

**Not Jehovah Witnesses - The 144,000
Who Are They And What Do They Do?
More From The 6th Seal
Revelation 7**

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Last week we covered the events being seen by John immediately after Jesus broke the 6th seal. Many commentators relate that chapter 7 is a pause between the 6th and 7th seal. But the text never uses the word...pause. It appears this is a continuation of the 6th seal and is also a continuation, in response to what the post rapture, pre-tribulation saints asked with the 5th seal.

THREE visions are embraced in the results of the breaking of the sixth seal: first, the prodigious commotions which fill the world with consternation; second, the sealing of the 144,000; and here, the multitude of palm-bearers before the throne. (Seiss 1901, 430)

Revelation 6:12–7:17

"I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads." And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: From the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed. After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." And all the angels were standing around the throne

and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen." Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.'" (NASB95)

Four corners of the earth? The four winds of the earth? So, the earth is flat? No, not at all. This is a reference back to the understanding of the readers of the time to their understanding of the universe. From an Old Testament perspective, Jerusalem is at the center of the earth, thus all other areas are the four corners of the earth.

Ezekiel 5:5

"This is what the sovereign LORD says: This is Jerusalem; I placed her in the center of the nations with countries all around her." (NET)

Isaiah 11:11–12

"At that time the sovereign master will again lift his hand to reclaim the remnant of his people from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the seacoasts. He will lift a signal flag for the nations; he will gather Israel's dispersed people and assemble Judah's scattered people from the four corners of the earth." (NET)

In Ezekiel 38, in the prophecy of the Gog Magog War, there is the following:

Ezekiel 38:10–12

" 'This is what the sovereign LORD says: On that day thoughts will come into your mind, and you will devise an evil plan. You will say, "I will invade a land of unwalled towns; I will advance against those living quietly in security—all of them living without walls and barred gates—to loot and plunder, to attack the inhabited ruins and the people gathered from the nations, who are acquiring cattle and goods, who live at the center of the earth." (NET)

We should understand this not so much as a statement of John's view of the shape of the earth (we still talk about the four corners of the earth!) as a way of saying that the angels overshadow the whole world. None of it is beyond their control. (Morris 1987, 112)

Ezekiel 7:2

"You, son of man—this is what the sovereign LORD says to the land of Israel: An end! The end is coming on the four corners of the land!" (NET)

We see in Revelation, more than once, that God uses His servants, angels, to do a lot of the heavy lifting. Some have specific assignments that they have been training for since creation, others have duties assigned in addition to what they currently do. But it becomes a question, does God create an angel, a divine being, for one job only?

Let's expand that question to you and me. Does God provide unique gifting for each of us to accomplish a specific goal or goals for Him, here on planet earth?

Exodus 31:1–6

"The LORD said to Moses, "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting,

and in carving wood, to work in every craft. And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you:" (ESV)

Ephesians 4:11–13

"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," (ESV)

Yes indeed, just as God has jobs for specific angels and divine beings God has a job for each of us as well, not only here and now as servants of His, but also in the Kingdom. Just as divine beings were created for that role or function, so were we.

Romans 9:20–21

"But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?" (ESV)

Jeremiah 18:5–6

"Then the word of the LORD came to me: "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the LORD. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel." (ESV)

The non-canonical book of Jubilees, which John would have been familiar with, may also speak to this.

From Jubilees 2:2

For on the first day he created the heavens, which are above, and the earth, and the waters and all of the spirits which minister before him: the angels of the presence, and the angels of sanctification, and the angels of the spirit of fire, and the angels of the spirit of the winds, and the angels of the spirit of the clouds and darkness and snow and hail and frost, and the angels of resoundings and thunder and lightning, and the angels of the spirits of cold and heat and winter and springtime and harvest and summer, and all of the spirits of his creatures which are in heaven and on earth. (Charlesworth 1985, 55)

So we have "four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree."

At each of the quarters one of the four winds is held prisoner by an angel appointed to the task. (Swete 1906, 94)

They are holding back what is the beginning of the wrath of God, the tribulation, until those evangelists from Israel are supernaturally protected from what is about to take place.

Yes, there is also a non-canonical reference to the winds as well that John and some of his readers would have been familiar with.

