# The 144,000 as First Fruits of an Accumulating Harvest

from the series: **Tribulation to Glory — The Trail of the Saints**

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## I. Introduction

**Principles:** A wise person once said that **the Bible alone is the standard** — *"Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support"* — from *"the Bible only."* (GC 595.1). The same person was equally clear that long-held interpretations are not automatically correct — *"The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people is **not a proof that our ideas are infallible**. Age will not make error into truth."* (CW 35.2). **This series applies both principles:** If the Bible text says something different from what we were taught, the text wins.

**My thesis:** The 144,000 are literal Israelites, the first fruits of the harvest of the earth. The great multitude is the entire harvest, gathered in stages and shown complete in Rev 7:9-17 .

**Also under study:** The "sea of glass" company of Rev 15:2-4 and the surviving saints with the resurrected at Christ's 2nd coming - all part of the same harvest of saints from planet earth.

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## II. The 144,000 Defined ( **Rev 7:1-8** )

**John speaking** => Revelation 7:1-4 ... I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth, or on the sea, or on any tree. 2 I saw another angel ascend from the sunrise, having the seal of the living God. He cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given to harm the earth and the sea, 3 saying, “Don’t harm the earth, the sea, or the trees, until we have sealed **the bondservants of our God** on their foreheads!” 4 I heard the number of **those who were sealed**, **one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel**:

- 144,000 Israelites, on the earth, were sealed before the 4 winds of strife were released. We understand this to be sometime prior to the all the tribulation leading up to the enforcement of the "mark of the beast".
- The following 3 verses( Rev 7:5-8 ) show 12,000 Israelites chosen from each of the 12 tribes. We also see a unique tribal list - different from any previous tribal list.
- Because of all these unique descriptions, I find it impossible to believe that these descriptions are symbolic, rather than literal. These must be real Israelites from the real tribes of Israel - not Gentiles(non-Israelites). Strangely, most people believe this is all symbolic.

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## III. The 144,000 in Heaven ( **Rev 14:1-5** )

**John speaking** => Revelation 14:1 I saw, and behold, **the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him a number, one hundred forty-four thousand, having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads.**

- Here we see the 144,000 with Jesus, the Lamb, on Mount Zion. The old testament mentions Mt. Zion as being the location of Jerusalem in the nation of Israel. However, Hebrews 12:22 refers to Mt. Zion as "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." So, is this scene in Heaven or on earth in the nation of Israel? Some say it is on earth. Let's consider what that would mean:
    - **Can Zion in 14:1 be earthly?** Yes, but that seems textually awkward because of it's placement just before the 3 angel's messages, which is before the Beast's crisis and also awkward with the heavenly context of verses 2-3(see below) and also awkward with the "Lamb standing on the mount Zion"

(verse 1) with the 144k unless this at the beginning of the 1000 years (Zech 14) and that would also be awkward with the textual context.

- **Can Zion in 14:1 be heavenly?** Yes, let's read the next two verses below:

Revelation 14:2-3 I heard a sound from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of a great thunder. The sound which I heard was like that of harpists playing on their harps. 3 They sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders...

- Where were the harpists that were playing and singing the the "new song". They were "before the throne" - God's throne, in Heaven. So, the most natural reading of the 144,000 with Jesus on Mount Zion would be in Heaven - not the earth.

Revelation 14:3 They sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. **No one could learn the song** except the one hundred forty-four thousand, those who had been **redeemed out of the earth.**

- **Why could no one else learn the song?** See => https://sidnash.org/docs/TheNewSong.html
- **What does it mean** to be "**redeemed out of the earth**"? In verse 4, we will see they "were **redeemed by Jesus from among men**". In Rev 7:1-8 we saw they were on the earth when they were sealed. Now, we see them in Heaven. How did they get there? There is no mention anywhere, or even a hint, that they died. So, they must have been translated without death.
- **What is the timing of this scene?** Is this after Christ's 2nd coming or were they translated early, like Enoch( Gen 5:24 ) and Elijah( 2Kings 2:11 )? We will find the answer later, after we discover the timing of the scene in Rev 15:2-4 . For now, let's read on to see what else defines who the 144,000 are:

Revelation 14:4-5 These are those who were **not defiled with women**, for they are virgins. These are **those who follow the Lamb wherever he goes**. These were **redeemed by Jesus from among men**, the **first fruits to God and to the Lamb**. 5 In their mouth was found no lie, for **they are blameless**.

- "**defiled with women" -** What's that about? Because of the use of the word "**defiled**", this is the most likely meaning:
  - They were not seduced(**defiled**) by false religious systems. Throughout Revelation, "fornication" with women consistently describes religious-political corruption ( Rev. 17:2; 18:3 ). The same pattern appears in Numbers 25:1-4, where Israel's literal seduction by Moabite women was simultaneously religious defection. Paul uses the identical image in 2 Cor. 11:2, and James 4:4 makes the equivalence explicit. Conclusion: **The 144,000 refused seduction to religious-political corruption entirely.**
- They "**follow the Lamb wherever he goes.**" This is interesting - they are always with Jesus. That makes sense since they were hand-picked by Jesus in Rev 7:1-8 . We'll think about this further in future studies in this series...
- They "were **redeemed by Jesus from among men**" - hand-picked by Jesus.
- "**they are blameless.**" This is likely why they could be sealed( Rev 7:4 ) without trial by the Beast.
- They were "the **first fruits to God and to the Lamb**". "first fruits" is an agricultural harvest term. We see God's instruction to Moses in Exodus 23:19 => *"The first of the first fruits of your ground you shall **bring into the house of Yahweh your God**."* Likewise, the 144,000 are *"the first fruits to God and to the Lamb"* brought into Heaven - the house of God and Jesus. Of course, the first fruits are only the first part of the harvest, meaning there are more fruits to soon come. What are the next fruits? We find them in Rev 15:2-4 .

