

An Innumerable Multitude

Revelation 7: 9-17

The End Times

In my last post, we continued our journey in **Revelation 7** discussing the **One Hundred Forty-Four Thousand**. In this post, we look at the **Innumerable Multitude** which no one could number.

"⁹ After this, I looked; and there before me was a huge crowd, too large for anyone to count, from every nation, tribe, people and language. They were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palm branches in their hands; ¹⁰ and they shouted, "Victory to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ All the angels stood around the throne, the elders and the four living beings; they fell face down before the throne and worshipped God, saying, ¹² "Amen! "Praise and glory, wisdom and thanks, honor and power and strength belong to our God forever and ever! "Amen!" ¹³ One of the elders asked me, "These people dressed in white robes - who are they, and where are they from?" ¹⁴ "Sir," I answered, "you know." Then he told me, "These are the people who have come out of the Great Persecution. They have washed their robes and made them white with the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ That is why they are before God's throne. "Day and night, they serve him in his Temple; and the One who sits on the throne will put his Sh'khinah upon them. ¹⁶ "They will never again be hungry, they will never again be thirsty, the sun will not beat down on them, nor will any burning heat. ¹⁷ "For the Lamb at the center of the throne will shepherd them, will lead them to springs of living water, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes." ~ Revelation 7:9-17 (CJB)

The 144,000 were the elect of Israel, while the multitude is from all nations. The scene in Revelation 7:1-8 was on earth - the 144,000 were sealed by God before the worst of the tribulation years began (Revelation 7:3). Beginning with v. 9, Yochanan sees a great multitude of people in heaven *after* the seven years of **Great Tribulation** (or **Great Persecution**) are complete. Yochanan is told by one of the elders in heaven the identity of the multitudes and how they came to be in heaven: ***These are the people who have come out of the Great Persecution. They have washed their robes and made them white with the blood of the Lamb.*** The great multitude, safe at last in the Father's house, is the answer to the cry of the martyrs under the fifth seal.

After this, I looked; and there before me was a huge crowd, too large for anyone to count, from every nation, tribe, people and language. They were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palm branches in their hands; and they shouted, "Victory to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" G. E. Jones separates the 144,000 from the multitudes:

In contrast to the 144,000 which will be from only one nation, which is Israel, the great multitude John saw before the throne was from ALL nations and kindreds.

Gary Cohen adds this:

These come "out of every nation" and out of "tribes and peoples and tongues" (Greek), and thus this group is not a Jewish group but a Gentile one from all over the world. It was so large that John despairs of even trying to assign a number to it. How will this fit our modern era of burgeoning population? Seven billion on earth by 2000 CE. With such numbers John could see the almost numberless mass of those redeemed during the Tribulation and yet as the Scriptures show, the mass of the world will still follow Antichrist (Revelation 13:8). ¹

¹ Both quotes are from A Layman's Commentary of Revelation by Don Jones.

All the angels stood around the throne, the elders and the four living beings; they fell face down before the throne and worshipped God, saying, ¹² "Amen! "Praise and glory, wisdom and thanks, honor and power and strength belong to our God forever and ever! "Amen!" What a great throng gathered around the throne! First, there is an outer circle of angels composed of **ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands**. Next there are the twenty-four elders, representing the redeemed of the Lord, who were raptured at the appearing of Messiah. Then the four living creatures and finally, next to the throne, are those who are martyred during the Tribulation. This group enters a time of worship, praise and adoration which results in a seven-fold doxology of (1) **praise**, (2) **glory**, (3) **wisdom**, (4) **thanksgiving**, (5) **honor**, (6) **power**, and (7) **strength**, all directed to God forever and ever.

One of the elders asked me, "These people dressed in white robes - who are they, and where are they from?"¹⁴ "Sir," I answered, "you know." Then he told me, "These are the people who have come out of the Great Persecution. They have washed their robes and made them white with the blood of the Lamb. It is interesting that one of the elders asks two key questions: "Who are these people?" and "Where did they come from?" Yochanan looks at him and says, **Sir, you know**. And sure enough, the elder gives the correct answer. They are the ones who have been saved out of every nation, tongue (language), tribe (ethnic group) and kindred (race) on the face of the earth. These have been saved through the preaching of the 144,000 witnesses. Their salvation, like ours, was made possible by **the blood of the Lamb**. Yochanan closes this chapter by telling what they have been delivered to, and what they have been delivered from!

That is why they are before God's throne. "Day and night, they serve him in his Temple; and the One who sits on the throne will put his Sh'khinah upon them. ¹⁶ "They will never again be hungry, they will never again be thirsty, the sun will not beat down on them, nor will any burning heat. ¹⁷ "For the Lamb at the center of the throne will shepherd them, will lead them to springs of living water, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes." Henry H. Halley describes this incredible scene:

The blood-washed throng, safe at last in the Father's Home, as against the Day of Wrath on Earth (6:16), is the Answer to the Martyrs cry (6:10). Arrayed in white robes, palms in their hands. Songs on their lips they hunger no more. All tears wiped away. In the land where Fountains are Forever flowing with Living Waters. ²

Special Comparative Note on Chapter 7: 9-17 ³

Historicist Approach:

Some **Historicists** see this innumerable throng with the group sealed early in the chapter. In the former vision, they were sealed for preservation; here they are seen in their eternal blessedness. Showing these in heaven is intended to encourage the church of its heavenly triumph – a needed message considering the spiritual decline after Constantine. Matthew Henry and Adan Clark still view this section in the same manner as the **Preterists**.

Preterist Approach:

Preterists espouse some very Anti-Semitic beliefs that I am loathe to even share here. They do see the multitude coming out of the Great Tribulation

² A Layman's Commentary of Revelation by Don Jones.

³ Material in this section is taken from "Revelation: Four Views, Revised & Updated" by Steve Gregg

Futurist Approach:

According to the dispensational view within the **Futurists**, in addition to the salvation of the 144,000 Jewish Believers, an even greater number of Jews and Gentiles will be brought to salvation through their testimony during the **Great Tribulation**. Some **Futurists** believe that the **Tribulation Saints** will enter the Millennium with an inferior status than the **Raptured Saints**. (Personally, I find this hard to accept as no scriptural references are provided to support this position.)

Idealist Approach:

Idealists agree that the scene has now shifted from earth to heaven. However, they espouse the Replacement Theology of the **Preterists**.

In my next post, we will begin to explore **Revelation 8**.