gives us the answer.

Of course the church will be standing before Christ in Heaven, dressed in white garments. But in chapter 7, we’ll see two other groups who can also stand before God — because they have been washed clean and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb and so declared innocent before God.

### **God Remembers Mercy in Judgement**

Also in Revelation chapter 7 we see God remembering mercy in judgement. We see this in two ways. Firstly, God will not remain angry with Israel even though they rejected and crucified Him when He came to them the first time. Here are a couple of verses that show God’s heart towards His chosen people, the nation of Israel, despite their continual disobedience.

Jeremiah 3:12 NKJV

Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say:  
'Return, backsliding Israel,' says the Lord;  
'I will not cause My anger to fall on you.  
For I am merciful,' says the Lord;  
'I will not remain angry forever.

Jeremiah 31:20 NKJV

Is Ephraim My dear son?  
Is he a pleasant child?  
For though I spoke against him,  
I earnestly remember him still;  
Therefore My heart yearns for him;  
I will surely have mercy on him, says the Lord.

The second way we see God's mercy on display is how God continue to show mercy to the very world that He is judging, a world that hates Him and is doing everything it can to be independent of Him.

Habakkuk 3:2

I have heard all about you, Lord.  
I am filled with awe by your amazing works.  
In this time of our deep need,  
help us again as you did in years gone by.  
And in your anger,  
remember your mercy.

What we see throughout most of the tribulation, at least until right up to the very end, is God doing everything He can to offer sinners the pardon for their sins, the opportunity to receive eternal life and live together with Him forever. There will be 144,000 Jewish evangelists travelling all over the world, the two witnesses prophesying from Jerusalem for the first 3 1/2 years, as well as angels flying around the world warning people of three specific ways the antichrist wants to deceive them and of course giving them the everlasting gospel. This is truly astounding when we consider just how evil this world is, how badly they have treated all the messengers that God has sent in the past and even now, and how badly they will treat the messengers that God will send in the future. Millions of Christians have been martyred for their testimony of Jesus, and millions more will be during the tribulation. In addition to this, God's 144,000 Jewish evangelists will be persecuted and mistreated by the world as they lead multitudes to faith in Christ as well as the cold blooded murder of two witnesses celebrated all over the world. Let's read the chapter.

**Revelation 7:1-19 NKJV**

**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. <sup>2</sup> 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, <sup>3</sup> saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." <sup>4</sup> 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:**

**<sup>5</sup> 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.

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 honour and power and might,  
Be to our God forever and ever.

Amen."

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."

## **The Sealing of the 144,000**

### **Wind as a symbol of judgement**

#### **Revelation 7:1 (a) NKJV**

**And 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.**

The phrase **four corners of the earth** is an ancient (and sometimes modern) equivalent to the idea of "the four points of the compass." The idea is that these angels effect the entire earth.

For example, the U.S. Marines ran an advertising campaign a while ago that said "Our Marines are stationed on the four corners of the earth." It's a figure of speech we still use today as well as in bible times, as we will see shortly.

Also, in Bible typology, wind, or as it is here in verse 1, "the four winds of the earth," speak of the judgment of God (for example, Jeremiah 49:36; 51:1, 16). There are more, but I'll just read one:

Jeremiah 49:36

Against Elam I will bring the four winds

From the four quarters of heaven,

And scatter them toward all those winds;

There shall be no nations where the outcasts of Elam will not go.

Notice here also the use of the figure of speech, “the four quarters of heaven,” to mean the whole world, and the four winds represent judgement.

It seems likely that God sealed the 144,000 before any judgements came upon the earth so He would have a witness on the earth for the entire 7 years.

**Revelation 7:2a, 4 NKJV**

**And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God... <sup>4</sup>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:**

So before judgement begins, God seals the 144,000 Jewish witnesses, with most likely a visible seal, though we don't know. According to Revelation 14:1, it could be the name of the Father. In Ezekiel 9:4, a similar protective seal was given to the righteous before Jerusalem was judged, but that one wasn't humanly visible.

**Lost tribes of Israel?**

Another objection here is that some say that 10 of the tribes of Israel were lost, but this isn't true. At the time when Israel became two kingdoms, after Solomon rebelled against God, Solomon's son Rehoboam remained faithful to God for the first three years that he ruled over the southern kingdom of Judah. In the meantime, Jeroboam, whom God had chosen to be the king of the 10 northern tribes, made 2 golden calves, and invited anyone to be priests, not just the Levites. As a result, all those who followed God in the northern kingdom migrated down to the southern kingdom, Judah, in protest of this blatant apostasy and turning away from God.

