**The 144,000, Holding back judgment until the servants of God are sealed.**

[**Revelation 7:1-3**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/7/1-3/s_1174001) **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.”**

1. **Four angels standing at the four corners of the earth**: The phrase **four corners of the earth** is an ancient (and sometimes modern) equivalent to the idea of “the four points of the compass.” (N,E,W,S)
   1. The idea is that these angels effect the entire earth.
2. **Holding the four winds of the earth**: These **winds** were a destructive force of God’s judgment, as they often are in the Old Testament.
   1. [**Hosea 13:15**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/hos/13/15/s_875015) gives an example: ***Though he is fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come; the wind of the Lord shall come from the wilderness. Then his spring will become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up.***
   2. **Another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God**: Another angel had a **seal**, and he sealed the people of God.
      1. In the ancient world, seals were familiar. A king or a property owner could use a seal to show ownership or authenticity.
   3. **Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads**: These servants of God will receive a seal on their forehead.
      1. GOD is showing his ownership of these people!
      2. [**Revelation 14:1**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/14/1/s_1181001) **Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads.**
   4. A similar protective seal was given to the righteous before Jerusalem was judged.
      1. [**Ezekiel 9:4**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/eze/9/4/s_811004) **and the LORD said to him, “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.”**
   5. **The servants of our God**: We are not told what exactly their service is, but the 144,000 are sealed for a specific and unique purpose. However, the general idea of being sealed is not limited to them.
      1. Jesus was sealed; *God the Father has set His seal on Him.* [**John 6:27**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/jhn/6/27/s_1003027) **Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”**
      2. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit [**2 Corinthians 1:21-22**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/2co/1/21-22/s_1079021) **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.**
      3. This sealing of the Holy Spirit belongs to every believer when they are saved: *having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.* [**Ephesians 1:13**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/eph/1/13/s_1098013) **In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,**

**The number of those sealed.**

[**Revelation 7:4-8**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/7/4-8/s_1174004) **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: 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; 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; 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; 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.**

1. **One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed**: This is their *general* identification. They are of **all the tribes of the children of Israel**. *Ethnically*, *they are Jewish*, and there are 144,000 of these chosen ones.
   1. This is their *specific* identification. The 144,000 are divided among the **12** tribes of Israel.
2. **Of the tribe of**: In this listing of the tribes, the tribe of Dan is left out. Some think this is because Dan is the tribe of the Antichrist, based on [**Daniel 11:37**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/dan/11/37/s_861037) and [**Jeremiah 8:16**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/jer/8/16/s_753016).
   1. This may or may not be the case, but without doubt, Dan was the tribe that introduced idolatry into the nation of Israel ([**Genesis 49:17**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/gen/49/17/s_49017)**;** [**Judges 18:30**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/jdg/18/30/s_229030)).
   2. There is a wonderful redemption for the tribe of Dan. Dan is the *first* tribe listed in Ezekiel’s millennial roll call of the tribes ([**Ezekiel 48**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/eze/48/1-35/s_850001)).
3. **Of the tribe of**: This list is also interesting in the way that the tribe of Ephraim is referred to, but only indirectly.
   1. The **tribe of Joseph** is mentioned, but Joseph was represented by **two** tribes: *Ephraim* and *Manasseh*.
   2. 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.
   3. Perhaps **Ephraim** was slighted because the tribe of Ephraim was also associated with great **idolatry** ([**Hosea 4:17**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/hos/4/17/s_866017)).
4. **Who are these 144,000?**
   1. Many different groups have claimed to be the 144,000. For example, the Jehovah’s Witnesses once said their entire group was, until they surpassed 144,000 in number.
   2. Now they say that the 144,000 are only a select group of Witnesses who go to heaven.
   3. Most Bible scholars either regard the 144,000 as the ***church*** or as ***converted Jews***.
      1. 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.
   4. Some facts about the 144,000 from [**Revelation 7**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/7/1-17/s_1174001) and [**Revelation 14**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/14/1-20/s_1181001) give us insight regarding their identity.
      1. They are called *the children of Israel* ([**Revelation 7:4**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/7/4/s_1174004))
      2. Their tribal affiliation is specific ([**Revelation 7:4-8**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/7/4-8/s_1174004))
      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**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/14/1/s_1181001)).
      4. They are celibate ([**Revelation 14:4**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/14/4/s_1181004))
      5. They are the beginning of a greater harvest ([**Revelation 14:4**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/14/4/s_1181004))
      6. They are marked by integrity and faithfulness ([**Revelation 14:5**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/14/5/s_1181005))
      7. Taken together, these facts make it difficult to say that the 144,000 are a symbolic picture of the church.
      8. *Israel* is a term never specifically applied to the church in the New Testament.
      9. 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**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1co/7/1-6/s_1069001)).
      10. It is best to see the 144,000 as specifically chosen Jewish people who come to faith in Jesus and protectively sealed throughout the tribulation.
      11. They are the beginning harvest of the salvation of Israel ([Romans 11:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rom/11/1/s_1057001), [Romans 11:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rom/11/26/s_1057026), [Matthew 23:37-39](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/mat/23/37-39/s_952037)).
      12. (Seiss) “They are not a part of the Church proper; for their repentance comes too late for that. They are a superaddition to the Church — a supplementary body — near and precious to Christ, but made up after the proper Church has finished its course.”

