

NOTES ON REVELATION SEVEN

This is a parenthesis chapter

The 144,000 in 7:4.

Seven views regarding the identity of the 144,000 are given below:

1. The true church *selected from* the professing church.
2. The complete Christian “Israel of God” (spiritual Israel) numbered at *only 144,000*. This is the JW view.
3. The complete Christian “Israel of God” yet with the number as *symbolic* of all Christians. This is the most popular view.
4. A literal 144,000 non-Christian *Jewish remnant* who become Christians by the time of the situation described in Revelation 14.
5. **Jewish Christians** who form the Messianic army of the Lion of Judah and have been selected from among those of *spiritual Israel* i.e. “the Great Multitude.”
6. **The international group of Christians** at the time of the Great Tribulation who form the Messianic army of the Lion of Judah and have come from all of *spiritual Israel* i.e. the entire age-long “Israel of God.” They are **the same as the great multitude** and with the number 144,000 being a symbolic one.
7. **The international group of Christians in Judea** at the time of the Great Tribulation and with the number 144,000 most likely being a symbolic one. These form the Messianic army of the Lion of Judah and have come from all of the end-time *spiritual Israel* “Israel of God” as represented by “the Great Multitude.”

**VIEW 1 — THE 144,000 AS THE TRUE CHURCH SELECTED FROM
THE PROFESSING CHURCH**

REASONS AGAINST

- This view depends on whether God looks upon the ‘professing church’ as really being the “Israel of God” or not. It seems unlikely that he would do so given Jesus’ statement of:
 - ❖ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven...‘I never knew you; depart from me you workers of lawlessness’” (*Matt. 7: 21*).
- Furthermore, if “the great multitude” from which the 144,000 as the true church may have been selected are the ‘professing church’ then they are seen as dressed in white robes “coming out of the great tribulation” and serving God in the sanctuary. This seems to make them—“the great multitude”—to be **the true church** and not just the ‘professing church’.

**VIEW 2 — THE LITERAL 144,000 AS THE COMPLETE “ISRAEL OF GOD”
(The JW position)**

Although there is sufficient scriptural proof that the 144,000 are Christians it would appear that a numerically literal 144,000 cannot be the entire body of “the Israel of God” for the following reasons:

REASONS AGAINST

- Christians will be **greater in number** than the numbers of national Israel which has always amounted to more than 144,000:

“...for the *children* (*Anointed Christians*) of the desolate woman are *more numerous than* those (*the Israelites*) of her who has the husband” (*Gal. 4:27*).

- All *144,000 positions were filled* by the 2nd century. Even in the 1st and 2nd centuries there were already 100’s of thousands of *anointed* Christians. B. Reike gives one of the conservative estimates that there were about 40,000 Christians in A.D.67, with a total of 320,000 at about the turn of the 1st century. So if the WTS interpretation was correct then all 144,000 positions were clearly filled long before the 19th and 20th centuries.
- The 144,000 appear on the scene just prior to the Great Tribulation and so do not picture all of anointed Christians through time.
- The 144,000 are **only part of “the Israel of God”** as detailed below.
- This view creates a second class of non-anointed Christians, See Volume 1. Part 1: STUDY 11.

VIEW 3 — 144,000 IS SYMBOLIC OF ALL THE “ISRAEL OF GOD” SINCE THE 1ST CENTURY

The book of Revelation sets all these events **in the end-time**. So for the 144,000 to be symbolic of all of “the Israel of God” since the 1st century is incongruent. The great multitude is a picture only of the end-time Christians.

VIEW 4 — THE 144,000 IN REVELATION 7 AS A NON-CHRISTIAN LITERAL ISRAELITE REMNANT WHICH BECOMES CHRISTIAN IN REVELATION 14

REASONS OFFERED IN FAVOUR

- *The scriptures speak of a remnant of Israel* (Micah 2:12, Hosea 3:5, Romans 9:27). Proof that God still has a purpose for those who are literally Israelites is explained by Paul when he asks:
 - ❖ “God did not reject his people did he? Never may that happen! For I too am an Israelite ... a dulling of sensibilities has happened in part to Israel **until the fullness of the people of the nations has come in**; and in this manner all Israel will be saved” (*Rom. 11:1, 25, 26*).

