



¹ And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. ² And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, ³ Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

In the sequence of the Revelation, this follows the opening of the first six seals of the book that is taken by the Lamb of God (5:7). *These* refers to the numerous changes that will take place on the earth in the days to come – changes that John has just witnessed and described for us, as the Lord Jesus opened six of the seals of the book. This chapter is inserted as a parenthetical overview of what will take place for the faithful ones – an interlude in the described devastation of the first six seals being opened; chapter eight then continues with the opening of the seventh seal. Perhaps the Lord desires to assure those who have been purchased out of sin that they have not been forgotten despite all of the destruction that will be taking place on the earth, and to encourage them to remain faithful so that they may enjoy the ultimate redemption that God has prepared.

John describes for us *four angels* who have been *standing* (perfect tense, describing a completed action with ongoing results) at the four directional extremities of the earth (namely: east, west, north and south).¹ It would seem that these four angels have control over the winds of the earth, for John sees them holding the winds with the ability to prevent them from blowing over the earth, the sea, or on any tree. Although *blow* is in the subjunctive mood (which generally heralds a potentiality) but because it is in a purpose clause, it is to be taken as a certainty.² The angels have assumed their positions (they are *standing* when John first sees them) and are restraining the winds of the earth. However, before these four angels can do any damage by withholding the winds, another angel is seen coming up from the rising of the sun (*east*) having the *seal* (*sphragis*) of the *living God*.³

Looking ahead, we see that when the fifth trumpet sounds, locusts swarm the earth but do not hurt anything that is green, and instead, they sting as a scorpion

¹ Friberg Lexicon; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm.

² https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

³ Strong's Online.

those who do not have the *seal (sphragis) of God in their forehead* (Revelation 9:4); this tells us that the *seal of God* will have been applied to His servants long before this earth is removed (this takes place during the time of the Antichrist and before the Lord returns for His own). In the new heaven and earth (after the old has been removed) where the slaves (*servants*) of the Lord will dwell forever with Him, we are told that they will see *His name* in their *foreheads* (Revelation 22:4). The Greek word *sphragis* (noun) refers to an instrument that is used to apply a mark of ownership or authentication⁴ – what better sign of ownership (*seal*) could there be than the name of the Lamb of God in our foreheads. Paul tells the Ephesians that after they had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, they “were sealed [*sphragizo* (verb form of *sphragis*)] with that holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13); this affirms that the Holy Spirit is given as a mark of ownership and not as an eternal preservative – the Spirit is a down payment (*earnest*) or a deposit toward our future salvation (Ephesians 1:14).⁵ We all know that a down payment does not guarantee the completion of the agreement, and so we are warned to guard against a faithless heart that will lead to apostasy (a permanent departure) from God (Hebrews 3:12).⁶

As this angel ascends onto the scene, he cries out to the four who are prepared to damage the earth, sea and trees by withholding the wind that they should not cause any harm *as long as [till] we may be sealing [have sealed; sealed is in the present tense (describing an ongoing activity) and subjunctive mood (a possible action that is dependent upon circumstances; namely, as long as there are those who are coming to faith in the Lord, the sealing will continue)] the slaves [servants] of our God in their foreheads*.⁷ It is through faith in the Lord Jesus that these *slaves* are being bought out of sin and sealed (*sphragizo* – marked) with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). While this is ongoing, the four angels are told that they are not to cause any damage (*hurt*) by restraining the winds.⁸

In one of his visions regarding the spiritual corruption of the people of Jerusalem, Ezekiel is told by the Lord to call for those who are in charge of the city to step forward with their weapons in hand; six come (generally considered to be angels) and with them Ezekiel sees another clothed in linen having an inkhorn (wearing the garment of a high priest), and the Lord tells this angel to go throughout the city and

⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵ Strong's Online.

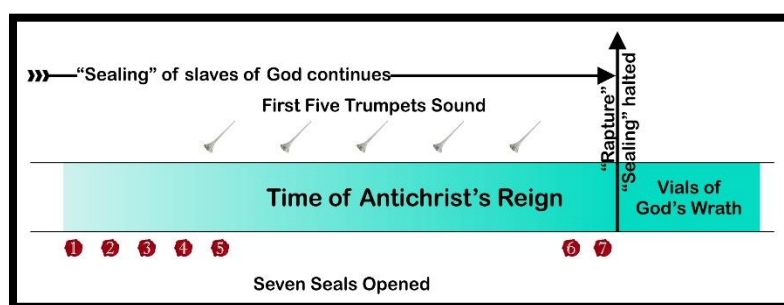
⁶ Friberg Lexicon; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm.

⁷ Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁸ Strong's Online.

put a mark upon the forehead of everyone who bemoans the sins of the people (Ezekiel 9:1-4).⁹ As the angel proceeds through Jerusalem, marking those who lament the sins of the people, he is followed by the six with their weapons who then kill everyone who is not marked (Ezekiel 9:5). In a somewhat similar fashion, we see the four angels who are prepared to unleash damage upon the earth but are told to withhold their destruction until the sealing of the slaves of God should be completed.

If we consider this within the timeline of Revelation, then it appears to describe the time until the Lord comes to gather His own out of the world (the “rapture”). Up to the time when He comes in the clouds of the air for the harvest, there will be those



few who discover the Narrow Gate (Jesus) Who leads to life, and they, too, will be marked with the Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13) – the *sealing* of the Lord’s slaves is still taking

place today and the four angels are still waiting to withhold the winds from the earth. Regarding the day of His coming for His own, Jesus said: “But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Matthew 24:36); therefore, these angels stand ready and await the Lord’s timing. However, once the Lord has harvested the earth of those who are His, the destruction of the vials of God’s wrath will be poured onto the earth and these angels will then withhold the wind. When the fourth vial is emptied onto the sun, those on the earth will be burned by the heat from the sun (Revelation 16:8); it seems that the wind is not there to dissipate the heat and bring relief. After listing some activities of the worldly, Paul clarified: “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath [*orge*] of God upon the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 5:6); to the Thessalonians, he wrote: “For God hath not appointed [destined] us to wrath [*orge*], but to obtain [*the possession of*] salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:9).¹⁰ The time of the Antichrist will be a time of tribulation (*thlipsis* – something that we are to expect in this life – 1 Thessalonians 3:4) for the Lord’s faithful (Revelation 13:7), but it will not be a time when the expression (*thumos*) of God’s wrath (*orge*) will descend upon the earth (Revelation 16:1), which, after the

⁹ Keil & Delitzsch Commentary (*ESword*).

¹⁰ Strong’s Online; Stephanus 1550 NT; Gingrich Lexicon.

Lord's harvest of His own, will only be occupied by the children of disobedience. As in the vision of Ezekiel, the righteous will not face the expression of wrath that the Lord has prepared for the unrighteous.



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.* 5. Of the tribe of Juda *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Reuben *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Gad *were sealed twelve thousand.* 6. Of the tribe of Aser *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Nepthalim *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Manasses *were sealed twelve thousand.* 7. Of the tribe of Simeon *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Levi *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Issachar *were sealed twelve thousand.* 8. Of the tribe of Zabulon *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Joseph *were sealed twelve thousand.* Of the tribe of Benjamin *were sealed twelve thousand.*

John then hears the number of those who have been sealed (remember that he has been translated in the spirit into heaven to hear of things that are to come), and it is one hundred and forty-four thousands of *every tribe* (*all the tribes*— both words are singular in the Greek) of the *sons* (*huios* — not *teknon* for children) of Israel.¹¹ The Greek shows this number as ρμδ (144) χιλιάδες (thousands), with the 144 being represented by the letter values *rho* (ρ), *mu* (μ) and *delta* (δ), which are 100, 40 and 4 respectively; Greek does not have separate numerical characters¹² and the plural form *thousands* is used for everything greater than 1,999.¹³

Within Biblical numerology, the number 12 is said to speak of completeness or perfection (among other things), and here we have 12 tribes with 12 thousands who have been sealed.¹⁴ The 144,000, therefore, represents a complete body of those who have been sealed — no one has been overlooked or missed in any way. I do not take either the 12,000 or the 144,000 to be restrictive numbers but representative — namely, the sealing of the slaves of God, when it is ended, will be complete. Taking these as being restrictive numbers would place a cap on those who could be sealed

¹¹ Strong's Online; Stephanus 1550 NT.

¹² https://www.agapebiblestudy.com/charts/LETTER_NUMBER_EQUIVALENT.htm

¹³ <https://www.foundalis.com/lan/grknum.htm>

¹⁴ <https://www.learnreligions.com/biblical-numerology-700168>

by the Lord, but the invitation to come is open to everyone; all who come to the Lord Jesus in faith will be *sealed* (marked) by the Holy Spirit of promise (John 3:16; Ephesians 1:13) – clearly, the Lord’s calling is without restriction.

After noting that 144,000 were being sealed from *every tribe* of the *sons* of Israel, John then records the twelve names that are associated with those who are being sealed by God. However, this listing of *every tribe* is not what we might expect; one of the sons of Israel is missing (Dan), and one of the sons of Joseph is likewise missing (Ephraim) – you will recall that Jacob took Joseph’s two sons (Manasseh and Ephraim) as his own (Genesis 48:5). The Promised Land was divided among twelve families of Israel, which included the families of Joseph’s two sons (but not Joseph) and excluded the family of Levi. The Levites bore responsibility for the tabernacle (Numbers 1:50), and the priesthood came through the family of Aaron (Exodus 30:30); as such, they were paid tithes by the other twelve families (Numbers 18:24) and were given cities that were scattered throughout the Land (Numbers 35:7).

