

## The Heavenly Host

Revelation was probably written in 68 AD, 2 years before the fall of Jerusalem to Rome in 70AD and the destruction of Jerusalem was, at least, a partial fulfilment of the prophecy of Revelation.

... but this letter is also the prophecy about the end of all things.

Here we are going to see that even though we may go through the trials in life we have the assurance that in the end the Church will be triumphant in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before the destruction of Jerusalem, Christianity was still largely identified with Israel and there was the concern that some Jewish Christians would return to OT worship and ritualism ... which was the point of the book of Hebrews.

At first, Christians never saw themselves as separate from the Jewish faith, but the destruction of Jerusalem and the general rejection by the mainline Jews, caused Christians (Gentile and Jew alike) to see themselves as both separate from Judaism as well as being the true heirs of Abraham and Moses.

Christianity was the fulfillment of all the promises God had made to the Jews. ... God's promise to preserve and bless Israel was in fact, God's promise to preserve and bless the church.

J. Marcellus Kik in his book "**An Eschatology of Victory**" writes, "*One of the most remarkable things about the siege of Jerusalem was the miraculous escape of the Christians. It has been estimated that over a million Jews lost their lives in that terrible siege, but not one of them was a Christian.*"

**Now tonight we are in chapter 7. it's a parenthetical period after the 6<sup>th</sup> seal and before the 7<sup>th</sup> –it is a pause and** what John is seeing here is taking place **in Heaven.**

Here in heaven see a great multitude of Christians who, "*have come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.*"

There is a roar of thunderous praise—glory—victory—triumph! We are coming to the apex of celestial thrill and adoration where Jesus, the lamb of God, will be holding in his hands the open scroll.

## Why are we here?

Because here we can see what praise and worship looks like in heaven.

**(Rev 7:1-3) After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. <sup>2</sup> And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out 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 or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads."**

*What we see in these first 3 verses is that four angels are holding back the judgment of God in obedience to the command of another angel who John sees ascending from the rising of the sun.*

Although everything is ready for these judgments to come ... the four winds from the North, South, East and West are being held back by four angels and ready for release!

Suddenly, dramatically another angel ascends from the East and cries out—Do no harm the earth or the sea or the trees **UNTIL we have sealed the bond-servants of God.**

- 1 Cor. 15:51-52- “at the last trumpet”
- Rev. 10:7- “the mystery completed”
- 2 Thess 2:1- “that day will not come until the man of lawlessness is revealed?”

These angels are holding back the prepared judgments/punishments until they can be unleashed only on the unsaved.

... IN OTHER WORDS, this judgment is not going to fall on the believers! **WHY?** Because the servants of God have been sealed.

**This sealing is the most precious thing under heaven! It means 3 things.**

- **As a protection** against tampering—they sealed the tomb where Jesus was buried.
- **As a mark of ownership**—The Song of Solomon says “set me as a seal today upon your heart.”

- **It certifies that something is genuine**—In Esther the decree against the Jews was sealed with the seal of King Xerxes.
- As a Christian the Father has sealed you and you enjoy His **care and protection**—it is to HIM we pray.
- As a Christian Jesus has **ownership** of you because He bought you with His own precious blood.
- As a Christian you are a **genuine** child of God sealed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Then John hears the number of sealed believers.

(Rev 7:4-8) <sup>4</sup> And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: <sup>5</sup> from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, <sup>6</sup> from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, <sup>7</sup> from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, <sup>8</sup> from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.

Does this literally mean 144k or is this number symbolic... **I believe it is both literal and symbolic** – let me show you why I think this.

First, consider the number 144—it is the product of 12x12.

**3 x 4 = 12 [Trinity/Creation] ... The Trinity (3) operating in the created universe (4) results in redemption = 12.**

In Revelation 21 we are going to see that the holy city of the New Jerusalem has 12 gates and 12 foundations and on the 12 gates are written the names of the **12 tribes of Israel** and on the 12 foundations are the names of the **12 apostles**.

We are also told that the height of the walls is 144 cubits.

If you take the OT 12 and multiply it by the NT 12 you get 144 so this number clearly symbolizes the entire Church of God from both the Old and New Testament eras.

Furthermore, the specific naming of the 12 tribes indicates these are literally Jewish people from the 12 tribes.

Two interesting things about this list.