2 Chronicles 11:16-17 NLT paraphrase

**From all the tribes of Israel**, those who sincerely wanted to worship the Lord, the God of Israel, followed the Levites to Jerusalem, where they could offer sacrifices to the Lord, the God of their ancestors. <sup>17</sup> This strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and for three years they supported Rehoboam son of Solomon, for during those years they faithfully followed in the footsteps of David and Solomon.

So most likely thousands from each of the 10 tribes would have come and lived in Judah, just so that they would be able to worship God at the temple, and not be made to worship the golden calves and the other demonic gods that Jeroboam had made.

The southern kingdom of Judah was taken captive many years later, but many of those exiles returned to Jerusalem and the surrounding areas after the captivity, while some stayed put in the other nations. So you see that there were representatives from each of the 12 tribes either living in Judah or still living in the foreign countries where they were exiled to. James refers to these people still dispersed abroad when he writes in:

James 1:1 NKJV

James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

**To the twelve tribes** which are scattered abroad:

Greetings.

This makes sense, as in the book of Ester, we see a great many ethnic Jews living outside of Israel, in all or most the provinces of the Mede and Persian empire. The same is true today. There are still many Jewish communities around the world, besides those who have already chosen to return to Israel.

### **What is the Seal?**

Now, what is this seal?

In verse 2 it says that another angel had a **seal**, and he sealed the people of God. In the ancient world, these types of seals were familiar or common. A king or a property owner could use a seal to show ownership or authenticity. They would have a ring with an emblem on it, unique to their family or government. They would put hot wax on something, then press the ring into the wax as it cooled, preserving the image of the ring in the wax. This would prove ownership. Only the owner had the authority to break the seal.

For example, a builder would seal with wax the lumber/wood he chose before it was shipped across the Aegean Sea. Arriving at the port nearest him, the builder would carry away whichever trees had his seal upon them.

So, too, the Master Carpenter, Jesus Christ, has chosen us to be the material of His eternal temple. Therefore, He has sealed us with His Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). These Jewish believers were also sealed with the Holy Spirit. The fact that it says that they were sealed on their foreheads (v 3) could indicate that there was a visible mark as well, just like God put a mark on Cain so that people wouldn't hurt him (Genesis 4:15).

### **Revelation 7:2b–4 NKJV**

**And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, <sup>3</sup> saying, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” <sup>4</sup> 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:**

One hundred forty-four thousand Jews will be marked by God as His servants during the Tribulation. And guess what. In chapter 14, verse 1, we see every single one of them surviving the Tribulation to stand with the Lord.

Just as a reminder, as we talked about recently, Israel was God's light to the world until they rejected their Messiah, and God then instituted the church to be His witness, His light to the world. But the church will be removed at the rapture and God will once again use Israel to reach the world for the last 7 years of human government before Jesus comes back. God has not abandoned His chosen or covenant people Israel and will keep His promises to them.

### **Why do so many cults claim that they are the 144,000?**

So, who *is* this first group, the 144,000 who will stand in the Tribulation? Many groups claim to be the 144,000. Jehovah Witnesses are one, even though they had to change their stance a bit when their group grew to number more than 144,000. Historical Mormonism also claimed to be the 144,000. Ellen G. White and the Seventh Day Adventists claim to be the 144,000. Garner Ted Armstrong and his Worldwide Church of God claim to be the 144,000.

Why would such groups *want* to be these 144,000, considering that during the Tribulation, the world will be falling apart around them? *Because in so doing, they conveniently write the Jews out of prophecy.*

You see, throughout history, Christians and cult members alike have attempted to take Israel out of the eschatological equation. Doctrines such as “Replacement Theology,” “Reconstructionism,” and “Kingdom Now” all propound that all of God’s promises to Israel were passed on to the church because the Jews rejected Jesus. This is anything but a new idea....

Origen, a heavyweight Bible teacher and philosopher in the second and third centuries said, “I think we’ve been reading the Scriptures wrong. All of the promises given to Israel are simply allegories and illustrations.” And as a result, the power and potency, the effectiveness and impact of the church decreased steadily from that point on.

Origen left the scene and was followed by Augustine, who used his tremendous intellect to further the case for the allegorising of the Old Testament, especially prophecy.