**The Great Multitude - More worship at the throne of God.**

[**Revelation 7:9-10**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/7/9-10/s_1174009) **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, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation *belongs to o*ur God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”**

1. **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, even as Jesus promised ([**Matthew 24:14**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/mat/24/14/s_953014))
   1. Because John knew they came from different **nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues**, 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.
   2. (Spurgeon) “I suppose as he looked at them, he could tell where they come from. There is individuality in heaven, depend upon it. Every seed will have its own body. There will sit down in heaven not three unknown patriarchs, but Abraham — you will know him; Isaac, you will know him; and Jacob, you will know him. There will be in heaven not a company of persons, all struck off alike so that you cannot tell who is who; but they will be out of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue.”
2. **Standing before the throne and before the Lamb**: Again, John saw everything in heaven in reference to the *throne* of God.
   1. (Spurgeon) “This is a peculiar subject of their joy: that God has a throne, that he sits upon it, and that he ruleth over all things, and all things do his bidding. The central thought of heaven, then, is divine sovereignty.”
3. **Clothed with white robes**: These **robes** remind us not only of the covering righteousness of Jesus, but also of *priestly service*.
   1. (Spurgeon) “They are *arrayed for holy servic*e, and arrayed at once, for they wear white robes fitted for their priestly service.”
4. **Palm branches**: (**John 12:12-13**) This remind us of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem where Jesus was praised as Savior and King.
   1. **Palm branches** were emblems of victory. It shows this **great multitude** celebrates a great victory.
5. **Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!** Having an emblem of righteousness (**white robes**), they worship God for **salvation**.
   1. They recognize that *God* is the source of salvation, and no one else.
   2. Salvation isn’t something we earn; it is something **God gives**.
   3. Sometimes believers on earth take their salvation for granted. This isn’t true of **this** great multitude in heaven.

**All heavenly creatures join in worship.**

[**Revelation 7:11-12**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/7/11-12/s_1174011) **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, saying: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *Be* to our God forever and ever. Amen.**

1. **All the angels… the elders and the four living creatures… worshiped God**: As the great multitude worships God, the others in heaven join their voices in praise. All created beings around the throne join in.
2. **Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might**: As these other created beings hear the worship the great multitude brings to God, *they* see more clearly the power and wisdom and majesty of God. They can worship God all the more by seeing the salvation He brought to the great multitude.

**The identity of the great multitude.**

[**Revelation 7:13-14**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/7/13-14/s_1174013) **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.**

1. **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.
2. **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**.
   1. This was a time of **great tribulation** *for this multitude*. This leads many to believe that most, if not all, of these are *martyrs* from **the great tribulation**.
   2. The presence of so many tribulation saints is a powerful statement of God’s ***mercy*** and ***grace***.
3. Even in this time of wrath and judgment on the earth, many are **saved**.
4. Because the great multitude are mentioned right after the 144,000, many think they are — at least in part — due to the work of those 144,000 servants of God.
   1. Perhaps the 144,000 are evangelists who help reap this huge harvest for the kingdom during the great tribulation.
5. **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**.
   1. Even if they are martyred, their martyrdom ***does not save*** them. Only the work of Jesus can cleanse and save.
   2. (Spurgeon) “They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Not one of them became white through his tears of repentance, not one through the shedding of the blood of bulls or of goats. They all wanted a vicarious sacrifice, and for none of them was any sacrifice effectual, except the death of Jesus Christ the Lord. They washed their robes nowhere but in the blood of the Lamb.”
6. **White by blood** is an interesting phrase; we don’t think of things being made white by the application of blood.
   1. But the blood of Jesus cleanses us: [**Isaiah 1:18**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/isa/1/18/s_680018)***“Come now, and 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 be as wool.***

**What this great multitude does, and how it is blessed.**

[**Revelation 7:15-17**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/7/15-17/s_1174015) **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.”**

1. **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.
   1. These saints knew affliction on earth, and they triumphed over it. But it **wasn’t** their affliction that saved them, it was their faith in Jesus.
2. **And serve Him day and night**: In heaven, the redeemed **serve** God. We don’t know exactly how, but they do.
   1. (Walvoord) “Heaven is not only a place of rest from earthly toil but also a place of privileged service.”
3. **He who sits on the throne will dwell among them**: In heaven, God **will dwell** with His people. This is the ultimate fulfillment of King David’s great desire in [**Psalm 27:4**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/psa/27/4/s_505004) ***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.***
4. **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**).
5. Jesus is our **shepherd** now. But in heaven I believe that it will different, it will be considerably more.
6. **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**.
   1. We 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.
   2. We also understand from this that *every*tear will only be wiped away in *heaven*.
      1. On this earth, we have our share of pain and tears to endure and bring to God.
      2. He shows His love *now* with sweet comfort and strength for our tears; but *one day* — in heaven, *not now* — He will wipe them away forever.