

THE 144,000

The first time we read of the 144,000 is in Revelation 7:3,4

3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

To place the scripture in context we see that we are in the second half of the 7 years of tribulation, more importantly we are at the beginning of the time when God exacts His wrath on the earth. Revelation 6:17

17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Four angels are sent to hurt the earth in Revelation 7:1 which are positioned at the four corners of the earth. However before they start, another angel comes 'from the east', probably Michael who we know is the champion and protector of Israel. He instructs the angels not to start until the 144,000 are sealed (Rev 7:3). This 'sealing' is in contrast to the Anti-Christ's sealing of his followers in Revelation 13:16,17.

16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

The 144,000 are nothing to do with the Church or left-behind Christians, they are Jews, taken from the 12 tribes. In Revelation 7:5-8 we are told the breakdown of the 144,000 which are 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. This is quite clear and separate from the other descriptions of peoples gathered, as recorded in other verses. In the verse 9 we see a description of a great multitude in heaven, and their identity in verse 14.

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;

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.

Whilst we are at this point and scripture I wanted to point out the closing of another door as it were in the plan of God. During the tribulation, people will have another chance of eternal life with Christ. They receive it by their belief in the testimony of Jesus - unto death. In other words they will have to die for Jesus during the tribulation, as Jesus died for the mankind. Revelation 20:4

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

This 'second chance' to be saved is not open ended, we can see the conclusion just before the advent of the wrath of God. As with the rapture God does not subject His children to His wrath if they have been forgiven. The fulfilling of the number killed during the tribulation is in Revelation 7:9 (above) and the foretelling of the close can be found earlier in Revelation 6:10,11

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

Returning to the 144,000, we have established they are Jews, taken evenly from the twelve tribes of Israel, they are sealed (Divinely protected) during the closing stages of the tribulation. We can

now look closer at the people themselves and why they were chosen.

As for why they were chosen we only have to turn to Revelation 14:3,4 to see the determining factors, (in addition to their devout adherence to the Law) is their virginity,

3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

But what happens to them from being sealed in Revelation 7:3 and the view of them on Mount Sion with Christ in the above verses. These verses themselves tell us that the 144,000 survive the tribulation intact and without any loss. There are only three verses which actually mention by number these people where else can we find any evidence of a special group within the Jews, protected against the terrors of the tribulation. One place could be in Revelation 12:14-17

14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

To put these verses in context, Satan (as the Dragon) has been thrown to earth, never to be allowed back into the realms of heaven. In obvious anger he goes after the God's chosen (the Jews or the woman) in verse 15, but God helps them to escape his evil intent in verse 16. They are taken into the wilderness and protected and nourished for three and a half years, which if this takes place in the midst of the 7 years of tribulation means they will be protected up to the end, and return of Christ. (Rev 12:14)

What does this have to do with the 144,000. Well Satan does not get hold of the Woman, which is Israel, but we read that because the earth helped swallow up the flood he sent to kill them, he was inflamed with anger and so went after the 'remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.' Note this is not the woman but the remnant or remaining ones who are left, who keep the same commandments and believe in Jesus Christ. This is a definite split within the believers during this time. Some are protected and the rest are targeted by Satan and the Anti-Christ.