Enoch 76:1–14

"And at the ends of the earth I saw twelve portals open to all the quarters of the heaven, from which the winds go forth and blow over the earth. Three of them are open on the face i.e. the east of the heavens, and three in the west, and three on the right i.e. the south of the heaven, and three on the left i.e. the north. And the three first are those of the east, and three are of the north, and three after those on the left of the south, and three of the west. Through four of these come winds of blessing and prosperity, and from those eight come hurtful winds: when they are sent, they bring destruction on all the earth and on the water upon it, and on all who dwell thereon, and on everything which is in the water and on the land. And the first wind from those portals, called the east wind, comes forth through the first portal which is in

the east, inclining towards the south: from it come forth desolation, drought, heat, and destruction. And through the second portal in the middle comes what is fitting, and from it there come rain and fruitfulness and prosperity and dew; and through the third portal which lies toward the north come cold and drought. And after these come forth the south winds through three portals: through the first portal of them inclining to the east comes forth a hot wind. And through the middle portal next to it there come forth fragrant smells, and dew and rain, and prosperity and health. And through the third portal lying to the west come forth dew and rain, locusts and desolation. And after these the north winds: from the seventh portal in the east come dew and rain, locusts and desolation. And from the middle portal come in a direct direction health and rain and dew and prosperity; and through the third portal in the west come cloud and hoarfrost, and snow and rain, and dew and locusts. And after these four are the west winds: through the first portal adjoining the north come forth dew and hoarfrost, and cold and snow and frost. And from the middle portal come forth dew and rain, and prosperity and blessing; and through the last portal which adjoins the south come forth drought and desolation, and burning and destruction. And the twelve portals of the four quarters of the heaven are therewith completed, and all their laws and all their plagues and all their benefactions have I shown to thee, my son Methuselah.” (Charles and Oesterley 1917, Enoch 76:1-14)

Interesting that they are to hold back the winds to prevent damage to the earth, sea or on any tree. In the Greek, something is going on with the three words. Normally all three nouns would be in the same case, earth and sea are in the genitive case but trees are in the accusative. That means something.

The change of case (γῆς ... θαλάσσης ... δένδρον) answers to a subtle difference in the force of ἐπί; the winds blow on land and sea, but the trees are singled out for a direct attack. (Swete 1906, 94)

The winds in Scripture are the symbol of divine judgments, the storms of suffering and temptation which are appointed by God. In ch. 6:13, “as a fig-tree casts its unripe fruit, when shaken by a strong wind,” the divine judgment was already compared to a strong wind. And from that there was but a step to the representation here, where it appears under the image of the wind. (Hengstenberg 1852, 350)

Wind is a symbol of judgement, we see that in Jeremiah 22:22, 49:36, and Daniel 7:2.

We could take the earth sea and trees literally or, look at what they have meant elsewhere in scripture. Another angel, having the seal of God, is heard. He cries that the earth (the ordered state if(sic) society), the sea (the masses without principle), the trees (prominent rulers and the like) shall not be hurt till the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads. (Pollock 2005, 96)

The earth in Scripture is used for the nations under settled, stable government; while the sea is a figure naturally suggestive of multitudes, especially of people in a disorganized condition. (Baines 2005, 96)

1 Chronicles 17:21

“And who is like your people, Israel, a unique nation in the earth? Their God went to claim a nation for himself! You made a name for yourself by doing great and awesome deeds when you drove out nations before your people whom you had delivered from the Egyptian empire and its gods.” (NET)

Psalms 65:7

“You calm the raging seas and their roaring waves, as well as the commotion made by the nations.” (NET)

A tree, on the other hand, is a well known Scripture figure of a great one of the earth... (Baines 2005, 96-97)

See Daniel 4, Jeremiah 21:14, 46:22 as examples.

So one of two potential possibilities, the angels are holding back judgement from God on limited aspects of the earth, reflecting that the initial judgement coming is still limited which is a reflection of the grace of

God and His desire to see all be saved; or it is a picture of judgement being withheld on the nations of the world, both those who still are organized as well as those who have fallen into chaos, see previous seals as well as a selecting out for judgement of those who are rulers, rich, movers and shakers. This also reflects the grace of God.

Revelation 7:2

“And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,” (NASB95)

So we have the four angels empowered to hold back judgement throughout the globe and the why to this is provided by a fourth angel who comes from the east. A Jew would understand that from the east is where YAHWEH came from to enter the Tabernacle as well as the Temple. It is also the direction that Ezekiel saw the glory of God depart to and then saw YAHWEH come into the Millennial temple from. An angel from the east carries baggage that would be understood by many of the readers of the age.