If we look at the history of Dan and Ephraim in the Scriptures, it seems that their exclusion from this list is not without reason. Many of the tribes were unable to completely drive the pagan peoples out of their assigned lands, and one of Joshua’s final instructions to Israel was that they were to do all that the Lord had commanded them, they were not to go among the pagans (i.e., they were to maintain a distinct separation) and the pagan gods were not to be named, served nor worshipped – they were to cleave to Jehovah alone (Joshua 23:6-8). These final words were largely ignored, and Israel went through times of great oppression by their enemies (the pagans who lived among them) and then times when judges would draw the people back to the Lord. After the death of Samson (one of the judges), we read that the mother of Micah, an Ephraimite who lived in the region of Mt. Ephraim (that part of Mt. Ebal



that was included within Ephraim's allotment¹⁵), dedicated 1,100 pieces of silver to Jehovah (*LORD*) for the purpose of making *a graven image and a molten image* (Judges 17:3) – a direct violation of Commandment Two: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image ... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them” (Exodus 20:4-5). Micah stole the silver but later returned it to her, for which she blesses him in the name of Jehovah; she took 200 pieces and had a *graven image* (probably a calf) and a *molten image* (possibly the base for the graven image) made (Judges 17:4).¹⁶ Notice the mixture of the name of Jehovah with idolatry – something that is specifically identified as being an abomination unto Jehovah (Deuteronomy 27:15); it is noted that this was a time when “every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6). These graven and molten images were placed in Micah's *house of gods* (*bayith Elohiym* (Judged 17:5); *house of God* – *Elohiym* is a plural Hebrew word that is most frequently translated as *God*);¹⁷ considering that they retained some concept of Jehovah, it seems that He was the focus of Micah's idolatry (much like his ancestors at Mt Sinai – Exodus 32:3-4). He made an ephod (an object that was used in seeking divine guidance – Judges 8:27) and teraphim (images, generally of human form, also used in divination¹⁸), and assigned one of his sons to be his priest (Judges 17:5). By all appearances, Micah had constructed a special house for the worship of his idol (which he called Jehovah).

One day, a young man (who is not named) of the tribe of Levi (those who were responsible for the true tabernacle and its functions) came from the land of Judah (undoubtedly from one of the Levitical cities within Judah's borders) looking for a place to fit in (Judges 17:8). He comes to Micah, and, when Micah hears that he is a Levite, he is offered (and accepts) the position of being Micah's family priest – it was Micah's anticipation that Jehovah would bring him prosperity now that he had a Levite as his priest (Judges 17:13). Notice that Micah held to a form of godliness: his idol was referred to as Jehovah, and he considered it to be good fortune that he now had a priest who was a Levite from those who attended to the true tabernacle of Jehovah.

The tribe of Dan, on the other hand, had received their allotted inheritance of the Promised Land just like all of the other eleven tribes; however, they were not able to occupy all of it because the Amorites would not permit them to live in the valleys,

¹⁵ https://bibleatlas.org/mount_ephraim.htm (modified).

¹⁶ K & D.

¹⁷ Strong's Online.

¹⁸ <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14331-teraphim>

thereby forcing them into the mountainous areas that were not ideal and confined them to an area that was not large enough (Joshua 19:47; Judges 1:34). The blessing of the Lord upon the people of Israel in the Promised Land was dependent upon their love and obedience to Him (Deuteronomy 30:16); if they remained faithful, then the Lord would destroy the people of Canaan from before them so that they would be able to possess the land (Deuteronomy 28:1, 7). The Lord also promised that if they did not live in obedience to Him that He would then work against them (Deuteronomy 28:15, 25). What is evident is that the people of Dan were not living faithfully for the Lord; the Amorites were among the people, and the Lord had promised to remove them from before Israel if they remained faithful to Him (Exodus 23:22-24) – the Amorites forced the tribe of Dan into the least favorable parts of their inheritance. Because of this, some of the children of Dan sent a team of five men to search throughout the land given to Israel in order to find a place where they could live under more favorable conditions; in essence, they would rather find something away from their God-given inheritance that would permit them to live as they desired, than to live in obedience to the Lord and have Him deal with their enemies as He had promised.

Not much has changed; today it is almost the norm for professing Christians to move from church to church within a community – always looking for a change of scenery and a setting where their lifestyle is approved; it is never (or very rarely) a matter of seeking a community of believers who have a thirst for the truth of God and who seek to live faithfully for Him. These Danites looked for a place where they could dwell in comfort and ease without changing how they lived; they were prepared to leave their allotted inheritance so that they could live in accordance with what they had determined was right for them (Judges 18:1). Micah, who referred to his idols as being Jehovah, on the other hand, seems to be representative of the Ephraimites; they held to the language of the faith that they had left behind – their practice was in opposition to the God of that faith yet they maintained some of the words and practices. Evangelicals make full use of the expressions of faith in the Lord, yet their Ecumenical living stands in sharp contradiction to what the Lord has commanded in His Word. We must be alert lest we be lulled into such pagan compromise.

As these *spies* left the region of Dan, they traveled through the area of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah. They heard Micah's priest and recognized by his voice that the young man was a Levite. After learning of his situation with Micah, they asked him for counsel of God as to whether they would be prosperous in their

search; without any indication of inquiry of the Lord, they are told: “Go in peace: before the LORD *is* your way wherein ye go” (Judges 18:6). This Levite, despite practicing pagan idolatry, still pronounced a blessing in the name of Jehovah! The men departed (undoubtedly comforted by the Levite’s words), came to the city of Laish that met with their approval and then returned quickly to Dan. Six hundred armed men left Dan to conquer Laish (taking with them all of their families and belongings), and on their way they stopped at Micah’s dwelling where the five spies told them of the Levite and the images (Judges 18:13); certainly they looked favorably upon this young priest because their previous journey had been successful. The five spies entered Micah’s house, took his graven and molten images, his ephod and teraphim, and then said to the Levite: “*is it* better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?” (Judges 18:19). With such a better offer, the Levite scooped the idols up and left with the Danites; Micah’s protest in the face of six hundred soldiers was futile. The forces of Dan conquered Laish (or Leshem), rebuilt the city and named it Dan (Judges 18:29); many years later, Jeroboam, the first king of the separated 10 tribes of Israel, placed one of two golden calf idols in the city of Dan – this, too, was to be representative of Jehovah (1 Kings 12:28-29). We are told that Micah’s graven image became the god of the tribe of Dan until Israel was finally taken into captivity (Judges 18:30) – the idol that Jeroboam placed in their city did not change what they had been practicing for years; clearly, there was no repentance or change of heart – idolatry was their religion.

The word of the Lord concerning Ephraim is this: “Ephraim *is* joined to [united with (describing a continuous action)] idols: let him alone [a command to *let alone* – do not interfere with; abandon]” (Hosea 4:17).¹⁹ The tribe of Ephraim is described as being continually joined with idolatry, and as such, they are to be left alone. Through the influence of Ephraim, the tribe of Dan (through Micah) also became wholly idolatrous. As we see the listing of the tribes of Israel in Revelation 7, it seems apparent that the idolatry of Dan and Ephraim excluded them from being among those who received the *seal of the living God*.

It is important at this point to consider Paul’s illustration of the Olive Tree in Romans 11 because of the perspective that it provides for us of the Lord Jesus Christ and Israel. Paul lays the foundation for this illustration by making this interesting statement: “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision,

¹⁹ Strong’s Online; BDB.

which is outward in the flesh: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit ..." (Romans 2:28-29). He zeroes in on the spiritual calling that Jehovah placed upon the Patriarchs of the Jewish nation: a true Jew is one who has had a change of heart before God. Paul reminds us of Abraham who was declared righteous before God because he believed Him – his *faith* formed the basis for this righteousness in the eyes of God (Romans 4:3-5; Genesis 15:6). Therefore, when Paul says: "They *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Romans 9:6), we can readily understand that true Israel are those who, through faith, have been declared righteous before God – regardless of their lineage. Being the Apostle of the New Covenant to the Gentiles, Paul brings this new understanding of Israel back to the Lord Jesus by identifying Him as being the Olive Tree – that *holy root* that bears many branches (Romans 11:16). "And if some of the branches be broken off [Israelites broken off because of unbelief; the sons of Israel are the *natural branches*], and thou, being a wild olive tree [a Gentile], wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree [the Lord Jesus Christ]; Boast not against the branches [that were removed]. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief [*apistia* – no belief/faith; faithless] they were broken off, and thou standest [perfect tense – a one-time, past action with ongoing results] by faith" (Romans 11:17-20a).²⁰ Under the Old Covenant (the Mosaic Law), Israel was central to anyone obtaining cleansing before God; the temple, the sacrifices and the priesthood made them the focus of God's salvation for not just Israel, but for the whole world. With the institution of the New Covenant through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus (Luke 22:20) came a new and living way through Him; the Jews no longer held an advantage as before (Romans 10:12). Salvation under the New Covenant comes only through a living belief (faith) in what the Lord Jesus Christ has done to remove the penalty of sin. Everyone who places their faith in the Lord is grafted into Him, including Jews: "And they [the Jews] also, if they abide not still in unbelief [if they place their faith in the Lord Jesus], shall be grafted in:" *for thereupon* [no longer abiding in *unbelief*] *God is able to graft them in* (Romans 11:23, literal in italics).²¹ The reality for the grafted branch is quite simple: "because of unbelief they [the unbelieving Jews] were

²⁰ Strong's Online.