- *The Rev. 7 description is of Israelites.*

The fact that the twelve tribes in Revelation do not match the other biblical lists of tribes does not mean that this list cannot refer to literal Israelites. These are 12 tribes of the **sons of Israel (Jacob)**. However, the listing is not taken from any of the 20 lists of the tribes, but from the listing **according to the order in which their mothers gave birth**. This is found in Genesis 35:23-26, although not in the exact order of the births, which is given in Genesis 29:32-30:24 and 35:16-18. The Revelation list leaves out Dan probably because Judges 18:30 mentions the tribe’s idolatry:

- ❖ “Let Dan be a serpent by the roadside (*indicating treachery*), a horned snake at the wayside, that bites the heels of the horse so that its rider falls backwards” (*Gen. 49:17*).

So Dan is replaced by Joseph’s first-born Manasseh and Judah is placed first on the list probably because it was Messiah’s tribe. This listing of Judah in first position favours the interpretation of a messianic Israelite army of 144,000 as does much of the context. The argument that these literal Israelites could not be identified because the genealogical records were lost is irrelevant because God can identify them. Unlike Christians who were sealed at baptism, this firstfruits of the remnant of literal Israelites is sealed (*marked as in Ezekiel 9*) for identification in preparation for when the devastations are poured out on the earth (*Rev. 7:1-4*). *Also it is possible that the 144,000 sons of Jacob may not be*

Christians at this point, because, according to Jesus, the apostles and by extension Christians will judge “the 12 tribes of Israel”:

❖ “...you who have followed me will also yourselves sit on 12 thrones, judging **the 12 tribes of Israel**” (*Matt. 19:28*).

• *144,000 BECOME CHRISTIAN LATER*

More details are given in Revelation 14 concerning the 144,000 as seen after the Great tribulation. At this time they stand with Christ upon the literal Mount Zion:

Revelation 14:1, 4, 5:

❖ “And I saw, and, look! The Lamb standing upon the Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 **having his name** and the name of his Father written on their foreheads...These are the ones who did not defile themselves with women; in fact, they are virgins. These are the ones who **keep following the Lamb** no matter where he goes. These were bought from among mankind as **firstfruits** to God and to the Lamb, and no falsehood was found in their mouths; they are without blemish.”

If this is a reference to literal Israelites, then the 144,000 of Revelation 14 will be the firstfruits of all of the Israelites who will finally respond to Christ’s reign in the millennium. Only at the point when Jesus returns, will these Israelites have accepted him as their Messiah (*Zech.12:10-14, Rev. 1:7*). The full remnant will be 1/3 of the nation existing at the end time:

❖ “In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and **one third shall be left alive**. And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The LORD is my God’” (*Zech. 13:8, 9*).

REASONS AGAINST

• However, this view is unlikely because as shown below the 144,000 seem to have the same characteristics and experiences as “the great multitude” who evidently picture “the holy ones” i.e. anointed Christians.

• Notwithstanding Romans 11 the NT emphasis is on “spiritual Israel” (*Rom 2:28-29, 9:8; Phil 3:3; Gal. 3:29, 6:16*) rather than on Israel according to the flesh” (*1 Cor.10:18*).

VIEW 5 — THE ARMY OF 144,000 AS JEWISH CHRISTIANS SELECTED FROM THE GREAT MULTITUDE OF END-TIME CHRISTIANS

REASONS IN FAVOUR - These are the same as for view 4.

REASONS AGAINST

• As shown below, the two descriptions of the 144,000 in Revelation 7 and 14 evidently are of the same group of people and are redeemed from mankind. This makes them an international people as are “the great multitude.”

• By comparison of the details both the 144,000 and “the great multitude” of “the holy ones.” seem to be in the same position before God—before His throne and so in His temple.

VIEW 6 — THE ARMY OF 144,000 AS THE INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN GREAT MULTITUDE IN THE END-TIME

REASON AGAINST

• Even if taken as a symbolic number the 144,000 are clearly a much smaller group than the Great Multitude

VIEW 7 — THE ARMY OF A SYMBOLIC 144,000 AS INTERNATIONAL
CHRISTIANS IN JUDEA IN THE END-TIME

INDICATORS THAT THE 144,000 IN BOTH REVELATION 7 AND 14 ARE
THE SAME GROUP

- It seems evident that it was John’s intention that the reader would correlate the two contexts within which this number is found.
- All of the 144,000 of Revelation 7 are seen to be **on the earth** and in a situation of imminent danger because they are being **sealed for protection** (Ezekiel 9:1-6) against the devastation about to be launched upon the earth. Furthermore, the scene in Revelation 14 is also **on earth** because the voice that John hears is *from* heaven, hence John is back on earth vision-wise.
- The Revelation 14 parallel of the Revelation 7 sealing of the 144,000 is when they are shown to have *“his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads.”*

COMMON FACTORS REGARDING “the 144,000”
“THE HOLY ONES” and “THE GREAT MULTITUDE”

GENERAL COMMENT

The temple mentioned throughout Revelation is called in Greek the **naos**. This was the building housing the *Holy* and the *Most Holy* compartments and called the **sanctuary**. The word used elsewhere in the NT to include the whole of the temple complex (courtyards etc) is **hieron**.