Augustine was eventually followed by Martin Luther. And Luther, although a giant of the faith, was terribly wrong on one issue: He hated the Jews. Why? Because he disregarded the simple and plain meaning of the multiple verses that record God saying emphatically that He will never leave, give up on, or disown the people of Israel. As a result of this allegorical method of interpreting the scriptures, many Protestant pastors supported Hitler well into his regime as He murdered millions of Jews. We’ll talk more about antisemitism and how it started in the church later on. But for now, just realise that God is not through with His people Israel. His promises to them are firmly rooted in the five covenants He made with them—four of which are unconditional. Let’s have a quick look at them:

1. In the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised to bless Abraham regardless of what Abraham did or didn’t do (Genesis 12:1–3).
2. In the Palestinian Covenant, God gave three hundred thousand square miles of land—from the Euphrates River to the Nile—to the Jews, even though at the height of their rule under Solomon, they only possessed thirty thousand square miles (Genesis 13:14).
3. In the Mosaic Covenant, otherwise known as the Law, God promised to bless Israel if they followed His commandments (Deuteronomy 28). Of the five covenants, only the Mosaic Covenant is conditional.
4. In the Davidic Covenant, God unconditionally promised that an eternal King would come from David’s lineage—fulfilled, of course, in Jesus (2 Samuel 7).
5. In the New Covenant, God unconditionally promised to give Israel a new heart upon which He would write His will (Jeremiah 31:31–33). This is yet to be fulfilled, though He has already brought them back into the land and formed them into a nation again, just like He promised.

Again I emphasise, God is *not* through with the Jew. Because the promises He made to them were *unconditional*, they cannot be forfeited. Here is something from Jon Courson that brings the point home.

“But Israel failed,” you say.

So do I.

“But Israel was fickle,” you protest.

So are you.

“But Israel faltered,” you whisper.

So do we.

That’s why in Romans 9–11, God says, “Look at Israel. I have not turned My back on them—and I’ll not turn My back on you.” We went through these verses recently. God has only temporarily put Israel aside — it is only a temporary and partial rejection.

### **Let’s learn about the 144,000:**

#### **Revelation 7:5–8 NKJV**

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;

<sup>6</sup> 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;

<sup>7</sup> 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;

<sup>8</sup> 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.

Listed by tribe, the 144,000 refer to 144,000 Jews who will preach throughout the world during the Tribulation.

Lets’ come back to the list of tribes and who they are. **Of the tribe of:** This list is also interesting in the way that the tribe of Ephraim is referred to, but only indirectly. The **tribe of Joseph** is mentioned, but Joseph was represented by two tribes: Ephraim and Manasseh (Joseph’s two sons). Since the **tribe of Manasseh** is mentioned, by elimination, the **tribe of Joseph** must mean the tribe of Ephraim—who is listed, but not by name. Perhaps Ephraim was slighted because the tribe of Ephraim was also associated with great idolatry (Hosea 4:17).

As you know, there are only 12 tribes. But here, Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim (referred to here as Joseph because of their idolatry) and Manasseh, step in and take the place of Joseph. But if Joseph is replaced by two in this list and yet the number of tribes remains twelve, a tribe must be missing. Who is the missing tribe? Can you pick it? The missing tribe is Dan.

But why is Dan missing? The Rabbis have consistently interpreted the ominous word in Genesis 49:17 to mean that a false Messiah, or Antichrist, will come from the tribe of Dan. That could indeed be true (also see Daniel 11:37 and Jeremiah 8:16). But Dan’s exclusion may also be the result of something else—idolatry. God specifically says in Deuteronomy 29 that any tribe involved in idolatry would be separated from the remaining tribes of Israel. This is exactly what happened to Dan. When they came into the Promised Land, the people of Dan were given coastal territory. But they weren’t happy. They soon migrated north in search of new land, finally settling above the Sea of Galilee in close proximity to the pagans. Because of their geographic location, Dan fell into idolatry.

Consequently, just as Deuteronomy 29:21 prophesied, Dan was blotted out as a tribe. But when the Lord comes back and establishes His kingdom in Israel, guess who is the first tribe given their allotment? Dan (Ezekiel 48:1–3). This just shows the incredible grace, mercy, and forgiveness of our God.

### **The 144,000 can't represent the church:**

Who the 144,000 are is an important issue. *If* they are a symbol of the church, then the church is definitely *in* the Great Tribulation, but sealed for survival *through* the Great Tribulation. This means that there would be no pretribulation rapture. However, some facts about the 144,000 from Revelation 7 and Revelation 14 give us insight regarding their identity.