²¹ Stephanus 1550 NT; it is not the *broken off* branches that are referred to here, but rather the Jews who come to faith who will be grafted in just like everyone else. The Jews are of the same lineage as the Savior (not a *wild olive tree*); since the wild branches are grafted in, then certainly the cultivated branches can also be grafted in (Romans 11:24).

broken off, and **thou** [the Gentiles who have been grafted in] **standest** [perfect tense – a one-time completed action] **by faith**. Be not highminded [arrogant], but fear [present tense, imperative mood; a command to continually be afraid]: For if [since] God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also [*should – spare* is in the subjunctive mood (a possibility)] spare not thee” (Romans 11:20-21).²² *Faith* is the glue that binds us to the Lord; the warning issued is that if our faith should fail, then our connection to the life-giving Tree is also gone: “Take heed, **brethren** [those who have been grafted in by faith], lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [*apistia* – no faith; faithless], in departing [becoming apostate] from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).²³ James clarified this for us: “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17); in other words, unless our faith in the Lord results in obedience to Him (the acceptable works that He has prepared for us to do [Ephesians 2:10], a life reflecting His holiness and righteousness [Ephesians 4:24]), our faith is dead and we simply cannot claim to have faith in Him.

After Paul has carefully shown the necessity of a living faith in the Lord Jesus in order to remain in Him (the Olive Tree), he explains that Israel, in part, has become stubborn (*blindness*) until the time when the fullness of the Gentiles should come in (those who, through faith, are being grafted-in) and thus everyone of Israel will be saved (Romans 11:25b-26a).²⁴ Although salvation has always been by faith in the Promised One and open to everyone, Israel played a critical role in making Jehovah available to all people and provided a faith-based, promise-related ancestry for the birth of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The promise of salvation came through Abraham, Isaac (not Ishmael), and Jacob (not Esau) and so on down to Mary, who was betrothed to Joseph (Luke 3:23-38). Jesus took on the body of a Jew – a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, etc.; Paul portrays Him as the Good Olive Tree into which everyone who has faith in Him is grafted, and the *natural branches* would obviously be those of His earthly family – the Jews.

As we come to the twelve tribes of Israel in Revelation 7, we realize that, even though the twelve sons of Israel are not listed, the two who are left out were steeped in idolatry and could not be said to bear the seal of God. As noted earlier, I do not believe that the numbers cited are meant to be restrictive, but rather that they speak of a completeness of the Body of Christ – those who, by faith, have been grafted into the Lord Jesus Christ. This provides us with a greater understanding of the necessity

²² Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

²³ Strong’s Online; Gingrich Lexicon.

²⁴ Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

of faith in the Lord in order to be among His spiritual Israel (Romans 2:28-29); all of Israel was not marked as belonging to the Lord – it was limited to those who held an active, life-changing faith in Him and His promises.



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; ¹⁰ And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. ¹¹ And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, ¹² Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

There is a dramatic shift in location – John now views a large crowd (*great multitude*) of people standing before the throne and the Lamb in heaven; the setting is very similar to what John saw earlier: “in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb” (Revelation 5:6).²⁵ *Stood* (in reference to the *multitude*) is in the perfect tense: this is a completed, past action with ongoing consequences;²⁶ this *multitude* is before the throne and Lamb because of their faith in the salvation that was purchased by the Lamb (the past, completed action) and their life-long faithfulness to Him (the required ongoing results that will bring salvation [Matthew 24:13]).

No one is able to count how many are in this crowd that is comprised of people from *every nation* (*all nations* – both words are singular in the Greek), *even* (*and*) *tribes* (*kindreds*), *and peoples* (plural in Greek), *and languages* (*tongues*).²⁷ This huge assembly comes from *every nation* – there is someone from every nation that has ever been, which means that the Message of God’s saving work has gone everywhere. However, something has dramatically changed, for we have just read about a large number out of Israel who have been marked as being God’s – within this *multitude*, the identity of the Jew is gone! Yes, *every nation* is represented but

²⁵ Strong’s Online.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Stephanus 1550 NT.

no one is given particular mention. Clearly, this multitude has come together under the finished work of Christ – namely, the New Covenant. The New Covenant is very different from the Old Mosaic Covenant that was used to define the Jewish race through whom salvation was made available to the world. Moreover, the Old Covenant has been rendered obsolete through the work of Christ, and has been replaced by the New: “In that he [Jehovah] saith, A new *covenant* [this is a reference to Jeremiah 31:31 that was just quoted], he [Jehovah] hath made the first old [obsolete]. Now that which decayeth [is being made obsolete] and waxeth [is becoming] old *is* ready [near] to vanish away [or be done away with]” (Hebrews 8:13).²⁸ The writer of Hebrews draws together the prophecy from Jeremiah with the New Covenant that Jesus implemented (Luke 22:20), and alludes to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, which was the physical representation of the Old Covenant. It is not that the New Covenant stands alone, but rather, the Old Covenant has been fulfilled in the New and, thereby, everyone under the Old, who faithfully followed the Lord, is brought into the New. Jesus said: “Think not that I am come to destroy [do away with] the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy [do away with], but to fulfil” (Matthew 5:17).²⁹ John, in his writing, made eight references to Jesus fulfilling the prophetic OT Scriptures (John 12:38; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 18:9; 19:24, 28, 36). Jesus did not remove the Old by simply declaring it ended; He fulfilled its prophecies and brought the temple activities to an end by becoming our eternal High Priest, and His single sacrifice permanently opened the way to the Father (Hebrews 9:11-12; Matthew 27:50-51).

Consider Paul’s words concerning the New Covenant: “There is neither [not] Jew nor Greek, there is neither [not] bond nor free, there is neither [not] male nor [and] female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28); “Where³⁰ there is neither [not] Greek nor [and] Jew, circumcision nor [and] uncircumcision, Barbarian [*barbaros* – strictly, uttering unintelligible sounds; a foreigner], Scythian³¹, bond *nor*

²⁸ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

²⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

³⁰ *Where* refers back the *new man* whom we have put on, who has been created by God in *holiness* and *righteousness* (Ephesians 4:24), and who is being continually *renewed* in the precise and correct *knowledge* according to (*after*) the likeness (*image*) of God (Colossians 3:10); it is in this state that what follows is true. Stephanus 1550 NT.

³¹ It is interesting that *Scythian* is included here because, as a ruling people, they ceased to exist about 300 BC, but their reputation lived on; they were nomadic, yet controlled a large area around the Black and Caspian Seas. They were notoriously effective in their warfare, gaining great victories against overwhelming odds through their skilled use of archery and horses in battle, and their effective overlapping-leaf style armor. Despite being nomadic, the Scythians were not uncivilized, and archeology has proven them to be highly skilled craftsmen who produced musical instruments, delicate carvings in gold, as well as elaborate clothing. <https://www.worldhistory.org/Scythians/>; <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Scythian>.

free: but Christ *is* all, and in all” (Colossians 3:11). The point that Paul is making is that *in Christ* there is no designation of Jew and Greek, no circumcision and uncircumcision, no foreigner and savage, no slave and freeman, and no male and female – there is nothing to polarize those who are His, for we are all one. Paul says that there is *not Jew nor Greek* (and *not Greek and Jew*), and thereby identifies the age-old separation that existed between the Jew and the Gentile; if we consider this for a moment, it may help us to understand the significance of this teaching in light of the multitude that John saw. Although the two phrases are framed differently and the identities are reversed, they are really making exactly the same point: for those who are *in Christ* (which includes the faithful OT saints who have been marked as His) there is no longer an identification of a Jew or a Greek (a non-Jew). *In Christ*, we are all made members of His Body; therefore, it’s not that we all become identical without any identity but, rather, that we all fill differing roles within the Body: “... by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles ...” (1 Corinthians 12:12-18). The United States is often referred to as being a melting pot, by which it is meant that many international cultures come together in the USA and meld to become a new American culture.³² Although the reality of this example is in question today, the Body of Christ is a true *melting-pot* of peoples from every nation who are brought together through the Lord’s sacrifice into a blessed unity in Christ, Who is our Head (Colossians 1:18) and the Shepherd of a single flock (John 10:16).