The “sea of glass” was placed in the inner courtyard of the ancient temple. So the statement that: “before the **throne** there was a **sea of glass**, like crystal” (4:6) means that “the throne” also must be in the temple area.

THE 144,000

7:1, 4:

“...sealed against **four winds** of the earth (*symbolic*) ... from **every tribe of Israel**.”

14:2-4:

“...voice like the roar of many waters...*like* the sound of harpists playing on their harps...singing a new song **before the throne**...no one could learn the song except the 144,000...redeemed from the earth ... **redeemed from mankind** as first fruits...it is these who **follow the Lamb** wherever he goes”

THE HOLY ONES

3:5, 8, 10, 12:

“He that *conquers* arrayed in **white outer garments** ... set before you an **open door** (to throne-room 4:1, 2) ... keep you from the **hour of trial** coming upon the whole world ... make him a **pillar in the temple** (*naos*).” ... **never shall he go out of it.**”

5:9: “**ransomed men from every tribe**, tongue, peoples, nation (kingdom/priests).”

6:11: “a **white robe** was given each of them [*martyred anointed Christians*].”

11:1: “**measure the temple** (*naos*) & altar and **those who worship there.**”

13:7: “The Beast was allowed to wage **war against** the holy ones.”

15:2, 3:

“...those who *conquered the beast* standing **beside the sea of glass** with harps... sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.”

19:7, 8: *Bride clothed* in fine linen, **bright and pure**—is *righteous deeds of the holy ones*.

THE GREAT MULTITUDE

7:9, 10: “from every nation, **tribe**, peoples and tongues ... standing **before the throne**...**clothed in white robes** ... crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to God and to the Lamb.””

7:14, 15: “coming out of the **Great Tribulation**...washed their **robes** – made **white** in the blood of the Lamb ... they are **before the throne** of God, *and serve him day and night in his temple* (*naos*).”

7:17: “**the Lamb...will guide them** to springs of living water.”

THE 144,000 ARE CHRISTIANS

Using the above passages it can be deduced that the 144,000 have the same characteristics and experiences as the Great Multitude of Holy Ones [*Christians*] as shown in the following summary:

1. The 144,000, are “*sealed against four winds*” of the coming Great Tribulation so that, as the Holy Ones, they are kept “*from the hour of trial coming upon the whole world*” when “*the Beast wages war against*” them and, as the Great Multitude of Christians, they are “*coming out of the Great Tribulation*.”
2. Because there are not two different groups of 144,000 in the passages of chapters 7 and 14, the “**tribes** of Israel” must refer to “the Israel of God” i.e. Christians “**redeemed from mankind**,” that is, just as the Holy Ones are “**ransomed** from every **tribe**, tongue, peoples, nation and the Great Multitude are “from every nation, **tribe**, peoples and tongues.”
3. Because the Great Multitude “*are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple* (*naos*)” they must be the same group as the 144,000 who are also “*before the throne*” in the temple and the same as the Holy Ones who enter the **open door** to the throne-room (4:1,2) to be made “*a pillar in the temple* (*naos*) and *never go out of it*” as “*those who worship there in the naos*.” They are also seen as cleansed *priests* “*standing beside the sea of glass*.”
4. The 144,000 “**are following the Lamb** wherever he goes” just as “**the Lamb...will guide**” the Great Multitude. And so making two descriptions of the same group.
5. Because the “*fine linen, bright and pure = the righteous deeds of the holy ones*” this must be the case for the Great Multitude who also are dressed in *priestly* “**robes** made **white** in the blood of the Lamb” and who therefore must also be Holy Ones.

The fact that 144,000 is a fixed number in contrast to “a Great Multitude which **no man** was able to number” may be because 144,000 is simply God’s way of saying to John that not a single one is missing. So He uses 12 squared then multiplied by 1,000—numbers with significant figurative meaning.

FURTHER REASONS THAT THE 144,000 OF REVELATION 7 ARE CHRISTIANS

- In Philippians 3:3 Paul calls Christians “the true circumcision” which is a phrase that parallels the phrase “The Israel of God” in Galatians 6:16.
- “The Vine” in the temple stood as a symbol of Israel. So Jesus as “the true vine” is the true Israel” and his followers as the branches are part of the true Israel.

