

Between the sixth and seventh seals, there is an interlude in which John sees two visions. They may be designed to answer the question raised at the end of the previous chapter: *"For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"* ([Re 6:17](#))

In **the first vision** John sees four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the winds from blowing on the earth, sea, or on any tree. An angel arises from the east having the seal of the living God, who cries out to the other four angels not to harm the earth, etc., until the servants of God have been sealed on their foreheads. John then hears the number of those who are sealed. They are 144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel, with 12,000 from each tribe. Of interest is the fact that Ephraim and Dan are not mentioned, while Levi and Joseph are counted as tribes. This suggests to many that the 144,000 of Israel is symbolic (**1-8**).

The second vision reveals a large innumerable multitude of all nations standing before the throne and the Lamb. Clothed with white robes and palm branches in their hands, they cry out "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" They are joined in their praise by angels, the elders, and four living creatures. John is then told by one of the elders that those arrayed in white robes have come out of the great tribulation, with their robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. Before the throne of God, they serve Him day and night in His temple. Future blessings are then described: God will dwell among them, they shall be free from hunger, thirst, and the heat of the sun. The Lamb will shepherd them and lead them to fountains of living waters, and God will wipe all tears from their eyes (**9-17**).

What do the two visions mean? The 144,000 of Israel sealed on earth may represent faithful Jewish Christians in Palestine leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. They are sealed and thereby spared from God's wrath (cf. [Eze 9:1-11](#)). Eusebius says that Jewish Christians were able to flee to Pella before the Romans overwhelmed Jerusalem, just as Jesus urged His disciples to do in [Lk 21:20-24](#).

The second vision provides hope for any who must pass through "the great tribulation" (not just Israel, but *"of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues"*), for it would not be limited to Palestine, but would spread throughout the Roman empire. Provided they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, they are assured that they will serve God in His temple in "the intermediate state" (between death and the resurrection).

They are also promised future blessings in "the eternal state" (after the resurrection and judgment, cf. [Re 7:16-17](#) with [Re 21:1-4](#)).

Thus, it would be Jewish Christians in Palestine, and Christians among all nations willing to remain faithful, who would be able to stand in the day of God's wrath!

POINTS TO PONDER

- * The identity of the two groups in the two visions seen in this chapter
- * The comfort promised those who would pass through the great tribulation

OUTLINE

I. THE 144,000 SEALED ON EARTH (1-8)

A. THE ANGELS RESTRAINED (1-3)

1. John saw four angels at the four corners of the earth
 - a. Holding the four winds of the earth
 - b. That the winds would not blow on the earth, sea, or any tree
2. John saw another angel ascending from the east

- a. Crying with a loud voice to the four angels granted to harm the earth and sea
- b. Instructing them not to harm the earth, sea, or trees until the servants of God were sealed on their foreheads

B. THE 144,000 SEALED (4-8)

1. John "heard" the number of those sealed
2. Those sealed were 12,000 each of the tribes of Israel:
 - a. Judah g. Simeon
 - b. Reuben h. Levi
 - c. Gad i. Issachar
 - d. Asher j. Zebulun
 - e. Naphtali k. Joseph
 - f. Manasseh l. Benjamin

II. THE GREAT MULTITUDE IN HEAVEN (9-17)

A. JOHN SEES A GREAT MULTITUDE (9-12)

1. Which none could number, from all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues
2. Standing before the throne and before the Lamb
 - a. Clothed with white robes
 - b. With palm branches in their hands
3. Crying with loud voices: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"
4. Angels, the elders, and the four living creatures also join in with praise
 - a. Falling on their faces before the throne and worshipping God
 - b. Ascribing blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might to God

B. THE GREAT MULTITUDE IDENTIFIED (13-17)

1. Asked by one of the elders, John puts the question back to him
2. The elder identifies the great multitude:
 - a. Those who come out of the great tribulation
 - b. Who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb
 - c. Who are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple
3. The elder describes their future blessedness:
 - a. The One on the throne will dwell with them
 - b. They shall not hunger nor thirst anymore; the sun nor any heat shall strike them
 - c. The Lamb will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of water
 - d. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1) What are the main points of this chapter?

- The 144,000 sealed on the earth (1-8)
- The great multitude in heaven (9-17)

2) What does John see next? (1)

- Four angels at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds from harming the earth, sea and any tree

3) What did an angel ascending from the east cry out? (2-3)

- "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

4) Who and how many were sealed? (4)

- 144,000 of the tribes of Israel

5) In the list of those sealed, what two tribes of Israel are missing?

(5-8)

- Ephraim and Dan

6) What two names are used for tribes which were not normally listed among the twelve tribes of Israel?

(5-8)

- Levi (the priestly tribe which did not receive a land inheritance)

- Joseph (the father of Manasseh and Ephraim, whose two sons made up two tribes)

7) After the 144,000 are sealed, what does John see next? (9-10)

- A great multitude of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues

- Standing before the throne and the Lamb

- Clothed with white robes and palm branches in their hands

- Ascribing salvation to God on the throne and to the Lamb

8) Who else joins in with praise to God? (11-12)

- Angels, the elders, the four living creatures

9) Who does the elder identify as the great multitude? (13-14)

- Those who come out of the great tribulation, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb

- Who are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple

10) What future blessings are they promised to receive? (15-17)

- The One on the throne will dwell with them

- They shall not hunger nor thirst anymore; neither the sun nor any heat shall strike them

- The Lamb will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of water

- God will wipe away every tear from their eyes