Therefore, when we read of the *multitude* whom John saw having come to stand before God’s throne and the Lamb, we must understand this within the context of the Word of God that shows no differentiating marks among those who are the Lord’s. Our differing roles within the Body does not detract from its unity but, rather, serve to promote the health and strength of the Body through Christ’s work within each member (Ephesians 4:11-16). All who are a part of the Body of Christ have, first of all, placed their faith in the redemptive plan of God and then have remained faithful to Him. Jesus made it abundantly clear: “And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure [*hupomeno* – to remain faithful through trials] unto the end [when we die or the Lord returns], the same shall [it is this one who will] be saved” (Mark 13:13).³³ There is no one within this vast multitude who committed himself to the Lord and then lived according to his own standard – everyone has remained faithful to the Lord; James made it clear that faith in the Lord

³² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melting_pot

³³ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

that does not result in faithfulness of life (obedience), is dead (James 2:17), and a *dead* faith does not bring life.

We are told that this crowd has been clothed in *white robes* and everyone is holding a palm branch (*palms*). *Clothed (periballo)* is in the perfect tense and passive voice: the latter means that it is God Who has clothed each one, and the former tells us that this is done only once but with ongoing consequences (we'll look at this more closely a little later).³⁴ The palm branch is a symbol of victory,³⁵ and these who are standing before the throne and the Lamb are overcomers. To each of the elders of the seven assemblies in Asia, Jesus included a word for those who were *overcomers*, those who were living victoriously in Him, and it is these *overcomers* who will inherit all things in the new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:7). The palm branches in the hands of this multitude is a sign that they are **all** overcomers in the Lord.

The united cry that comes from this large gathering is: *the salvation through the One sitting on the throne of our God and through the Lamb*.³⁶ Even though this is a very large group, they have a singular focus: the salvation that has been made available to them through the planning of eternal God and the sacrificial work of the Lamb. Notice the comparable theme that was sung by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders to the Lamb: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Revelation 5:9) – they rejoice that the Lamb is worthy to open the seals of the book, but they declare the reason for this as being the salvation that He purchased at Calvary. Central to both is the salvation that God made available to all of mankind through the work of Christ on the cross – something that was planned before the world was made (1 Peter 1:18-20) and promised from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15).

The angels of heaven have been standing around the throne of God, the Lamb, the twenty-four elders, and the four living creatures. We are not given any indication as to whether this *round (around)* is linear (as we would think on earth) or spherical (as it would be possible in a place where gravity is not a consideration). This is a reiteration of John's earlier vision: "I heard the voice [*sound*] of many angels round about the throne and the beasts [*living creatures*] and the elders" (Revelation 5:11).³⁷ In both cases, the angels surround the throne area, the elders and living creatures,

³⁴ Strong's Online.

³⁵ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/palm-tree/>

³⁶ Stephanus 1550 NT.

³⁷ Strong's Online.

except that now there is also an innumerable host of the redeemed within the area of the throne. Are the elders and creatures a part of this multitude? We are not told, but we do know that they are very closely identified with this multitude as they are also among those who have been purchased out of sin by the work of the Lamb of God out of “every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ...” (Revelation 5:9). In essence, they are the same. We then read that the angels *fell before the throne on their faces*. The Greek word *prosopon* that is translated as *faces*, is singular; however, this word can also be translated as *presence*, which fits the context more perfectly: the angels *fell before the throne in their presence* – in the presence of the redeemed multitude, which includes the elders and creatures, as noted here.³⁸ In the presence of this multitude, the angels fell before the throne and *worshipped God!*

Worship is from a Greek word (*proskuneo*) that means to kiss the hand or the feet of someone as a sign of reverence; to venerate, pay homage (rooted in *faithfulness*³⁹) or do obeisance (a word that springs from *obedience*⁴⁰) to someone by kneeling or prostrating before them (in this case, God).⁴¹ How far the general Evangelical understanding of this word (*worship*) has fallen; today it is identified as being a time to sing repetitive choruses that are written about our feelings, being led by a group who are doing their best to emulate the world’s music and vocal stylings – and they *wist not that the LORD was departed from them* (Judges 16:20). The angelic hosts worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23).

The angels begin their worship of God with *amen* (truly, let it be so) in response to the multitude’s praise to the Lord for His salvation.⁴² They then ascribe several things to God for the *ages of the ages (for ever and ever)* as an indication of their reverence for Him: *blessing (praise)*, *glory* (not so much a radiance of light as the acclaim of others), *wisdom (sophia* – an eternally supreme intelligence), *thanksgiving* (gratitude expressed by others to God), *honor* (worthy of being held in high regard), *power* (the ability to act), and *might (power in action)*.⁴³ In true worship, the angelic hosts attribute to God what is due to Him and acknowledge His omnipotence (of infinite power) and omniscience (all knowing). They close their *worship* with: *let it be so (amen)*. Jesus taught His disciples to pray: “Thy will be

³⁸ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

³⁹ https://www.etymonline.com/word/homage#etymonline_v_12112

⁴⁰ https://www.etymonline.com/word/obeisance#etymonline_v_2410

⁴¹ Strong’s Online.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon; Vine’s “ability.”

done in earth, as *it is* in heaven” (Matthew 6:10); if we are living in the *will* of God, then the worship of the angels will find expression through us.



13. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 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.

After the multitude’s praise of God and the angels’ worship of Him, one of the twenty-four elders comes to John to speak with him; although the elders and living creatures are very much a part of the *multitude*, it seems that they must fulfill a unique role within the Body that permits them to retain this identity.

We read that the elder *answered* when we have no record of John asking a question; this is not typical for us in English. The Greek word (*apokrinomai*) shown as *answered* can also mean *to begin to speak* but always within the context of what has come before.⁴⁴ In this case, we have seen the multitude’s praise and the angels’ worship of God and, therefore, we can expect that what the elder is going to say to John will in some way relate to the multitude or angels. The elder poses two questions: 1) Who are these who have been clothed (*arrayed – periballo, clothed* in v.9) in white robes, and 2) where did they come from?⁴⁵ The elder’s questions focus on the vast multitude. John’s response is simply: *lord (sir – kurios, master), you have known (oida – to know with understanding; perfect tense – a past action)*, and this opens the way for the elder to explain everything to him.

The elder begins by telling John where this multitude has come from; *these are they which came* [are coming] *out of great* [*megas*] *tribulation* [*thlipsis* – literally, pressure or a pressing together; suffering brought on by circumstances].⁴⁶ When the Lamb opened the fifth seal, it revealed those who had been killed for the Word of God and for their witness; they were given *white robes* and told that they should wait as there were yet others who were about to be killed in the same manner (Revelation 6:9-11). This is during the time of the Antichrist who will *make war with the saints*

⁴⁴ Vine’s “answer.”

⁴⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁶ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

and will *overcome them* (Revelation 13:7). However, let's take a moment to understand the word *tribulation* (*thlipsis*) more thoroughly.

The word *tribulation* has become a source of error within the minds of many who try to wade through Revelation and end-time events. Within modern theology (and eschatology), the time of the Antichrist is identified as being the final week of Daniel's vision of seventy weeks; the last half of this seven-year period, they claim will be a time of *great tribulation*, and this will deal exclusively with Israel.⁴⁷ The latter thought seems to override everything else (in their minds) because it is founded upon an obsessive commitment to a dispensational view of the Scriptures. Earlier we considered the wealth of Scriptures that clarify for us that the Mosaic Covenant has been ended and the New Covenant implemented – a Covenant wherein there is no longer Jew and Gentile; dispensationalism calls for the Old Covenant to be reinstated (in some form) as the Lord deals exclusively with Israel during this final *week*.⁴⁸ This is not only unnecessary for a proper understanding of end-time events, it is really untenable to think that Jesus shed His blood in order to establish the New Covenant for all people only to have God set it aside in order to deal with Israel. The death and resurrection of Jesus **removed** the Old Covenant of Israel, and what God has done away with, we must not seek to restore (Hebrews 8:13); the work that Christ accomplished is an eternal deliverance from sin (if we appropriate it according to God's terms) – the role of the temple, priests and sacrifices has all been fulfilled and **ended** in Him (Hebrews 9:11-12). When Jesus died, the veil of the temple was split (*rent*) from top to bottom signifying that the way had been opened into the Holy of Holies through His death (Matthew 27:51); the work of the earthly high priest was ended, the sacrifice of animals for cleansing was over and, in 70 AD, the temple was destroyed thereby removing the means for the Jews to perpetuate what now were empty, fulfilled rituals (Hebrews 9:8-10).

A brief look at Daniel 9:27 reveals how dispensational theology can override the text of Scripture: "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" This *one week* is the last of Daniel's 70 weeks, and it is contended that it deals with the time of the Antichrist: "... the political ruler ... who **makes a covenant** with Israel ..." (emphasis added).⁴⁹ This is not a quote from an aberrant Evangelical source but comes from a book written by a faculty member of Dallas Theological

⁴⁷ <https://www.compellingtruth.org/end-times-tribulation.html>.

⁴⁸ <https://israelmyglory.org/article/the-tribulation-and-millennial-temples/>.

⁴⁹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 231.

Seminary and represents the standard position held by most Evangelicals today. Notice, however, that what Daniel wrote was that this leader would *confirm* a covenant.⁵⁰ To *confirm* a covenant does not mean to *make* one, it means to affirm or strengthen an already existing one;⁵¹ this would be done by providing assurances that an existing pledge has not changed. A careful consideration of this one word of Scripture shines a light on a significant error that has been perpetuated for many years: namely, that the Antichrist will sign a treaty with Israel at the beginning of the final week of Daniel. Simply by demonstrating that they are wrong on this one point throws their entire explanation of the 70th week into disarray; what has been taught as fact for many years by many Bible teachers who have merely parroted the musings of well-educated dispensational theologians, is now called into question. As is so often the case, dispensationalists have, once again, with their unwavering separation of Israel from the *ekklesia* that Jesus said that He would build, skewed a proper understanding of a text of Scripture.