The trees of the field, too, in ch. 31:4, 5, 15, are the princes of the earth. Comp. besides Jer. 21:14, 46:22, 23.—The angels hold the winds that the wind might not blow upon any tree, literally, every tree. And as Züllig remarks, the word all or every is not used in vain in the Apocalypse. For the present the winds must blow upon no tree; by and bye they must blow upon all trees. The hurting of the trees brings injury to those who dwell under their branches; Ez. 31:6, 17, 17:23; Matt. 13:31, 32. If but a single tree had been hurt before the sealing, the promise which the Lord has given to his people would be broken. For without his protecting grace the fall of that tree would be hurtful to them. (Hengstenberg 1852, 353)

This angel has the seal of the living God. This is not something we use to much today, if you have ever had to use or have been a notary, then you are aware of the use of a seal. We have examples throughout the old testament of this seal.

Genesis 41:42

“Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck.” (ESV)

“I will make you like my signet ring” (Hag. 2:23). Signet rings were used to authorize and authenticate royal documents. Shown left is an Egyptian royal signet ring (575 BC). (Hays and Duvall 2011, 443)

Σφραγιδα – sphragida - the instrument used for sealing or stamping, signet, the substance which bears the imprint of a signet and seals a document, seal, the impression made by a signet, mark that which confirms or authenticates, attestation, confirmation, certification. (Arndt, et al. 2000, 980)

The seal was used to attest to the fact that the person in possession of the seal was a direct representative of the king or was the king. The seal was also used to show ownership, kind of like a brand used with cattle. Today we would call it a trademark.

Recall in the book of Ezekiel, that before judgement could fall on Jerusalem, those who belonged to the Lord were marked or sealed.

Ezekiel 9:4–5

“The LORD said to him, “Go through the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of the people who moan and groan over all the abominations practiced in it.” While I listened, he said to the others, “Go through the city after him and strike people down; do not let your eye pity nor spare anyone!” (NET)

Before God pours out His judgement, He is going to actively seal and supernaturally protect the evangelists He will be using during this time.

Revelation 7:3

...saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads." (NASB95)

We know, in chapter 13, Satan will be marking or sealing his followers, and this is not new either. Now there was (and still is) on the coast a temple of Heracles; if a servant of any man takes refuge there and is branded with certain sacred marks, delivering himself to the god, he may not be touched. This law continues today the same as it has always been from the first. (Herodotus 1920)

Just before the kick off begins, in response to the question of those under the throne, the Lord attends to those who He will be using to reach the world during the tribulation.

So, who are the 144,000?

The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that the 144,000 represents the total number of those who will reign with Christ. Since there is a much larger group—a "vast multitude ... which no one could number"—mentioned immediately afterward as taken from earth to heaven (v. 9), the JW view is discredited even in its closest context in Revelation. While many believe the 144,000 is symbolic for the church, the tribal names and numbers naturally refer to ethnic Israel. The 12 tribes are numbered as a protective military deployment (e.g., Nm 2), making it plausible that 7:1–8 is implying that this sealing has to do with the new covenant entry of the Holy Spirit into the Jewish remnant returned to the promised land (Ezk 36:27; 37:7–9, 14), where the vision describes Israel as "a vast army" (Ezk 37:10). (Cabal, et al. 2007, 1897)

The 144,000 have been interpreted to be the church supernaturally protected during the tribulation. It has been used as a distinctive of those who are from the Philadelphia church going through the tribulation who are being protected. It has also been interpreted by the Jehovah's Witnesses as those who are true believers and born before 1917. They have doubled down on that and believe that only 144,000 will be resurrected and go to heaven, but we do not know who that will be, so knock on a few more doors.

I think it says what it means in the scripture, that there will be 12,000 from each tribe except for Dan.

This list of tribes is peculiar because it omits Dan and includes both Joseph and Manasseh. Perhaps Dan should replace Manasseh. Perhaps Dan is omitted because of the tradition that the Antichrist would come from this tribe, as suggested in Irenaeus and Hippolytus. Both quote Jer 8:16 (cf also vs. 17), and Hippolytus cites Deut 33:22 and Gen 49:17. It is true that in Gen 49:17 Dan is "A horned snake ..., that bites the horse's heel," AB, and that in Testament of Dan 5:6 it is written that the prince of the tribe of Dan is Satan. Nevertheless, the reason for omission from our list may be simply the idolatry of Dan as recorded in Judg 18:30 and 1 Kings 12:29. (Ford 2008, 118)

Revelation 7:4–8

"And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: From the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed." (NASB95)

The tribe of Dan is excluded from the list and there are numerous conjectures as to why. Interesting though what we see in the non-canonical book, the Testament of Dan from the second century BC.