**First**, Ephraim and Dan are omitted. Dan is replaced with Manasseh and in the place of Ephraim, Joseph is mentioned.

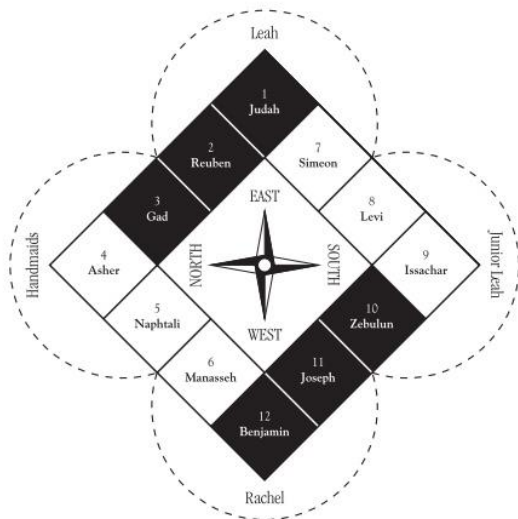
We are not told why but the obvious assumption is that Ephraim was the leader in the rebellion against the Davidic kingdom, splitting the Kingdom between the North and the South.

After the split Jeroboam established “high places” centers of idolatrous worship in Bethel (the tribe of Ephraim) **and** in the city of Dan.

**Second**, Judah and not Reuben (the oldest) is listed first. WHY? JUDAH IS TH TRIBE OF JESUS.

This listing of the tribes parallels with the names John sees written on the gates of the New Jerusalem in Rev. 21:12.

They are listed beginning at the eastern (top) corner.



After this John sees the most glorious vision of all ... the Church of God triumphant!

(Rev 7:9-10) <sup>9</sup> 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; <sup>10</sup> and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

This is a multitude that no man can number ... but God knows the exact number.

*"You must not fancy, then that God sits helplessly by while the world, which He has created for Himself, hurtles hopelessly to destruction, and He is able only to snatch with difficulty here and there a brand from the universal burning. The world does not govern Him in a single one of its acts. He governs it and leads it steadily onward to the end which from the beginning ... He had determined that the kingdoms of the earth would become ever more and more the Kingdom of our God and His Christ."* – B.B. Warfield. God's Immeasurable Love p. 518

*(2 Tim. 2:19<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His,")*

It says in verse 9 that these people from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue are "standing before the throne."

To **stand before the throne** means to have fellowship with, to render service to, and to share in the honor of the Lamb. The **white robes and palm branches** symbolizes holiness and blessedness.

**The angels surround this redeemed multitude and they render homage to God:**

(Rev 7:11-12) <sup>11</sup> 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, <sup>12</sup> saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

The heavenly host testify of their agreement with the adoration of the triumphant church. NOW LOOK WHAT HAPPENS ...

(Rev 7:13-14) <sup>13</sup> Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" <sup>14</sup> I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

An elder speaks and asks John a question, but John admits that he is unable to answer it.

It isn't that the elder doesn't know but rather the elder wants John's focus to be absolutely on the **countless multitude** and all these people that used to be hell bound sinners who are now righteous, holy, and clothed in white.

John, doesn't answer.

HERE IS THE GREAT POINT: Trials do come but the ONE who controls all sits upon the throne and he guarantees that the Church does not remain or be destroyed in trial and tribulation.

... The church comes **OUT** of great tribulation ... which means they do experience tribulation.

**(Matt. 24:21-22) <sup>21</sup> For at that time there will be great distress, the kind that hasn't taken place from the beginning of the world until now and never will again. <sup>22</sup> Unless those days were cut short, no one would be saved. But those days will be cut short because of the elect. [Also Mark 13:19-20]**

Jesus is saying that the tribulation that is coming will not destroy. Historically, it is not unusual for the church to suffer persecution and every NT writer was trying to prepare us for that possibility.

**<sup>12</sup> Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you as if something unusual were happening to you. <sup>13</sup> Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup> If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. (1 Pet. 4:12-14)** [Also see: 2 Tim. 3:12, John 16:33, Acts 14:22, Romans 5:3, 8:35]

The elder continue his explanation about those who are before the throne.

**(Rev 7:15-17)<sup>15</sup> "For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. <sup>16</sup> "They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; <sup>17</sup> for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."**

Christus Vincit, Christus Regnat, Christus Imperat [Christ is conquering, Christ is reigning; Christ rules over all.]