As we have noted before (in our study of Chapter One of Revelation), this **confirmation** of a covenant finds fulfillment in the actions of Rome against Judea that concluded with Commander Titus destroying Jerusalem in 70 AD. In its conquests, Rome never set out to “Romanize” people; they would gain their submission and tax revenue, and then permit them to carry on as before. With this approach, Rome had brought Judea under their control, and had come to recognize Judaism as very unique in that they did not permit many gods, and so they allowed the Jews to continue with their Mosaic Covenant practices and Judaism became an accepted religion within the Roman Empire.⁵² Even as Commander Vespasian and Commander Titus were sent to quash the Judean rebellions, their approach was made on the basis that Judaism was a recognized religion and submission by the Jews would permit them to return to their traditions – the focus of their conquest was only to rout the Jewish rebels who were causing the problems. In effect, Vespasian and Titus both sought to *affirm* the existing understanding, or *covenant*, that, with submission to Rome’s authority, the Jews would be permitted to continue to practice their traditions in keeping with the Mosaic Covenant; even though Jesus had fulfilled and ended this Covenant, the Jews, who had rejected Him as their Messiah, continued to keep their traditions involving the temple, priests, sacrifices, etc. When Titus arrived at Jerusalem, there was a concentration of rebels (zealots) in the city

⁵⁰ BDB.

⁵¹ <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/confirm>

⁵² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_the_Roman_Empire

from elsewhere in Judea, and they had systematically eliminated every Jewish leader who sought peace with Rome through surrender.⁵³ Therefore, even though Titus endeavored to spare Jerusalem and the temple, the zealots forced his hand by making the temple their final place of refuge from the Roman army; by doing so, they desecrated the temple (it was an abomination to God for them to be there), and thus assured its destruction just as Jesus had predicted (Matthew 24:15). Within a period of 3½ years (from the order to subdue the rebels of Judea), the religious practices of the Jews were ended: the temple and Jerusalem were completely destroyed; what began as Rome's quest to remove the Jewish rebels and permit Jewish customs to continue, ended with the destruction of the core of Judaism at this time. Truly, in the middle of the final week of Daniel (3½ years), *the sacrifice* and the temple offerings were brought to an end (Daniel 9:27) and the Roman soldiers offered sacrifices to their ensigns (*abominations*) on the temple site – a further abomination and desecration to that of the rebels.⁵⁴

Having established that Rome's total destruction of Jerusalem attends to the first half of Daniel's final *week*, we see that the length of the Antichrist's rule fits into the final half-week: "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast [the Antichrist] rise up out of the sea ... and the dragon [Satan] gave him his power [*dunamis* – ability], and his seat, and great authority [*exousia*] ... and all the world wondered after the beast ... and they worshipped the beast ... and power [*exousia*] was given unto him to continue forty *and* two months [3½ years]" (Revelation 13:1-5).⁵⁵ The rule of the Antichrist will be a time of *great tribulation* for the saints of the Lord: "And it was given unto him [the beast/Antichrist] to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (Revelation 13:7a); the only two *saints* who will be invincible during this *war* of the Antichrist are the two witnesses who will be prophesying during most of the Antichrist's rule. However, the actions taken by the Antichrist against the Lord's faithful ones is **not** the greatest trouble that will come during the time of his rule.

Jesus said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye **might have peace**. In the world ye **shall have tribulation**: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Jesus had just spoken to His disciples about *things* that related to His departing from them and of the coming of the Comforter; He clarified with them what was pending so that, in Him, they *might have peace* – although *have*

⁵³ <https://www.ancient.eu/article/823/the-great-jewish-revolt-of-66-ce/>

⁵⁴ Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 6, Section 1.

⁵⁵ Strong's Online.

is in the subjunctive mood, being part of a purpose clause it means that the *peace* is a reality and is the reason that He spoke of the coming Comforter.⁵⁶ Jesus says that *in Him* we will enjoy peace but, by contrast, as we live in the *world* (*kosmos* – the workings of humanity under the control of Satan) we will be having *tribulation* – oppression, affliction and trouble.⁵⁷ In this case, *have* (*tribulation*) is in the indicative mood, which means that this is a statement of fact: this is a certainty!⁵⁸ However, Jesus goes on to say: Take courage (*be of good cheer* – a command to be continually encouraged!) – I have conquered (*overcome*: perfect tense – a completed past action that was in place before the creation of the universe [1 Peter 1:18-20]) the world.⁵⁹ What we must not miss from what Jesus said is that, even though He is Victor over the devil and his world system and despite His *peace* being our portion when we are *in Him*, in this life *tribulation* will be our lot.

As Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from their missionary trip, they stopped at the assemblies that they had just established “confirming [strengthening] the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue [persevere] in the faith, and that we must [it is necessary] through much tribulation [*polus thlipsis* – *many tribulations*] enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).⁶⁰ Paul ensured that these new Christians understood that trials and afflictions would be their portion (cp. 1Thessalonians 3:4). To the Romans Paul explained: “... we glory in tribulations [*thlipsis* (plural form)] also: knowing [*oida*: *having known*, understanding (perfect tense – completed past action)] that tribulation [*thlipsis*] worketh [produces] patience [*hupomone* – steadfastness, endurance]” (Romans 5:3).⁶¹ Jesus explained: “And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure [*hupomeno*, verb form of *hupomone* – to remain faithful in the face of trials (*thlipsis*)] unto the end [our death or the Lord’s return], the same [a demonstrative pronoun is used clearly identifying the *enduring one*: **this** is the one who] shall [will] be saved” (Mark 13:13).⁶² Paul says that we (when we have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus) will glory in tribulations because they produce the endurance necessary to remain faithful to the Lord unto the end so that we will be saved. Without any doubt, the Christian life will be fraught with tribulations, and Jesus told us that this is how it

⁵⁶ Strong’s Online; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

⁵⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁰ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

must be; however, what is often overlooked today is that He also told us that we are to count the cost before committing to being His disciples (Luke 14:27-33), and the promised tribulations are part of that *cost*.

Moreover, as Paul neared the end of his life and provided final instructions to Timothy, he included this: “Yea, and all that will [*are desiring to be*] live godly [*living in a godly manner*] in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution [*will be pursued with hostility*]” (2 Timothy 3:12).⁶³ Jesus said that we would be *hated* by everyone (*all*) because of His name, Paul identifies this hatred as being aggressive in some people, and John reveals that this aggression against the saints of the Lord will be particularly evident during the time of the Antichrist (Revelation 13:7).

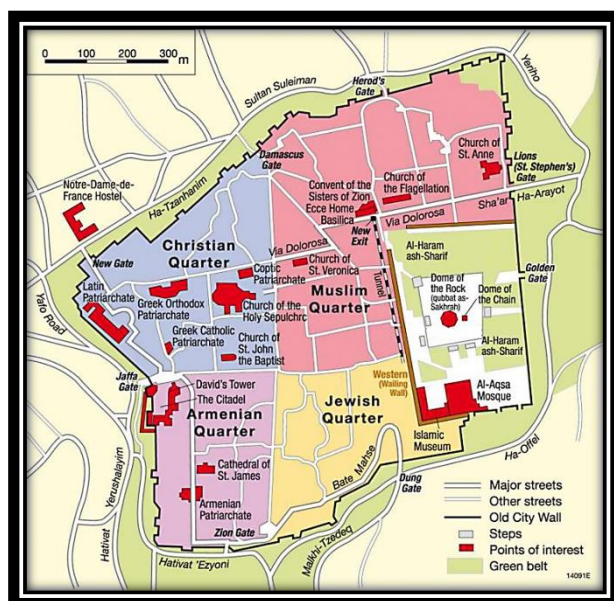
As Jesus expounded on the time of the destruction of the temple, of His return and the end of the world (Matthew 24:3), He made this statement: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). This is used by pre-trib dispensationalists as evidence that “God’s righteous judgments will then be poured out on an unbelieving world during the Tribulation ... This is the seventieth week of Daniel.”⁶⁴ However, what we will soon see is that there has been a failure to consider the context of Jesus’ statement. Just before this, Matthew recorded Jesus’ words concerning the abomination of desolation and these warnings: “Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day” (Matthew 24:16-20); this is the context for “then shall be great tribulation.” Consider Luke’s recording of this same time: “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles [peoples or nations; **not** *Gentiles*; consensus shows

⁶³ Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁶⁴ <https://www.wayoflife.org/about/statement.html>

that *ta ethnos* (article with plural form) refers to non-Jews or Gentiles; alone (as it is here), *ethnos* is peoples or nations⁶⁵], until the times of the Gentiles [same as before] be fulfilled” (Luke 21:20-24).⁶⁶ Luke provides a more specific context that focuses on the destruction of Jerusalem and the fact that it will not be a truly Jewish city until the workings of the nations is complete – i.e., when Jesus returns to establish His reign over all peoples (the Millennium). Most recently we have been told that Jerusalem is 60.5% Jewish, 36.5% Muslim, 1.8% Christian and 1.2% no religion;⁶⁷ the city is divided according to religious affiliations, yet the Jewish Quarter does not represent that largest portion of the city – it is still being overrun by *peoples* of all nations.