Full disclosure, this is not part of the Bible, and a reason why is in this extract, which says something is to be found in the Book of Enoch, but that information is not in the Book of Enoch, which is also non-canonical.

Testament of Dan 5:4-6

4* For I know that in the last days you will defect from the Lord, you will be offended at Levi, and revolt against Judah; but you will not prevail over them. An angel of the Lord guides them both, because by them Israel shall stand.

5 "To the extent that you abandon the Lord, you will live by every evil deed, committing the revolting acts of the gentiles, chasing after wives of lawless men, and you are motivated to all wickedness by the spirits of deceit among you. 6 For I read in the Book of Enoch the Righteous that your prince is Satan and that all the spirits of sexual promiscuity and of arrogance devote attention to the sons of Levi in the attempt to observe them closely and cause them to commit sin before the Lord. (Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* 1983, 809)

As seen earlier, Irenaeus, one of the early church fathers who is believed to have been born in 140AD taught that the tribe of Dan was the tribe the antichrist would come from. Thus, the reason they are not listed.

2. Such then must learn, and quickly turn back to the true number of the Name;(how to expect antichrist) that they may not be accounted as false Prophets. But knowing the fixed number which has been declared by Scripture, i.e., 666, let them await first the division of the Kingdom into ten: then afterwards while they are reigning, and beginning to amend their own affairs and to increase their Kingdom; he that shall come suddenly claiming the Kingdom for himself, and shall alarm those whom I have spoken of, having the name in which is the aforesaid number; him they must know to be truly the Abomination of Desolation. As also saith the Apostle, (1 Thess 5:3) When they shall say, Peace and Defence, then sudden destruction shall come upon them. And Jeremias hath signified not only his sudden approach, but also the tribe of which he shall come,(Jer 8:16) saying, From Dan we heard the sound of the swiftness of his horses: at the voice of the neighing of the finishing course of his horses shall the whole earth be moved: and he shall come and devour the earth, and the fulness thereof, and the city, and them that dwell therein. And therefore the aforesaid Tribe is not named in the Apocalypse among those which are saved. (S. Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons 1872, 520)

In our study of Genesis, we learned that the names of the tribes have meaning and the order they are listed in have meaning as well.

There are several lists of the tribes in Scripture (e.g. Gn. 29–30; 49; Dt. 33; Jos. 13–21; Rev. 7:5–8). These lists raise some interesting questions. For example, the order changes and sometimes a tribe is left out. (Naylor 1994, 171-172)

Lists of the tribes of Israel appear approximately twenty times in the Hebrew Bible, with variations of which tribes are included and in the order of the tribes. [Twelve Tribes of Israel] Reuben, being the oldest son of Jacob, often appears first. In this list Judah occurs first, perhaps because that was the tribe from which the messiah was to come (cf. 5:5, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah"; in other biblical lists in which Judah appears first, the list is arranged geographically from south to north. That is not the case here, however.) (Reddish 2001, 147)

There are no references to the tribe of Levi in the New Testament other than in Revelation and a handful of Gospel references to "Levites."...The tribe of Levi appears in the list of tribes in Rev 7:7, though the tribe rarely appears in Old Testament tribal lists. Their inclusion in Rev 7:7 is especially odd since this appears to be a military census. Numbers 1:49 indicates the tribe of Levi should not be included in such lists. The tribe also appears in the eschatological war described in the War Scroll, one of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QM 1:2; 2:2; Aune 643). (Long 2016)

Interesting that the tribal list is like a war list of available troops, like Numbers 2. This, again, is spiritual warfare that spills out into the physical world.

