

The Great Innumerable Multitude

Being Presented as it is, students of Bible Prophecy feel they are left to Deduce who this Vast Assembly actually represents. While much is offered as to their Identity, few take fully into account what the Divine Elder in Chapter 7 clearly explains.

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Among the many prophetic scenes presented in Scripture, the full and true identity of the Great Multitude described in Revelation chapter 7 is certainly among them. Exiled on the Island of Patmos in the eastern Mediterranean, the Apostle John was given a series of revelations that the religious world has yet to fully comprehend. Being so seemingly bizarre to the early Church, this book wasn't fully embraced in their day! Only as time progressed was its significance realized.

Sealed Until the Latter Days

While the concluding verses of the Book of Daniel – a similar treatise in what it covers – explains that many things would only be understood in the latter days. So as we move along in time and grow in our comprehensions, we should expect to know who and what these prophecies refer to more fully.

When asking the religious scholar who these people are, we will find a wide range of possible answers presented. One motivating factor is the group mentioned just before them, identified as the 144,000. Being such a disturbingly small number, these *'firstfruits'* (as chapter 14 calls them) believers grasp at answers as to whether or not these 144,000 comprise ALL who will arise in the first resurrection, or are there to be others but who are not mentioned? That question can subliminally factor into the mental interpretation of who we assume the innumerable multitude to be.

How Long After?

The narrative that John offers says, *"after this I saw..."*. What isn't explained, at least not here, is exactly how long after? As written, most of us take it to mean shortly after, like he was looking at one group and then immediately turned to view another group of individuals. That at least might address the huge question as to whether or not the 144,000 are all there is to be in the first resurrection.

But, we should ask, is there anything that places this second group of people in a discernable time context? Actually, there is one even in chapter 7 that for some reason hasn't been taken into account. It's when we get into Revelation chapter 14, which again presents these two groups that we find what appears to be a more affirmative answer to, "How long after?"

Looking Forward, Looking Back

Revelation 7 presents these two groups in anticipation, before all the former are fully sealed. But chapter 14 presents them (the 44,000 at least) in retrospect, as an accomplished fact. They are seen standing with Christ after the first resurrection and the Second Coming are past events. The other group is separated by a series of events which we should realize takes place at the beginning of the millennial age. That gives us some sense of how long John's "after" might possibly be.

I was asked a question recently, which caused me to look into the question again more analytically than before. I will admit, there are significant details given in the latter verses of chapter 7 that I never saw in their full meaning. While my understanding of who they are didn't change, I came to realize that there is much more there than is typically considered. Being that the 144,000 is such an alarmingly small number, we typically read the first couple of verses, forming an opinion there, and then generally reading on over the rest of the Elder's explanation without fully comprehending the implications of the message as John penned it.

The Great Tribulation

Mention of them having *"come out of Great Tribulation"* is another statement that causes us to form an opinion which clouds our comprehension of the rest of the Elder's explanation. But a simple application of logic should give pause. As this

number is so unfathomably vast, could all of them literally have been living IN the Tribulation? Or is this setting a time element in place from which to get the picture? Yes, some will have lived in the Tribulation and survived it, but it's the numbers question that needs to be considered. When we get to chapter 14 we'll have a better answer as to how the Tribulation factors-in to this scenario.

What we need to determine is whether or not the peoples pictured in the White Cloud Harvest of the corresponding chapter 14 are the same as these 'innumerable' individuals.

It should also be apparent that this innumerable multitude are people who have been raised. If not in the first resurrection, then which? Keep in mind that they "*made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb*" and that had to be AFTER the Tribulation, as those who did so before the first resurrection would have been IN IT and numbered with the 144,000! And, it could not have included any who died in the Tribulation unconverted, as they aren't to be raised until after the millennial age! This also helps us establish how long after!

Whatever we decide as to forming an opinion of who they are, we need to think through all of these considerations.

Revelation Chapter 7

To get a better answer to the question as to their true identity, we should consider the full message as the Apostle saw and recorded it and as the Elder explained it: [Rev. 7:9] "*After this I beheld, and, lo, a **great multitude**, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;*

[10] *And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*

[11] *And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,*

[12] *Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*

[13] *And one of the elders answered, saying unto*

me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

[14] *And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which **came out of great tribulation**, and have washed their robes, and **made them white** in the blood of the Lamb.*

[15] *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.*

[16] *They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; **neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.***

[17] *For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and **God shall wipe away all tears** from their eyes.*

Even John Didn't Understand!

When asked to identify who it was that he was seeing, John gave a safe answer to cover his inability to really answer. One of the Divine Elders who serve before the Throne then gave a very lengthy and explicit account of who they will be.

Let's look at the passage in question more analytically than usual. It's here that we can stop guessing and form a more definitive and supportable answer. The Apostle's vision and the Elder's explanation is quite profound, actually.

Again With Commentary:

Taking note of all the specific points in chapter 7's narrative, we find and should take note of and appreciate the following:

[Comments are bracketed in lighter type.]