1. They are called the children of Israel (Revelation 7:4).
2. Their tribal affiliation is specific (Revelation 7:4–8).
3. They seem to be protected and triumphant through the period of God's wrath, meeting with Jesus at Mount Zion at His return (Revelation 14:1).
4. They are celibate (single or unmarried and virgins) (Revelation 14:4).
5. They are the beginning of a greater harvest (Revelation 14:4).
6. They are marked by integrity and faithfulness (Revelation 14:5).

Taken together, these facts make it difficult to say that the 144,000 are a symbolic picture of the church. Why? Because:

1. Israel is a term never specifically applied to the church in the New Testament, and never by any Christian until a.d. 160
2. Their tribal affiliation is emphatic and known to God. Even if God only knows it, there is absolutely no reason to regard their tribal affiliation as symbolic or allegorical, and not literal.
3. It is difficult to imagine the entire church surviving through the tribulation without martyrdom and remaining celibate through the period, something that was never required for the church as a whole (1 Corinthians 7:1–6).
4. If the 144,000 are a symbol of the entire church, then what greater harvest are they the beginning of?

***Therefore, it is best to see the 144,000 as specifically chosen Jewish people who come to faith in Jesus, protectively sealed throughout the tribulation as a sign. They are the beginning harvest of the salvation of Israel*** (Romans 11:1, 11:26, Matthew 23:37–39).

## **A multitude saved during the Tribulation**

### **Revelation 7:9–11 NKJV**

**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, <sup>10</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" <sup>11</sup> 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,**



v 9 **A great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues:** The diversity here is evidence that the Great Commission will be fulfilled before the end (of the Tribulation), even as Jesus promised.

Matthew 24:14 NKJV

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

*Did you realise that this verse doesn't apply to the church?* Jesus in this passage in Matthew 24 is talking to Jews about what will happen to the Jewish nation. For example in Matthew 24:20, it talks about the flight not being on the Sabbath. The Jews are the only nation that keeps the Sabbath.

Here is another interesting fact:

John knew they came from different **nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues**. Therefore, we know that there will be *differences* among people in heaven, just as there is on earth. We will not all be the same. We will be individuals, and we will be recognisable.

Now, it says in verse 9 that this great multitude was **Standing before the throne and before the Lamb:** Just like in Revelation chapters 4 and 5, everyone's attention in heaven is focused on the *throne* of God.

Spurgeon says, "This is a peculiar subject of their joy: that God has a throne, that he sits upon it, and that he rules over all things, and all things do his bidding. The central thought of heaven, then, is divine sovereignty."

Also in verse 9 it says that they are **Clothed with white robes:** These **robes** remind us not only of the covering righteousness of Jesus, but also of *priestly service*.

Verse 9 also describes the multitude as having **Palm branches** in their hands: These remind us of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (John 12:12–16), where Jesus was also praised as Savior and King. The word *Hosanna* means "save now!"

Historically speaking, **Palm branches** represented victory. It shows this **great multitude** celebrates a great victory. Not even death could defeat them. Do you remember the source of our victory?

1 John 5:4-5 NKJV

**For every child of God defeats this evil world,** and we achieve this victory through our faith. <sup>5</sup> And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

Don't you just love that, "**For every child of God defeats this evil world...**" How? By faith, which is the opposite of works or self-effort or legalism or works. Faith means that we trust in God alone, and are empowered and filled by His Spirit to do His work and love with His love.

### **What's the most important thing? Our salvation!**

Now, in verse 10 it says that this great multitude is crying out with a loud voice saying, **Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!** Having the symbol of righteousness (**white robes**), they worship and praise God for their **salvation**. They recognise that *God* is the source of salvation, and no one else. Always remember that salvation isn't something we earn, it is something God gives.

David Guzik says, “Sometimes believers on earth take their salvation almost for granted. This isn’t true of this great multitude in heaven.”

I pray that we would not take our salvation for granted either, but rather be praising God confidently and clearly for all to hear, remembering the great cost that Jesus went to to save us from our sins, and never taking it for granted.

### **Spontaneous praise in Heaven**

This victorious great multitude causes the angels, the four living creatures and the elders (who represent the church) to hold a heavenly praise and worship service, giving worship and adulation, praise and glory to God the Father and the Son.

#### **Revelation 7:12 NKJV**

**saying:**

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

### **Who is this multitude? Where did they come from?**

#### **Revelation 7:13 NKJV**

**Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?”**

**Then one of the elders answered:** It was important that John knew the identity of this great multitude. But he didn’t know that he should ask, so **one of the elders** prompted him to ask.