- The letter of James was written **to Christians** in the 50s A.D. when the scattered church was predominantly Jewish. Yet the introduction in James 1:1 NASB is: “To **the twelve tribes** who are dispersed abroad.” Evidently James saw these *Jewish Christians* as “the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16)—the new Israel (Rom. 2:9; 9:6) to which Gentiles were starting to be grafted in (Rom. 11:17, 18). This indicates that by the 90s A.D. the vision given to John would be focussed on this “Israel of God” rather than non-Christian Israel.
- In Revelation 7:3 the 144,000 are called “*the servants of our God.*” By the 90s A.D. this term would not have meant literal *Jews* to a Christian.
- In Revelation 14 it is stated that the 144,000 are to have the Lambs “*name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads*” and that “*these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes*” indicating that they are Christians. Of course, because this passage has moved along in time, these ones could be Jews who have become Christians.
- Although the list of the tribes in Revelation 7 has some correspondence with the births of the “sons of Israel” from their mothers according to the collating in Genesis 35, this is not an exact correspondence and may be a very subtle clue that *spiritual Israel* is the focus here.

The view that the 144,000 are international Christians does not negate Paul’s statements that a remnant of Israel will be saved in the end-times.

THE 144,000 IS ONLY PART OF “THE SONS OF ISRAEL”/
”ISRAEL OF GOD”/ SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

Revelation 7:3-8:

“Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed *the servants of our God* on their foreheads. And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed **from** every tribe of the sons of Israel: 12,000 **from** the tribe of Judah were sealed, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulon Joseph, Benjamin.”

The 12,000 are from (**ek** means “out of”) each tribe and therefore are only part of a whole number of Judeans etc. So the 12,000 are not the entire tribe of Judah etc and when tallied the entire 144,000 must also be only part of a whole number of Israelites—whether literal or spiritual Israel. The *Word Biblical Commentary* says:

144,000 were marked from every tribe of the sons of Israel; i.e., those who are sealed are part of a larger group, for **ek** + genitive here is a partitive genitive, indicating that a limited number are separated from the larger group. Whatever “the tribes of the sons of Israel” represents, 12,000 from each tribe can only mean a portion of those who make up the whole “tribe” (Caird, 96).

The Expositors Bible Commentary notes that:

It is important to note that John does not equate the 144,000 with all in the tribes. Rather his repeated use of the preposition *ek* (“from”) in vv. 4-8 implies that the sealed were an elect group chosen out of the tribes: “144,000 from all their tribes of Israel...From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed,” etc. If John had the actual Jewish Israel in view, this use of “from” would indicate an election from the whole nation. On the other hand, if he intended to imply something about the church, his language might indicate God’s selecting the true church out “from” the professing church, p. 483.

So if one takes the view that “the sons of Israel” represent spiritual Israel, then the 144,000 appear to be **only a part of “the Israel of God.”**

SEALING FOR PROTECTION — NOT THE SEALING AS A CHRISTIAN

- All of the 144,000 of Revelation 7 must be being *sealed for protection* (Ezekiel 9:1-6) because they are on earth and **in a situation of imminent danger**. This is because of the devastation about to be launched upon the earth. In particular they are protected during the 5th trumpet events (Rev. 9:4).
- Similar to Ezekiel’s description in 9:4-6, the Revelation 7 and 14 marking of the 144,000 with “*his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads*” indicates their ownership by God and Jesus and therefore protection of them by God and Jesus.

THE 144,000 AFTER THE GREAT TRIBULATION

More details are given in Revelation 14 concerning the 144,000 as seen after the Great Tribulation. At this time they stand with Christ upon the literal Mount Zion:

Revelation 14:1, 4, 5:

“And I saw, and, look! The Lamb standing upon the Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 **having his name** and the name of his Father written on their foreheads ... These are the ones who did not defile themselves with women; in fact, they are **virgins**. These are the ones who **keep following the Lamb** no matter where he goes. These were bought from among mankind as **firstfruits** to God and to the Lamb, and **no falsehood was found in their mouths**; they are without blemish.”