[Rev. 7:9] "*After this I beheld, [we aren't told at this point how long after, it just gives us a sequence] and, lo, a **great multitude**, which no man could number, [the number is so vast (or undeterminable in advance) that it can't be stated] of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, [it will include all ethnicities without limitation] stood before the throne, [which Throne is this? – see later] and before the Lamb, [is it the Lamb on that Throne, or is this indicating someOne else?] **clothed with white robes**, [they have become converted] and palms in their hands; [this picture alludes to the Second Coming of the Messiah and the millennial kingdom age as the participants expected on "Palm Sabbath", thus their actions. (Matt. 21:8.)]*

[10] *And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, [this addresses the question posed above Their salvation is finalized by this point.] and unto the Lamb. [it would appear that TWO Beings are represented as being in this scene! God (the Father) is on the Throne at this point, the Lamb is serving in its midst some other capacity (explained in v. 17).]*

[11] *And all the **angels** stood round about the throne, and about the **elders** and the **four beasts**, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, [If in fact the Father has come to earth at this point in time, then this indicates that He brings all the officiating Spirit Beings (His Retinue) with Him. Again see verse 17 below.]*

[12] *Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. [If the above deduction is correct, then this is addressed to the Father. Would such an accolade be expressed toward Christ at the beginning of the millennium before the greatest numbers ever are converted?]*

[13] *And **one of the elders** answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? [The apostle John didn't fully comprehend who these were.]*

[14] *And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which **came out of great tribulation**, [the founding generation of the millennial age (the Tribulation survivors) did experience the Tribulation. That is the starting point of this contingent. All of these become converted after the Great Tribulation.] and have washed their robes, and **made them white** in the blood of the Lamb. [describing the conversion experience, indicating their full participation in the process.]*

[15] *Therefore are they before the throne of God, [God in this place refers to the Father] and serve him day and night in his temple: [it being a different Temple than the physical millennial Temple described in Ezekiel.] and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. [we know that Christ will dwell among men from the Second Coming onward. This statement would be a given if it applied to Him alone!]*

[16] *They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; [indicating they're Spirit beings] **neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.** [this is still part of the elder's explanation of WHO these*

GIM peoples are. This statement is particularly startling when we realize what time-frame it puts them into: the post-Final Sentencing Event – that point when the “White Cloud Harvest” has been completed – held when the earth's harvest (of humanity) can ripen no further, and all the wicked are exterminated (Rev.14:18-20). Only then can the Father descend to assume the Kingdom, as 1st Cor. 15:26-28 explains. The “Day of God” (the Father) is that same event, as Peter illustrates: 2nd Pet. 3:7-13. The Father cannot descend to assume the Kingdom so long as sin-capable people exist, and as Peter indicates, the institution of Death will at that time be no longer needed, thus its destruction from existence in the Lake of Fire. Rev.20:14.]

[Further comment: this solar light/heat exemption and the absence of sorrowing mentioned in the next verse below, can only apply to the post-millennial Kingdom, after the institution of Death has been rendered extinct! (see Rev. 21:23 & 22:5 and Psalm 110:1) Christ is to rule until the institution of Death (the last enemy) is conquered.]

[17] *For the **Lamb which is in the midst of the throne** shall feed them, [throughout this description of the origin of the Great Multitude, the Father is represented as ‘sitting’ upon the Throne, but Christ is shown to be operating ‘in the midst’ of it. This suggests the Throne is not just a bench, but an entire courtroom area where the angels, elders and four beasts also serve.] and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and **God shall wipe away all tears** from their eyes. [Not a condition that will yet exist in the millennial age. **So, we're taken here to a time beyond that!]***

From an Unassailable Witness

Let's realize that this explanation given to John, that he faithfully wrote down, was given by one of the Divine Elder's, a preeminent officiant serving within the Heavenly Throne room. One of the twenty four Elders that we read of earlier in Rev. 4:1-11 & 5:6-11! He sets the great innumerable multitude into the time-frame of the Kingdom of the Father beyond the millennium, an age when all human trials and tribulations have at the last become passe! Could his reference be only to what we know as the Great Tribulation of the end-time? Or is his reference the tribulations of this life, not just that relatively short period in the near future, which will impact only a few of all who have ever lived.

Tribulation is Historic

Think of the trials experienced over the centuries, with all the wars, famines, diseases and natural disasters. Consider the trials of life that are incumbent upon those who choose leave 'orthodoxy' or highly irreverent society to follow God's Way. The Apostle Paul says that it is through much tribulation that we enter the Kingdom. *"Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much **tribulation** enter into the kingdom of God."* (Ac. 14:22)

Tribulation is not a phenomenon unique to our end-time situation. The early Church would not have made the same assumptions regarding the Elder's explanation that prophecy buffs might. *"And not only so, but we glory in **tribulations** also: knowing that **tribulation** worketh patience;"* (Rom. 5:3)

Many other passages say the same: *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall **tribulation**, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"* (Rom.8:35) *"For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that **we should suffer tribulation**; even as it came to pass, and ye know"* (1Ths.3:4). Even that early on, it was a very real experience!