Birth Order

Reuben	behold a son
Simeon	hearing, hears and obeys
Levi	joined, a companion
Judah	the Lord be praised
Dan	Judge, judging
Naphtali	A struggle, my wrestling
Gad	Good fortune, good luck, a troop
Asher	Fortunate, happy, fortress
Issachar	reward, he is wages, to be rewarded
Zebulun	dwelling, wished for habitation
Joseph	may God add, he shall add
Benjamin	Son of the right hand

144,000 Order

Judah	the Lord be praised
Reuben	behold a son
Gad	Good fortune, good luck, a troop
Asher	Fortunate, happy, fortress
Naphtali	A struggle, my wrestling
Manasseh	One who causes to forget; forgetting; forgetfulness
Simeon	hearing, hears and obeys
Levi	joined, a companion
Issachar	reward, he is wages, to be rewarded
Zebulun	dwelling, wished for habitation
Joseph	may God add, he shall add, increasing
Benjamin	Son of the right hand (Cornwall and Smith 1998)

Revelation 7:9–12

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.” (NASB95)

The expression after these things means that the salvation of these myriads of Gentiles follows chronologically the 144,000 Jews and there is a cause and effect relationship. After describing the worship of the One on the Throne (vv. 11–12), the text proceeds to identify who these Gentiles are that are found around the Throne (vv. 13–14). These Gentiles are identified as those who have come out of the Great Tribulation. They are saved Gentiles, for they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. Since they follow chronologically the ministry of the 144,000 Jews, the implication is that they are the Gentiles who come to Messiah as a result of the preaching of the 144,000 Jews. (Fruchtenbaum 2003, 222)

Talk about a revival, during the Tribulation period, millions will be saved, so many John cannot count them. But they come from everywhere, and John can tell that in that he said “from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues...”

The fact that they are no longer beneath the altar but standing before the throne waving palm branches (perhaps the antitype of the first “Palm Sunday”), indicates that John’s vision in this case was of the still future time when all the martyred saints, to the very end of the tribulation period, had been gathered together at the throne. (H. M. Morris 1983, 133)

The ministry of the 144,000 as well as the two witnesses in Revelation 11 results, by the end of the tribulation, in millions being saved. These are not the church, but these are those who come to Christ during the tribulation and have paid a price for that faith.

They are not called the Church, or any part of it. The Church—the Ecclesia—in its proper New Testament acceptance, ends its earthly course with what was represented by “the seven churches,” and is never heard of again in all the Apocalypse, after the third chapter, except as it appears in the Elders and Living ones in glory. (Seiss 1901, 435-436)

Revelation 7:13–17

Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?” I said to him, “My lord, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. “For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.” (NASB95)

These who are before the throne are in white robes, the same robes we saw with those who were under the altar. Remember, the church wears white garments, not white robes.

Recall our discussion about the white robes also being characteristic of those who serve in the temple which is exactly wear these will be serving.

The question is, does the scene describe the service of the multitude going on during their time before the throne, or does this look forward in anticipation of the millennium and their service of God in the millennial temple. The tense of the verb, “serve,” is present. This could be the futuristic present describing what will certainly take place in the future, i.e., these will be busy in the service of the King. But more than likely, it is a descriptive present and describes the scene in progress as they wait on the Lord in service before the throne. Undoubtedly, it refers to heaven and stresses that heaven is not only a rest from life’s pressures and toil, but it is especially a place of worship and privileged service even before the kingdom on earth ever begins. (Keathley III 2002, Re 7:15)

Remember the question of the 5th seal?

Revelation 6:9–11

“When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.” (NASB95)

That has now been answered and we have seen the upcoming events as well as the final disposition of all the saints coming not only prior to the actual beginning of the tribulation, but those who come from the tribulation as well.

They are all treated by the Lord the same and all have the same reward awaiting them. The number comes from all of those who were left behind at the rapture of the church.

They are people whom the judgment found unprepared, and who consequently were “left” when the rapture of the Church took place. The Scriptures are everywhere very particular in forewarning us that the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night—that it will come as a snare on all them that dwell on the

earth—that the great mass of men, and even of the professing Church, shall be overtaken by it unawares—and that, “in that night, there shall be two in one bed,” one of whom “shall be taken, and the other left;” and “two grinding at the mill,” one of whom “shall be taken, and the other left;” and two in the field, one of whom “shall be taken, and the other left.” The representations are also very clear, that great will be the number of those who will thus be “left.” (Seiss 1901, 443)

Matthew 24:14

“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.” (NASB95)

The requirement that all the world hear the gospel pertains not to the rapture but to the coming of Christ to set up His kingdom. (Walvoord 2008, 145)

We are to occupy till He comes, we take the word everywhere, but true worldwide evangelism will take place as the result of the worldwide praise fest in chapter 4, the worldwide cave movement of chapter 6, as well as the ministry of the 2 witnesses of chapter 11 and the 144,000.

Matthew 28:19–20

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (ESV)

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