



YES, NO AND MAYBE

1. If I had the superpower to control the weather, I would use it often.
2. I am part of the “great multitude” that John writes about.
3. Jews who have not become Christians will be in heaven.
4. You won’t be hungry in heaven.
5. You won’t cry in heaven.

THE 144,000 & THE GREAT MULTITUDE

➤ READ Revelation 7 (NIV)

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: 3 “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” 4 Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

5 From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, 6 from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, 7 from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000, 8 from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.

9 After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

11 All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying:

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!”

13 Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

14 I answered, “Sir, you know.”

And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 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.”

The events of this chapter, like those in other chapters to follow, do not advance the narrative but are a pause in the description of the events to spotlight a concentrated revelation on a special feature, in this case the answer to the question of 6:17, “Who can stand?”

» **Vs. 1: Four angels standing at the four corners of the earth** - An ancient Greek expression which is also used today to indicate the extended limits of the earth.

• **Holding back the four winds of the earth** - These four angels, like the four riders in chapter 6, have been given something (Greek *edothē*; compare 6:2, 4, 8), in this case, power to harm the land and the sea (v. 2) by releasing the

DIG DEEPER



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DIG DEEPER...CONTINUED

terrible four winds. Instead they hold the winds back, at least for the time being (v. 1).

» **Vs. 2&3: Put a seal on the foreheads** - The seal on their foreheads symbolizes protection and ownership and God's intention to protect the 12 tribes that are mentioned, much as He protected Noah from the Flood, Israel from the plagues of Egypt, and Rahab and her household in Jericho.

« What does it say about God that his first concern is not the perfection, but the protection of his followers?

» **Vs. 4-8: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel** - The genealogical records have all been destroyed. Even the fact that ten of the tribes were taken by the Assyrians and "lost" is no problem to God. He knows His people and their whereabouts (see Matt. 19:28; Acts 26:7; James 1:1).

« What do you think God is trying to say by focusing on the tribes of the Jews?

» **Vs. 9-17: The saved Gentiles** - You cannot read the Book of Revelation without developing a global outlook, for the emphasis is on what God does for people in the whole world. The Lamb died to redeem people "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9). The great multitudes pictured here came from "all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" (Rev. 7:9). "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" was our Lord's mandate (Mark 16:15).

« Why do you think it was important to God to show this other innumerable group of people?

» **Vs. 9: A great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language** - John gave a beautiful description of these people. First, they were accepted, for they stood before God's throne and the Lamb. No doubt they had been rejected on earth for they stood for truth at a time when lies were popular and Satan was in charge. Their white robes and palms symbolize victory: they were true overcomers!

• **Palm branches** - Palm branches were used on occasions of festivity (Leviticus 23:40, Nehemiah 8:15). They were regarded as tokens of joy and triumph. Kings and conquerors were welcomed by having palm branches strewn before them and waved in the air. Thus they were waved before the Messiah on the occasion of His entry into Jerusalem (John 12:13).

« What do you think God is trying to say by showing this group in white robes with palm branches?

» **Vs. 13-14: These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?** - This passage looks ahead to the equating of the "vast multitude" with the heaven dwellers in 12:12 and 13:6. The wording in 7:16-17 recalls Ps 23 and looks ahead to the new heaven and earth (Rv 21:4; 22:1). The robes of the "vast multitude" (v. 9) being washed white in the blood of the Lamb could speak of martyrdom but probably refers to the redemptive blood of Christ (1:5; 5:9). If that is the case, the "vast multitude" being removed in relation to the great tribulation (referred to in Dn 12:1 and Mt 24:21, and what is meant by the hour of trial in Rv 3:10) could refer to the rapture of the church

« Are these people living on earth or in heaven at this time? What difference does it make?

» **Vs. 15-16: He who sits on the throne will...** - The One who sits on the throne spreads his tent over them, indicating acceptance, possession, and safety. The word skēnoō has the sense of pitching a tent and is used, for example, in the prologue to John's Gospel where Jesus is said to have "made his dwelling among us" or "pitched his tent among us" (John 1:14). There is safety, protection, love, and acceptance in the presence of the One who sits on the throne. The difficulties that encountered the saints of God during their lifetime on earth are never experienced again. Never again do they hunger, thirst, or experience the bewildering and debilitating heat of the scorching of the sun. These three immunities are only suggestive of the removal of the totality of all those things that inflict sorrow and difficulty on the saints of God during the great tribulation or any era. Now in the heavenly condition all that is removed.

« What do these activities tell you about God's true nature and desire for you?

» **Vs. 17: The Lamb...will be their shepherd** - In this case, the Lamb who has shed his blood for them is none other than the ultimate shepherd, and so he becomes the shepherd of the sheep from the tribulation period. The fact that he leads them to springs of living water is an indication of his provision. Every need is met.

« What does it say about Jesus that he plays both the part of the Lamb and the Shepherd?

MY PRAYER...

1. How assured am I regarding my salvation?
2. What does it mean to me that I can be amongst the innumerable multitude in white?
3. What new aspect of God's character does He want me to know?



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