It Comes With the Territory

The early New Testament Church, centuries before the Great Tribulation of the end-time, was famous for their situations, enduring tribulations of many different kinds. A message to a first century congregation includes this: *"I know thy works, and **tribulation**, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things **which thou shalt suffer**: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and **ye shall have tribulation** ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."* (Rev.2:9-10)

The elder apostle John knew all about tribulations from personal experiences he shared with his many contemporaries. Would he have made the same assumption we might make? *"John, who also am your brother, and **companion in tribulation**, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in*

the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Rev.1:9)

Was it this distraction that has caused so many of us to assume we are looking for just a contingent of people who are alive at the Second Coming, causing us to disregard all of the mentions of situations unique to the Kingdom of the Father, that will be beyond the age of physical human beings?

What We Can Know

Chapter 7 gives us a great number of facts and details that we must bring-into our assessment of who these people are to be. Here are some of the obvious things:

- 1) These come some time after the 144,000 (we don't yet know how long after.) [Rev.7:9]
- 2) The actual number of them is presently indeterminable due to the count being so vast. [7:9]
- 3) They are drawn from every nation and every ethnicity and language. [7:9]
- 4) They have come out of great tribulation. [7:14] (The founding generation of the millennium, at least, was in it!)
- 5) They stand before the Throne and the Lamb. [7:9] (Who occupies that Throne at this point?)
- 6) They became converted (white robes) sometime after the (or their) Tribulation [7:9] (how long after?)
- 7) They have palm branches in their hands (alludes to the Kingdom age) [7:9] [Mt.21:8]
- 8) They acknowledge God upon the Throne AND the Lamb. [7:10] (alluding to it being after the Last Great Day) (Are BOTH Beings dwelling with men at this point? Does that tell us who is on the Throne?)
- 9) This Throne scene is surrounded by Angels / 24 Elders / 4 Beasts. [7:11] [see Rev.4:8 & 5:11]
- 10) These are already seen wearing white robes (identifying their righteous). [7:14]
- 11) They washed their robes / made them white in the blood of the Lamb. [7:14] (something that takes time)
- 12) They are before God's Throne & serve Him day & night. [7:15] [see also Rev.22:3]
- 13) He that sits on the Throne is dwelling among them. [7:15] [Comp. Rev. 21:3 & 22:3]
- 14) They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. [7:16] [Spirit Beings?]
- 15) They will not be exposed to solar light or heat [7:16] [Compare Rev. 21:23-25 & 22:5]

16) The Lamb in the midst of the Throne shall feed them [7:17]

17) The Lamb shall lead them into living fountains of waters [7:17] [Comp. Rev. 22:1]

18) God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes [7:17] [Compare Rev. 21:4]

More Relevant Considerations

To fully comprehend what the Elder explained to John, we need to review other referenced and related passages within the Book of Revelation. It was mentioned earlier that Chapter 14 also makes oblique reference to the great multitude. Harmonizing these two chapters provides an answer. Below, are given a few pertinent passages that must be factored-into our understanding of what we read.

[Rev. 14:14] “*And I looked, and behold a **white cloud**, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.*

[15] *And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for **the harvest of the earth is ripe.***

[16] *And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.”*

The Second Great Harvest

In this narrative, we see what is known as the great harvest of ‘fully ripened’ humanity at the end of time. It represents the end of the Age of Man, when the Judgment (Final Sentencing) is enacted. From within this mass of humanity, Christ will harvest out those converted for His Family. How many there will be who are converted from within the millennial Kingdom and the second resurrection era thereafter is a matter of speculation. From this, we are assured that it will be a vast number!

But it’s the references to conditions that are specific and unique to the Kingdom of the Father that should set in our minds exactly when these are gathered.

[Rev. 21:1] “*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was **no more sea.***

[2] *And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

[3] *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying,*

Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

[4] *And God shall **wipe away all tears** from their eyes; and there shall be **no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying**, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

[Rev. 21:22] “*And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*

[23] *And the city had **no need of the sun**, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*

[24] *And the **nations of them which are saved** shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.*

[25] *And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be **no night there.***

[26] *And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.”*

What We Discern from Revelation 21 & 22:

At a specific point in time, the Father will descend to earth to dwell with man (1st Cor. 15:24-28). This will be after the Final Sentencing Event (the second harvest) when there are no more sin-capable beings left, when death and the grave will have been rendered extinct in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14).

The Righteous Father cannot exist in the presence of sin! He will descend to earth only when the ‘last enemy’ (death) is conquered by the Son.

It is only in this situation that we can see the absence of death and sorrow, the presence of the Father and Son together living with humanity (made spirit by this point in time) and the lack of further need for the sun to illuminate them – not before. These do not describe the millennial situation.

That helps place the full assemblage of the Great Innumerable Multitude in its true time context! It is that contingent who become converted during the millennium and the second resurrection era.

In its simplest breakdown, the 144,000 represent the contingent of Firstfruits of the first resurrection assigned to govern the restored nation of Israel / the Great Multitude represent the final harvest of humanity. 