CHRISTIANS AS A HOLY ARMY

As has been noted earlier the 144,000 in Revelation 7 can only be *part of* “the Israel of God.” The reasons for viewing them as *a holy army* are:

- Revelation 7:4-8 has the literary form of a census of the tribes of Israel, and every OT census is a *military* census.
- The fact that Messiah’s tribe of Judah is listed first in Revelation 7 indicates that the 144,000 are to be led by Messiah. Judah is also listed first in the military order of the tribes in the camp (Num. 2:3; 7:12; 10:14), showing that there is a military order to the tribes in Revelation 7.
- An Israelite army composed of twelve equal tribal contingents conforms to OT practice e.g. one thousand troops from each of the twelve tribes was dispatched against Midian (Numbers 31:4-6).
- Revelation 17:14: “They will make **war** on the Lamb, and the lamb will **conquer** them...and **those with him are called and chosen** and faithful.”
- Revelation 19:14: “**The armies of heaven**” (as in all modern versions) depicts those Christians who ride alongside the Messiah in the eschatological battle.
- The notion of a Messianic army composed of all twelve tribes fits the Jewish eschatological expectation of the re-gathering of the tribes to fight in the eschatological war.
- Because “standing” is a military metaphor the picture of them standing on Mount Zion is indicative of a military force participating in a joyous victory (Rev. 2:26, 27; 15:2-4; 17:14).
- According to Revelation 14:4, the 144,000 are all adult **males**. This could apply to either the all-male army of Israel **or** the all-male priesthood.

- The chastity of the 144,000 males depicted as being “*the ones who did not defile themselves with women; in fact, they are virgins*” can be regarded as reflecting the purity regulations required of participants in a holy war (Lev. 15:16; Deut 23:9-10; 1 Sam. 21:5) **or** it can refer to the abstinence requirements for priests (Lev 15:18). The term *virgins* may simply mean that they “kept themselves pure” (NIV) or “kept themselves chaste” (NASB). At 2 Corinthians 11:12 believers are presented to Christ as a “pure virgin” (undefiled in teaching) **or** this simply means the army is composed of people of the right moral character.
- The Rev. 7 scene takes place just preceding the onset of the Great Tribulation.
- The new song of Revelation 14:3 belongs to holy-war terminology.
- Revelation 3:21:
 “To the one that conquers I will grant to sit down with me on my throne.”

The symbolic aspect to the number 144,000 [12 x 12 x 1000] probably means an ‘organizationally complete army.’

WHAT KIND OF CHRISTIAN ARMY?

Note the following possibilities:

1. A literal **fighting army at the battle for Jerusalem** as Christ destroys the armies that were gathered at “the place called Armageddon.”

COMMENT: Nowhere do the Scriptures indicate that Christians will need to fight. In fact, conscientious objection has been a hallmark of Christians.

2. To do the special work of **preaching the gospel** during the Great Tribulation.

COMMENT: A military army does not have as its prime mandate the function of speaking, neither are there any real indicators in the passages concerning the 144,000 that they might be preachers.

3. An army of **martyrs** having given their faithful witness.

COMMENT: Although Christians would be willing to die for their faith there is nothing in Revelation 7 or 14 to indicate that these ones are actually martyrs.

4. The **military marching order** fleeing into the wilderness of Sinai.

COMMENT: This seems most likely because it is based on Jesus’ instructions for **Christians in Judea to flee to the mountains** (Matt. 24:16) and the prophetic detail of “then the woman fled to the wilderness” (Rev. 12:6, 14). This would be in imitation of ancient Israel fleeing Egypt in highly organized fashion.

FIRSTFRUITS TO GOD

This refers to the first portion of crops that are presented to God. There were also “the first fruits of first-fruits” (Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Ezek. 44:30). Because all of “the Israel of God” is offered to God the 144,000 may be simply the first part of the Great Multitude as they are “coming out of the great tribulation. So they are the firstfruits of God’s harvest which guarantees the final harvest of all believers.

IS THE NUMBER SYMBOLIC?

REASON AGAINST

- A symbolic 12,000 would be **meaningless** as a way to highlight a **portion** that comes out of each tribe i.e. 144,000 will be only part of spiritual Israel. See the section **THE 144,000 IS ONLY PART OF “THE SONS OF ISRAEL.”**

REASONS IN FAVOUR

- A number squared indicates completeness and is therefore symbolic i.e. 12 x 12.
- Such numbers as 12 and 1,000 have spiritual significance. See the section THE USE OF THE NUMBERS IN REVELATION.
- If “the sons of Israel” is interpreted symbolically as the Christian “Israel of God” then, for consistency, the number must also be interpreted symbolically.
- The reason often given for a figurative interpretation of at least some of Revelation’s numbers is the extremely large dimensions of the New Jerusalem in Rev. 21, which are 1,380 miles each for the length, the breadth, and the height and with the wall being 210 feet (**144 cubits**) thick. If taken literally this seems to be impossibly large and protruding extremely far out into space so that only a hyperbolic/figurative interpretation seems possible.
- Because the 144,000 have been shown to be exactly the same as the Great Multitude “that no man could number” then we have an indicator that the number is symbolic.