It is as Jesus is speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem that He says: “For then shall be great tribulation” Luke does not include this comment but goes directly



Modern-Day Jerusalem

into the events surrounding the Lord’s return. Nevertheless, the parallel between these two accounts (Matthew 24 and Luke 21) places this *great tribulation* (*megas thlipsis*) at the time of Jerusalem’s destruction. What do we know about this time within the city’s history?

The Jewish zealots were the rebels whom Rome sought to remove so that Judea could again be a land of peace under their rule. As the Roman forces suppressed them throughout the other towns of Judea, zealots from these

regions escaped to Jerusalem; the armies of the Roman Commander Titus arrived at Jerusalem just days before the celebration of Passover, a time when the city was crowded with visiting Jews.⁶⁸ The Roman armies surrounded the city and stopped all supplies from entering into it; as supplies began to run out, starvation became the inevitable end for the people and looting became rampant within Jerusalem. However, the zealots still took every opportunity to vex the Roman soldiers to the

⁶⁵ Friberg Lexicon; Liddell-Scott Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

⁶⁶ Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁶⁷ <https://www.ipost.com/israel-news/jerusalem-2019-facts-and-figures-591764>

⁶⁸ Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Book V, Chapter 13, Section 7; and Book V, footnote 9.

point that an assault was made by the Romans and the city fell. Most of those who were still alive in the city were slaughtered, the temple was burned and Jerusalem was leveled: “it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it [Jerusalem] had ever been inhabited” (brackets a part of the quote).⁶⁹ The zealots incited the Romans to attack the city and so starvation did not become the means of conquering it; the number of those who were taken captive undoubtedly exceeded those who would have survived the starvation tactic. Josephus, the Jewish historian who witnessed the destruction, estimated that 97,000 were taken captive and about 1.1 million died, most of whom were not residents of Jerusalem.⁷⁰

Jesus said that this would be a time of *great tribulation* “such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21); historians have noted that “the siege of Jerusalem [in AD 70] was probably the greatest single slaughter in ancient history.”⁷¹ Jesus then noted that unless this time of *great tribulation* had been *shortened*, no one would have been *saved*; there was a point in the assault when consideration was given to simply allow starvation to end the resistance in Jerusalem, which would have greatly lengthened the siege and dramatically reduced the possibility of survivors. However, the continual forays by the zealots angered the Roman legions so that an all-out attack took place and the city fell. The time of the siege was *shortened* (from a long period of starvation to a much quicker all-out assault) and almost 100,000 Jews were spared, even though most were taken into slavery. Jesus says that this time was *shortened* for the *elect’s sake*. As we look into Scripture, *elect* (Hebrew *bachiyir* or chosen) was used to speak of Jesus, the Messiah (Isaiah 42:1), and God also called Israel His *elect* (*bachiyir*) or chosen (Isaiah 45:4).⁷²

Let’s consider how this was worked out. Abraham was called by God with this promise: “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:3); Paul elaborated on this: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Galatians 3:16; this is a reference to Genesis 17:7 where Abraham is renamed and God confirms His covenant with him and *thy seed after thee*). Christ was that promise of blessing Who would come for all of the *families of the earth*; the promise

⁶⁹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_\(70_CE\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_(70_CE))

⁷⁰ Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Book VI, Chapter 9, Section 3.

⁷¹ <https://www.historynet.com/first-jewish-roman-war-siege-of-jerusalem.htm>

⁷² Strong’s Online; BDB.

was given to Abraham: “Abraham believed [active voice – he *believed* and acted upon it (faith)] God, and it was counted [reckoned – passive voice, God took Abraham’s faith (belief and obedience) and made it *righteousness* for him] unto him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3; Genesis 15:6).⁷³ This promise (Genesis 12:3) was reiterated by God to the *faithful* descendants of Abraham: to Isaac (Genesis 26:4), but not to Ishmael or Abraham’s other children, and to Jacob (Genesis 28:14), but not to Esau – the promise of the Redeemer (the Blessing Who would come for everyone) came through the line of faith and the physical lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (Jacob). Moses told the children of Israel of a time when the Lord would *raise up unto thee a Prophet* to Whom they were to be obedient (Deuteronomy 18:15) – the promise was still alive, and it continued to be for the faithful (obedient) descendants of Abraham. The OT prophets sharpened the focus of the fulfillment of the coming One, and during this time Jesus, as the One Who was promised, was called the Elect (Isaiah 42:1), as was Israel (Isaiah 45:4). What must become evident is that being *elect* has nothing to do with salvation (as the Calvinists would claim), for Jesus, Who is called **the Elect**, is fully God! Jesus, Who is God in the flesh, was the One Who was promised to come and deliver a death-blow to Satan, and this assurance was given while man was still in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15). Moreover, this promise flowed out of God’s preparation before creation to provide a Deliverer from sin – an evidence of God’s foreknowledge that man would choose to sin. Jesus, as God’s Elect, “took upon him the form of a servant [slave] ... and became obedient [submissive] unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:7-8);⁷⁴ Jesus, before the foundation of the world, was chosen to **serve** as the perfect Sacrifice so that, through His death, the power of sin and Satan might be broken (Matthew 20:28; 1 Peter 2:18-20; Romans 6:23; Hebrews 2:14).

Israel became the physical line through whom the Lord, as the promised Blessing, would take on a body of flesh; they held the revelation of God to the world in the Ten Commandments and the Law of Moses that included a priesthood and sacrificial system in order to provide cleansing from sin (it was God’s desire that they should become a kingdom of priests, serving Him by pointing the world to the Lord – Exodus 19:6), and they became the means of receiving and preserving God’s Word (the OT). God made salvation available to the world through Israel, but being chosen by God (*elect*) did not save them – their salvation came only through the exercise of personal faith in God that was demonstrated through belief in Jehovah and obedience

⁷³ Strong’s Online.

⁷⁴ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

to Him (just like our salvation). Consider this: 1) Jesus, as eternal God Who became a man, continues in the presence of God the Father and the heavenly hosts in a glorified body that still exhibits the price that He paid for His service (sacrifice) on behalf of mankind (Revelation 5:6) – He is forever the Lamb of God, His Elect (Revelation 22:1); 2) all of the reasons for Israel being called *elect* have been fulfilled: the Messiah (the Blessing to all of the families of the earth) came through them, the final sacrifice for sin has been made and so the Law of Moses has been ended (Hebrews 8:13); 3) under the New Covenant we can be counted as being among God's elect (chosen for His service) if we are *in Christ* by faith (believing and obeying the Lord), Who is **the** Elect (Ephesians 1:3-4). “But God be thanked, that ye were [*being*] the servants [*doulos* – slaves] of sin, but **ye have obeyed** from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free [passive voice; through our obedience, God will make us free] from sin, ye became the servants of [*douloo* – enslaved to; this is God's work in us (passive voice)] righteousness” (Romans 6:17-18).⁷⁵

At the time that Jesus said that the days for the fall of Jerusalem would be *shortened* for the sake of the *elect*, the Jews were still the people through whom God had chosen to accomplish His promise to Satan in the Garden (Genesis 3:15) – a promise that was still not fulfilled. As Jesus spoke of the coming destruction of Jerusalem, He did so with an eye of mercy toward those who had carried the promise forward for many generations. Indeed, the shortening of this time would only be for Israel the *elect* – chosen to be the ancestry of the Messiah Who would come to fulfill the Mosaic Laws and bring a blessing to all peoples; those who were faithful to the Lord Jesus would have given heed to His words to flee Jerusalem in great haste when the zealots began to desecrate the temple and the armies were surrounding the city (Matthew 24:15-18; Luke 21:20-21). Even during the destruction of Jerusalem, the center of Judaism, the Lord extended mercy to those who had provided a faithful lineage for the Messiah; this is the last occasion for Israel to be termed the *elect* by the Lord.

Returning to our text (Revelation 7:14), the elder advises John that this multitude standing before God, are those who are coming (*came*) out of *great tribulation*; the present tense verb (*came* is not correct) tells us that this great congregation of people from all nations is still growing at this time. These, who are coming out of this *great tribulation*, have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

⁷⁵ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

As John began *The Revelation*, he noted that it was directed to those who were *his servants* (slaves of God; Revelation 1:1) and that it is Jesus Who “loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Revelation 1:5). However, those coming out of this tribulation have washed their *robes* in the Lamb’s blood and made them *white* – there appears to be a difference. As John writes of the Lamb’s Bride, the *ekklesia* (Paul compares the relationship between Christ and His *ekklesia* to that of a husband and wife – Ephesians 5:25-32), he describes her this way: “And to her was granted [*it was given*] that she should be arrayed [clothed] in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness [*dikaioma*] of saints” (Revelation 19:8). The *fine linen* (the clothing of the Bride of Christ) is described as being the *righteousness of saints*; *dikaioma* does not speak of the *righteousness of Christ* (as we might think), but of a righteousness that comes through the fulfillment of what God requires: i.e., faithful obedience to His commandments. “... God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the **righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk ... after the Spirit**” (Romans 8:3b-4); it is our faithful, obedient walk as overcomers through the enablement of the Spirit of God that is the *fine linen* that has been purified in the blood of the Lamb. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from sin (1 John 1:7) and we are cleansed so that we can then live in faithful obedience to His Word (Titus 2:14) – our living is made white (righteous) through His blood! Faith in the work of the Lord Jesus brings cleansing from sin, but unless that faith produces works of obedience to the Lord, it will die (James 2:17); Jesus said that if we are loving Him, then we must also be living in obedience to His commands (John 14:15) – that is the *fine linen* that is identified as being *righteousness*. Therefore, this multitude, and all who are continuing to join them, have received the Lord’s cleansing from sin **and** have lived in faithfulness to Him. To the elder of Sardis who was on the verge of spiritual death, Jesus declared: “He that overcometh [the one who is both cleansed from sin and living faithfully unto God], the same shall be clothed in white raiment ...” (Revelation 3:5).