**Application:** There is a great application for us here regarding evangelism: one of the elders answered—even though no one was asking. That’s exactly what an elder, a mature brother or sister, is supposed to do: answer even though no one’s asking. If you go to work or school, saying, “Lord, use me. Bring me someone today who will ask me about the meaning of life—it’s possible that will happen, but more than likely you’ll wait a long time for that to occur. An elder is one who doesn’t wait for someone to ask. Just as this elder did, he initiates spiritual discussion. We need to pray for boldness to witness.

#### **Revelation 7:14a NKJV**

**And I said to him, “Sir, you know.”**

In chapters 4 and 5, John recognised the church, represented by the 24 elders. Yet he doesn’t recognise this multitude before the throne. Therefore, strong evidence that they cannot be the church, and therefore the church was not in the Tribulation.

#### **Revelation 7:14 (b)—17 NKJV**

**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. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; <sup>17</sup> 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.”**

v 14 **These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation:** This vast multitude, from every tribe and tongue and nation, are those rescued for God's kingdom in the period of **the great tribulation**, as a result of the preaching of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists.

They had trouble on the earth during **the great tribulation**. In the ancient Greek grammar of this passage, "**the**" is emphatic. This was also a time of **great tribulation for this multitude**. Therefore, these are *martyrs* from **the great tribulation**.

As I said at the start, the presence of so many tribulation saints is a powerful statement of God's grace and mercy. Even in this time of judgment and wrath on the earth, many are saved.

Also, because the great multitude are mentioned right after the 144,000, it's strong evidence that they are saved due to the ministry of the 144,000 servants of God sent to evangelise the world during the great tribulation. This fits with the idea of God using Israel again as His light to the world.

It says in verse 14 that they **Washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb**: Those saved in the great tribulation are saved just like everybody else, by **the blood of the Lamb**. Even if they are martyred, their martyrdom does not save them. Only the work of Jesus can cleanse and save.

Also in verse 14, we don't usually think of things being made white by the application of blood, but the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin:

Isaiah 1:18b NKJV

*Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

## **Conclusion—The glorious future we have waiting for us in Heaven**

Verses 15-17 describe What this great multitude does, and how it is blessed.

Firstly, **They are before the throne of God**: In heaven, the redeemed enjoy the immediate presence of God. They can come right into the throne room and be with God. There are no barriers, no waiting lists.

Secondly it says, **And serve Him day and night**: In heaven, the redeemed **serve** God. We don't know exactly how, but they do. For the believer, Heaven is not only a place of rest from earthly labour, but also an opportunity to continue to serve God. We won't be bored at all.

It also says that **He who sits on the throne will dwell among them**: In heaven, God **will dwell physically** with His people. This is the ultimate fulfilment of King David's great desire in:

Psalms 27:4 NKJV

One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.

It then says that **The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them**: In heaven, the redeemed will know the loving care and nurture of their Savior. He will protect them from every affliction (**they shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat**). He will also provide for their every need (**lead them to living fountains of waters**).

While it is true that Jesus does **shepherd** us now, and He is close to us and cares for us now, yet in heaven it will be so much more.

It also says, **God will wipe away every tear from their eyes**: In heaven, the redeemed will know no more sorrow or pain. The hurt and the struggle of this earthly life are gone, and tears are a thing of the past, because **God will wipe away every tear**. This is a beautiful picture. Think of a mother's loving hand, brushing away the tears from her child's face. God loves us with that kind of nurturing care.

It's also important that we understand from this that **every tear** will only be wiped away in *heaven*. On this earth, we have our share of pain and tears to endure and bring to God. He shows His love *now* with sweet consolation and strength for our tears; but *one day*—in heaven, not now—He will wipe them away forever. So hold on, stand firm, for our light afflictions are only for a moment.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 NLT paraphrase

That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. <sup>17</sup> For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! <sup>18</sup> So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

We have so much to look forward to—heaven, with our Saviour shepherding us and leading us and comforting us and protecting us and providing for us our every need. What more could anyone want? I'll finish with some encouraging verses from Romans chapter 8:

Romans 8:18-25 NLT paraphrase

<sup>18</sup> Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. <sup>19</sup> For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. <sup>20</sup> Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, <sup>21</sup> the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. <sup>22</sup> For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup> And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. <sup>24</sup> We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. <sup>25</sup> But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)