

## Chapter 7:

“After this” speaks to the events that follow the opening of the first six seals. John sees four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, (North, South, East, West), preventing the wind from blowing across the earth. Another angel coming from the east has the seal of God and calls out to the other angels advising them not to harm anything until the servants of God have been sealed and protected. Note the direction the angel comes from is “the east”. Often in the Bible this term is used and represents holiness and/or events and activities that are sent from God.

There are 144,000 Jewish people sealed from the 12 tribes of Israel. The number 144,000, I’m sure, has some significant meaning, although I’m not fully sure I understand what it is. I know that 12 is a foundational number within scripture and symbolizes God’s power and authority. It also serves to represent completion, especially with respect to the nation of Israel. As such, it is fitting that 144,000 is a combination of  $12 \times 12 \times 1000$ . I do not believe this particular group of Jewish people believe in Jesus as the Messiah. I believe, that this group believes in God and are living under Mosaic law during the tribulation. I believe they have reinstated the sacrifice of animals for the atonement of sin, after the rebuilding of the Holy Temple, and are trying to live righteously under God’s law, but have not accepted Jesus as their personal Savior. This again shows God’s patience towards His chosen people. This is what I believe based on my studies thus far. I have not yet found scripture to back this up fully, and will continue to study. I would ask the question though: if these individuals believe in Jesus at this time, why have they not been raptured or martyred and under the alter?

The Great Multitude: This group comes from every nation, tribe, people and language. They stand before God and Jesus. They are wearing white robes and are holding palm branches. Palm branches signify being servants to our God and Jesus. This group came out of the great tribulation. Since they are not martyred souls under the alter, that are resurrected during the events of chapter 20, it is believed these are all raptured tribulation saints. The white robes signify their righteousness and “white in the blood of the Lamb”, signifies their acceptance and belief in Christ Jesus.

This is the first raptured group that we see appearing in Heaven. This text doesn’t specify when they were raptured, but this is when we first see them standing before the throne. This is one reason there are so many views as to when the resurrection and rapture occur, because it is unclear in scripture. Again, I would not recommend we focus on when and how those rapture/resurrection events occur. We need to focus on making ourselves ready. We can however reason that the Great Multitude will appear prior to the opening of the seventh seal.

When I read the following text, I don’t picture this Great Multitude as being the bride of Christ. There are many Christians that believe in more of a pass/fail type belief that all Christians are part of the bride and receive the same Heavenly rewards. I do not believe in that manner, and see different rewards and promises to Christians based on their level of devotion to Christ. I will get into that in more detail during the discussions of the seven churches and notes on the resurrection and rapture.

**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) Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. 17) For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. NIV*

I believe this Great Multitude are a blessed group of believers who made it through the first part of the tribulation without being killed. They either accepted Christ during this time or never denied Him. Up to this point in the scripture, the acceptance of the mark of the beast has not been discussed. We see that “requirement” appearing after the midway point of the tribulation when the earth will be forced to worship the beast. There may however be the opportunity to accept the mark during the first part of the tribulation. Let’s dig into that a little further:

We know the Antichrist will be at work on the earth at that time. He will have much popularity and influence in the world; don’t forget he is the first horseman. He will have created a peace treaty with Israel that allows for the rebuilding of the Holy Temple, and will be deceiving Israel in some manner. He will be pushing his agenda and promoting “global unity”. That will undoubtedly involve global financial and governmental systems that could likely incorporate the “mark of the beast”. Of course it won’t likely be called that, at least at that time.

We know that Christians will be persecuted during the first part of the tribulation and many of the bad tribulation events will be blamed on Christ followers. It is reasonable that different countries and governments begin requiring receiving this mark very early on, and even Christians that do not really understand God’s word, are deceived into accepting this mark. I however do believe that a person will be able to renounce this receiving of the mark and turning back to Jesus, but that is a discussion for later on.

Additionally keep in mind during this time the 2 witnesses, later discussed in Revelation 11, are in Jerusalem, at the Holy Temple, standing before the “Lord of the Earth” (Antichrist) and ministering to the world, about prophecy and our Savior Christ Jesus. They will have God’s power and authority to defend themselves and work miracles. We will discuss this more in chapter 11, but note that they will be creating great turmoil for the Antichrist and his followers that leads to even less popularity for those of us who love Christ Jesus.