We saw earlier (looking at Revelation 7:9) that this multitude had been *clothed with white robes*; the perfect tense of *clothed* tells us that this is a single action that took place in the past and out of which flows ongoing consequences, and it is in the passive voice, which means that it is God Who has clothed them.⁷⁶ Even though Revelation 7:14 tells us that these have made their robes white in the blood of the

⁷⁶ Strong’s Online; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm#AORIST.

Lamb, that is not a contradiction to what we have just reviewed from verse nine. Consider Jesus' words: "If ye love [present tense (must be ongoing); subjunctive mood (not a certainty: we have a choice)] me, keep [imperative mood; a command (if we are loving Him: no choice, obedience is required)] my commandments" (John 14:15).⁷⁷ In other words, if we profess to have a love for the Lord (we have placed our faith in Him for salvation) then, Jesus says, we **must** live in obedience to His commands. John picked up on these words of Jesus: "And hereby we do know [present tense; *are knowing*] that we know [perfect tense (a completed, one-time action); *have known*] him [God], if we keep [present tense, conditional clause: *are attending carefully to*] his commandments" (1 John 2:3).⁷⁸ If we have come to know God (a single, completed action with continuing results), then the indication of this past action will be a continuous obedience to the Lord's commandments – the obedience is our choice (the subjunctive mood of *keep* affirms that this is a conditional clause). To the Romans, Paul wrote: "*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1); the *no condemnation* comes based solidly upon being *in Christ Jesus* (they have placed their faith in Him for salvation) and is also dependent upon a continuous living according to the Spirit of God (obedience). Therefore, unless these two fundamentals are present (both faith in Christ and obedience to Him), that individual remains under God's condemnation! John explained further that if someone should say that he has known God but he is not living in obedience to Him, then he is a liar (1 John 2:4); Jesus made it clear that it is through careful obedience to Him that we demonstrate our love for Him (John 14:15).

If we take what we have just considered and move it into the life of an *overcomer* for the Lord, then it is clear that the multitude being clothed in white by God (Revelation 7:9) and having washed their robes in the Lamb's blood to make them white (v. 14) is not contradictory. As someone believes on what Jesus has done to pay for his sins, he steps out of darkness and into the light, and is clothed in the righteousness that come from the Lord. Moreover, at that moment he has also embarked on a life of obedience to the Lord: "For we are his [God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). By actively believing, we become new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) who then must commit to *walk* (in Ephesians

⁷⁷ Strong's Online.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

2:10 this word is in a result clause – God has purposed that we are to *walk* in the *works* for which we have been *created in Christ*, but being in the subjunctive mood it also clarifies that it must be our choice to so *walk*⁷⁹) in the *good works of righteousness and true holiness* for which we have been made new (Ephesians 4:24). We must **choose** to walk in keeping with our new standing with God, confessing our sins in order to remain in a cleansed relationship with Him (1 John 1:9), so that through the working of the Holy Spirit Who is abiding within us, the righteousness of the Law of God will *be fulfilled in us* (Romans 8:4) – the accomplishment of God’s purposes in us. Significantly, *fulfilled* is in the passive voice (this is something that God must work in us) **and** the subjunctive mood (we must permit Him to work in us);⁸⁰ for our lives to express God’s righteousness is something that only He can do for us, yet unless we choose to allow Him to accomplish His purposes in us, He will **not** do it! This is the clarification of what may appear to be a contradiction between Revelation 7:9 and 14: being *clothed with white robes* is something that can only be done by the Lord (and will take place once, as expressed by the perfect tense) **and** the purification of our *robes* in the *blood of the Lamb* will only take place if we permit Him to do so – a continual cleansing as we *walk* with Him (Matthew 26:28).

Consider carefully Paul’s words to Timothy: “[God] Who will [*is desiring to*] have all men [*all and men* are both plural!] to be saved [passive voice – this is God’s work], and to come [active voice – the responsibility of *all men*] unto the knowledge [a full knowledge] of the truth. For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for [*on behalf of*] all [plural; as earlier: *all men*], to be testified in due time [*a testimony in our own times*]” (1 Timothy 2:4-6).⁸¹ Jesus paid the price for sin (*ransom*) for everyone, which is why God desires *all men* to be saved; “for God so loved the world [*kosmos* – humanity] that He gave ...” (John 3:16) – it was God’s love for all of mankind that brought Jesus, the eternal Word, from heaven. As John the Baptist looked upon Jesus, he exclaimed: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin [*hamartia* (singular), not so much the sinful acts, but the body of sin that separates us from God] of the world [*kosmos* – humanity]” (John 1:29).⁸² Jesus said: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man [*anyone*] eat [*may eat* – this is a conditional clause, which makes this a choice that we must make; it speaks of

⁷⁹ Strong’s Online; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

⁸⁰ Strong’s Online.

⁸¹ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁸² Friberg Lexicon.

choosing to receive spiritual nourishment] of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for [*for the sake of*] the life of the world [*kosmos* – humanity]” (John 6:51).⁸³ Jesus gave His body upon the cross for the *life of humanity* (*kosmos*); yet it is clear that all of humanity is spiritually lifeless: “Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin [*hamartia*] entered into the world [*kosmos*], and death [both physical and spiritual] by sin; and so death passed upon [*extended to*] all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12);⁸⁴ therefore, Jesus died in order to bring *life* to a humanity that was destined for eternal separation from Him.

As Jesus spoke to the Father concerning His eleven disciples (Judas, the son of perdition, being excluded), He said: “I have given them thy word; and the world [*kosmos*] hath hated them, because they are not of the world [*kosmos* (the order of humanity under Satan)], even as I am not of the world [*kosmos*]” (John 17:14).⁸⁵ This tells us plainly that Jesus died for a humanity that stood against Him: “while we were yet sinners [*hamartolos*, those who are in opposition to God], Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).⁸⁶ The warning that is given to those who are in Christ by faith is this: “Love [a command] not the world [*kosmos* (the order of lost humanity)], neither the things *that are* in the world [*kosmos*]. If any man love [*might be loving* (conditional clause – it is our choice)] the world [*kosmos*], the love of the Father is not [an absolute; the indicative mood makes this a statement of fact based upon the condition given (a love for the world)] in him” (1 John 2:15).⁸⁷ Clearly, God’s love for this sinful world (*kosmos*; humanity – not the world system) was so great that He gave His only Son to pay the price for sin (*hamartia*) so that everyone (singular) who is believing in Him will not *perish* (this is a *result* clause, therefore the subjunctive mood indicates that the *believing* [the *cause*] will not perish) but is having (the second part of the *result* clause; present tense) life everlasting (John 3:16, my paraphrase).⁸⁸ This text succinctly presents two themes: 1) **God’s intention** – that *whosoever* is believing, and so will not perish and is holding everlasting life, and 2) **the choice that faces every *whosoever*** – to be persuaded of God’s truth so as to live in faithful obedience to Him (the essence of *believe*; John 3:36). Jesus died

⁸³ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT;
https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/conditional_sentences.htm#CONDITIONAL_PDF.

⁸⁴ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁸⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁸⁶ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁸⁷ Strong’s Online.

⁸⁸ Strong’s Online; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

so that everyone might have access to the new life that He has made available to everyone who has been separated from God by sin; yet we must not gloss over the choice that we all face concerning Jesus' sacrifice.

Returning to our text again (Revelation 7:14), the multitudes are those who have chosen faith in the Lord Jesus Christ **and** have chosen to live in obedience to His commands. These two (faith and obedience) work together, and the loss of either one will lead to eternal separation from God: 1) faith without works of obedience identifies a faith that is dead and unable to give life (James 2:17); 2) works without faith is either an attempt to earn salvation (which is futile) or it is an effort to maintain a façade of righteousness when the living Foundation for those works is missing (Matthew 7:22-23; Hebrews 3:12).



15. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

After explaining to John who these are who make up this great multitude, the elder goes on to provide a greater insight into their eternal situation.