CONCLUSIONS OF NUMEROUS SCHOLARS

The general concept of view 6 is held by Lohmeyer, Farrer, Caird, Beasley-Murray, Schussler, Fiorenza, Chilton, Bauckham, Harrington, Giesen, and Michaels. This view details how the 144,000 are a group selected from the international body of “the Israel of God” and sealed for special protection during the Great tribulation and organized in military fashion to give a faithful witness which could lead to their martyrdom. David Aune writing in the *Word Biblical Commentary* arrives at a similar conclusion that:

the 144,000 of Rev 7:4-8 represent that particular group of Christians (including all ages and both genders) who have been specially protected from both divine plagues and human persecution just before the final eschatological tribulation begins and who consequently survive that tribulation. The preservation of this group of “survivors”...guarantees the continued witness to Jesus during the unfolding end-time events.

NOTE: All Christians will be protected during the period of God’s **wrath** (1 Thess. 5:9) which begins as the Great Tribulation ends.

PROBABLE IDENTITY OF THE 144,000 OF REVELATION 7

- The number is likely to be symbolic.
- They are from the age-long spiritual Israel, but are Christians at the time of the end.
- They are multi-national Christians who are part of the Great Multitude of end-time Christians and have the same standing before God.
- In Revelation 14 these ones are seen standing on the literal Mount Zion with Christ.

POSSIBLE SCENARIO

After the catching up of the Great Tribulation survivors and the resurrected Christians to meet Jesus, the entire company descends to the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4a). At that time a very large Jewish Remnant (1/3 of tested and refined Israel in Zech. 13:8, 9) accept Jesus as Messiah and become Christians (Zech. 12:10-13). They then flee through the valley of the now split Mount of Olives to Azal (Zech. 14:4b, 5). After this event Jesus takes his immortal followers to Mount Sinai to organize the kingdom government. Then begins the Messianic march from Sinai to meet up at Azal with the waiting mortal Jewish (now Christian) Remnant (Rev. 7). This occurs immediately prior to the Day of God’s

wrath which was the last thing mentioned in Revelation 6:17. The entire body under Christ's leadership then marches to Jerusalem. After the defeat of those who are warring against Jerusalem (Zech. 14:12, 13) the Lamb with the entire company of immortal Christians will be standing on Mount Zion.

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7:9a: "**a great multitude**...from every nation, from all **tribes** and peoples and languages ... = Christians living at the time of the Great Tribulation.

7:9b: "standing **before the throne** and before the Lamb." = God's throne in heaven where Christians stand in a spiritual but not literal sense. There is no requirement that individuals literally be in heaven to stand before God's throne just as the Israelites did not need to go to heaven when told to "*come near before Yahweh*" (Ex.16:9). With reference to the expression "to behold my [God's] face" in Isaiah 1:12 the Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties p. 43 says: "it is quite possible that by Isaiah's time this had become an idiomatic expression for coming to the temple for worship and prayer."

However, verse 10 shows that these Christians, described in Revelation, attribute salvation "to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." This indicates that at this time when Christians are enduring the Great tribulation "the lamb" is still in heaven and God's throne is in heaven. Does this mean that these Christians have appeared in heaven? No! As shown in Volume 2, STUDY 5 the destiny of Christians is not heaven but a renewed earth with them having been granted glorified immortal bodies. However, even currently on earth and in their mortal state they are viewed as spiritually in heaven with Christ until he returns. Please see Volume 2, STUDY 6. Furthermore, *the Expositors Bible Commentary* notes that:

"standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" signifies their position of acceptance and honor as God's true servants, p. 486.

7:10 "crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb."

7:14-17: "These are the ones [*a great multitude*] **coming out of** the Great Tribulation. They have washed their **robes** and made **white** in the blood of the Lamb ... they are **before the throne** of God, and **serve him** day and night **in his temple** (sanctuary *naos*). They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, *nor any scorching heat*. For **the Lamb in the midst of the throne** will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

This description of the Great Multitude of Christians shows them serving figuratively as priests even though they are seen to be still "coming out of the Great Tribulation". The scorching heat may be a reference to the fourth bowl of God's wrath.

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