Therefore tells us that what follows is directly linked to what has come before. It is because these saints are wearing the white robes of God's salvation and have received the cleansing of the Lord Jesus that they are now standing before God's throne (Revelation 7:9, 14) – a cleansing that is accompanied by faithful obedience to the Lord (Matthew 10:22). The fact that they are coming out of *great tribulation* and are dressed in white speaks to their faithful endurance in the Lord through times of oppression. Jesus made it very clear that simply *believing* was not sufficient: "... he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13).⁸⁹ It is only as we remain faithful to the Lord through the tribulations (*endure*) that we have been promised that the Lord will save us – **after** *the end* has come! The warning is this: "Take heed, brethren [the writer is addressing those who are believing], lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [*apistia* – no belief; faithless], in departing [becoming apostate (the active voice identifies this as being the action of the one who no longer believes)] from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12).⁹⁰ These who are now standing before God's throne have remained faithful to the Lord despite the persecution that they have faced. It is interesting that Jesus openly declared: "In the

⁸⁹ Strong's Online.

⁹⁰ Strong's Online.

world ye shall have [are having; present tense, indicative mood – this is an existing statement of fact] tribulation [*thlipsis*]" (John 16:33b);⁹¹ however, He then provides encouragement: *be encouraged* (present tense, imperative mood – a command to never be afraid), *I have overcome* (it is a fact [indicative mood] that God predetermined that Jesus [the Word become flesh] would pay the price for sin once [1 Peter 1:19-21; Hebrews 7:27], and the ongoing consequence of this is that there has always been a way for man to be reconciled with God [perfect tense]) *the world* [*kosmos* – the order of humanity that abides under the authority of Satan] (John 16:33c; a literal translation).⁹² The elder has identified this multitude as being *overcomers* through what Christ has done for them.

Notice that this multitude has been saved for service: they are serving the Lord continually! We might wonder how we can *serve* God – the One Who created us. *Serve* (*latreuo*) can be applied to someone who has been hired to carry out a specific task, or, particularly within the NT, it can also refer to spiritual service or worship.⁹³ When John first entered into heaven to record those things that were yet to come, he saw four living creatures who “rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty” (Revelation 4:8) – these creatures were *serving* the Lord God. *Worship* (*proskuneo*) means to bow before someone in order to kiss their feet, the hem of their garment or the ground in front of them as a demonstration of reverence and respect.⁹⁴ If our service shows our reverence for the Lord as our Creator and Redeemer, then our service is also an act of worship to Him.

This vast, growing multitude of blood-bought saints is standing before God in heaven, and they are continually serving Him in His heavenly temple (*naos*).⁹⁵ In truth, they are continuing in heaven what they began on earth. “What? know ye not that your body is the temple [*naos*] of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify [to praise and honor] God in your body [His temple], and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).⁹⁶ Living in faithfulness to the Lord springs from continually believing in Him and obeying Him (John 14:15; James 2:17); only when both are active within us can we serve Him within our bodies, which are His temples. For the overcomers (who make up this multitude) such service to their Savior will

⁹¹ Strong’s Online; Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁹² Strong’s Online; Gingrich Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁹³ Strong’s Online.

⁹⁴ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁹⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁹⁶ Strong’s Online.

bridge death to continue without interruption in heaven; we are being given a glimpse into the everlasting life of the overcomer. The One Who is sitting upon the throne of heaven will (future tense) live (*skenoo*) with the overcomers; when John is given a vision of the New Jerusalem, he is told: “the tabernacle [*skene*] of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God” (Revelation 21:3).⁹⁷ The Greek words used in both cases (*skenoo* and *skene*) harken back to Israel’s construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness; Jehovah declared this to be where He would dwell among Israel (Exodus 25:8), and its portability ensured that His presence was always in their midst as they journeyed to the Promised Land. In the New Jerusalem that is in the new heaven and earth, God will live in the midst of His redeemed people – this will be the everlasting *tabernacle*, God’s dwelling place with those whom He created in His own image, who placed their faith in His provision for their sin, and who have lived faithfully for Him.



16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

This begins with a quote from Isaiah: “They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them” (Isaiah 49:10a). The Lord declared to Israel: “... if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day ... Cursed *shall be* thy basket and thy store ... And thy heaven that *is* over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that *is* under thee *shall be* iron. The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust ...” (Deuteronomy 28:15, 17, 23-24); a neglect of the Word of the Lord would bring hunger, smiting heat, and thirst. Yet, before this the Lord said: “... if thou shalt hearken diligently ... to observe *and* to do all [the Lord’s] commandments ... [then] the LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand” (Deuteronomy 28:1, 12a). The Lord promised Israel prosperity (neither *hunger* nor *thirst*) if they would live in obedience to His commands; Isaiah was writing at a time when Israel was in rebellion against the Lord, but he anticipated a

⁹⁷ Ibid.

day when the Lord's people would no longer be under oppression either from their enemies or the scorching heat of the sun.

As we come to the new heaven and earth and the New Jerusalem, we are told of a *pure river of water of life* that is flowing out from the throne of God and the Lamb, and the *tree of life* that is continually bearing fruit (Revelation 22:1-2) – *hunger* and *thirst* are past for *there shall be no more curse* (Revelation 22:3). Nevertheless, this eternal place of blessing is not everyone's inheritance: "Blessed *are* they that do [*are doing* (present tense)] his commandments, that they may have right [*their authority will be*] to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city [the New Jerusalem]" (Revelation 22:14).⁹⁸ This everlasting place, where God is dwelling with His children, is only available to those who faithfully live in obedience to Him in this life (Matthew 24:13; John 14:15). Within the New Jerusalem there *shall be no night ... neither light of the sun* (Revelation 22:5); the sun, which is central to our life on this earth, will not be a part of this eternal city because God and the Lamb are its light and the focus of our eternal dwelling (Revelation 21:23).

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11), and went on to say that He is gathering **one flock** and that they would have **one Shepherd** (John 10:16⁹⁹). The Lamb of God, Who is in the midst of the throne of God (Revelation 5:6), will *feed* them; *feed* is from the Greek word *poimaino*, which means *to shepherd*.¹⁰⁰ The Lamb Who is now a Shepherd, will provide a shepherd's care for those who are His own – a care that goes so much farther than simply feeding. The Psalmist said: "The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters" (Psalm 23:1-2); *still waters* is less about the waters being placid and more about this being a time of refreshing and rest for those whom He is shepherding.¹⁰¹ Jesus said: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh [*is coming*] to me shall never [*will never, ever*; the *ou* and *me* in Greek coming together with the subjunctive mood of *hunger* make this a very strong negative*] hunger; and he that believeth [*is believing* (present tense, active voice – *he* must be believing)] on me shall never [*will never, ever* *] thirst" (John 6:35).¹⁰² If we choose to abide in Christ (understanding the full requirement of a continuous faith and obedience) then we are assured that we will absolutely never be either hungry or thirsty spiritually;

⁹⁸ Strong's Online; Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁹⁹ The KJV translators use the word *fold* twice in this verse; the first time it is correct (*aule* – an enclosure where the sheep were kept at night) but the second is not: *poimne* – is a flock NOT a *fold*; Strong's Online.

¹⁰⁰ Strong's Online.

¹⁰¹ BDB.

¹⁰² Strong's Online; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-negation.htm.

as Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman, He drew her thinking from the water of the well to the spiritual refreshing that He could provide: “Whosoever drinketh [*is drinking*] of this water [the physical water of Jacob’s well] shall [will (future tense)] thirst again: But whosoever drinketh [*should drink*; the subjunctive mood identifies this as a possibility, and the *whosoever* has a choice to make] of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst [*will never, ever thirst*; *]” (John 4:13-14).¹⁰³ Jesus, the Lamb, is the Shepherd Who will care for His own (*feed* – shepherd) and provide them with eternal refreshing (*living waters*).

Every provision will be made for the well-being of those who are dwelling with the Lord in eternity. However, beyond that, God will *wipe away every tear* (*all tears* – both words are singular in the Greek) from the eyes of His children.¹⁰⁴ This is reiterated in Revelation 21:4 – “And God shall wipe away all tears [*every tear*] from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”¹⁰⁵ This multitude of *overcomers* will be among those with whom the Lord will abide for eternity. The question with which we are continually faced throughout the Revelation is this: will we be among those who are believing in the Lord and living in faithful obedience to Him to the end of our lives on this earth? The Lord will **never** force us to live for Him, that is something that we must choose to do; Revelation makes the consequences of our choice very clear: if we are faithful to the Lord in this life, then we will inherit an eternity in the presence of our Savior; if we choose our own way, then there will be an eternity with Satan in the Lake of Fire.

This overview provides us with a glimpse into the working of the Lord throughout history in drawing His people (those who choose to live in faithfulness to Him) together into a vast congregation (or flock) who will forever enjoy His presence and be cared for by the Good Shepherd, the Lamb of God. It is placed between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals, and it provides comfort and assurance to the Lord’s faithful ones that even during a time of great physical turmoil on earth, everything is unfolding according to God’s ultimate plan. As we remain faithful to the Lord in all things in this life, we can rest in His promise of the eternal blessings that await. “He that overcometh [*is overcoming*] shall [will (future tense)] inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (Revelation 21:7).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁰⁴ Stephanus 1550 NT.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Stephanus 1550 NT.

God's promise to His faithful ones is that they will inherit eternal blessings (Colossians 1:12), but He also promises that while on this earth, His faithful ones will be subject to tribulation (John 16:33). What assurance and encouragement we are able to access in the Lord Jesus Christ!