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## IV. The Sea of Glass Company ( **Rev 15:2-4** )

Revelation 15:2 I saw something like **a sea of glass** mixed with fire, and those who overcame the beast, his image, and the number of his name, standing on the **sea of glass**, having harps of God.

- Revelation 4:6 *"**Before the throne** was something like **a sea of glass**..."* From this we know that the **location of this group** in Rev 15:2-4 **is in heaven**, "***Before the throne***" of God.
- **The identity of this group** are "*those who overcame the beast, his image, and the number of his name*". These refused the mark of the Beast. Were they martyred? During what time period is this scene?

Revelation 15:3-4 They sang the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God, the Almighty! Righteous and true are your ways, you King of the nations. Who wouldn’t fear you, Lord, and glorify your name? For you only are holy...

- For more about their songs, see => https://sidnash.org/docs/MosesAndLambSongs.html

Revelation 15:4 ... For all **the nations will come and worship before you**. For your righteous acts have been revealed.”

- That is a remarkable declaration from people who were just persecuted by those same nations. It reflects **Isaiah 45:23** , quoted by Paul in **Romans 14:11** and **Philippians 2:10-11** — *"Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess."* During Christ's reign, **Zechariah 14:16** shows it beginning — the surviving nations streaming annually to worship the King.

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## V. Timing of the 144,000 on Zion and the Sea of Glass Company in Heaven - when does this happen?

**The Sea of Glass Company timing is certain.** Why? Since this scene is in Rev 15:2-4, it is sandwiched between Rev 15:1 and 15:5-6 . Why does that matter? Consider what that looks like:

- Revelation 15:1 ***I saw*** *another great and marvelous sign in the sky:* ***seven angels having the seven last plagues****, for in them God’s wrath is finished.*
- Revelation 15:2-4 ***I saw*** *something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and* ***those who overcame the beast, his image, and the number of his name****...*
- Revelation 15:5-6 *After these things* ***I looked****, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.* ***The seven angels who had the seven plagues came out****...*

**Did you see what happened there?** Verse 1 announces the seven last plagues. Verse 5-6 shows the continued process to release them. And "**those who overcame the beast, his image, and the number of his name**" sit between those two markers, so this "sea of glass" company is obviously in Heaven before the first plague falls and yet, they were obviously living on earth during the mark of the beast crisis while refusing("overcame the beast") the "mark". How else would they have "**overcame the beast...**"?

**From this we know the timing** of the Rev 15:2-5 sea of glass scene. It was just before the 7 last plagues and during or just after the mark of the beast enforcement.

**Does this help us to understand the timing** of Rev 14:1-5 where the sealed 144,000 were seen with Jesus in Heaven? **Yes!**

- In Rev 14:3-4, we see the 144,000 *"**redeemed out of the earth**... **by Jesus from among men**, the **first fruits to God and to the Lamb**.*
- In Rev 15:2-4, we saw that *"**those who overcame the beast...**"* were also redeemed out of the earth as

additional(not first) "fruits" of the same harvest.

**From this we know** that the "first fruits" - the 144,000 - arrived in Heaven prior to the sea of glass company and the 7 last plagues. First fruits are always harvested before the rest. Do we have an additional timing marker for the 144,000? **Yes!**

**Notice where that 144,000 scene**( Rev 14:1-5 ) **sits.** It comes immediately before the three angels' messages ( Rev 14:6-13 ), which warn the world about the beast and his mark, and those messages lead into the harvest( Rev 14:14-20 ) and the sea of glass ( Rev 15:2-4 ). Revelation sometimes looks ahead, as in Rev 7:9-17 and Rev 14:14-20 , but here the markers are chronological. **Due to this, we see that the 144,000 are gathered in Heaven before the warning goes out.**

**But, is there precedence for translation without seeing death prior to Christ's Second Coming?! Yes** -- Enoch and Elijah:

- Genesis 5:24 Enoch walked with God, and he was not found, for God took him.
    - Hebrews 11:5 By faith Enoch was taken away, so that he wouldn't see death, and he was not found, because **God translated him**....
- 2 Kings 2:11 ... **Elijah went up** by a whirlwind **into heaven**.

**Additionally, notice this comparison** of the 144,000 with Enoch:

- In Rev 14:5 we are told this about the 144,000: "In their mouth was found no lie, for **they are blameless**."
- In Heb 11:5 we are told this about Enoch: " **God translated him**. For he has had testimony given to him that before his translation **he had been well pleasing to God**.

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## VI. Are the Sea of Glass Company Martyred?

Consider this evidence:

1. Revelation 6:9-11 shows martyred souls already under the altar, given white robes, and told to wait.
2. Revelation 14:13 says, *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on... they will rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them."* This looks forward from that point, immediately after the three angels' messages and before the harvest vision. The blessing falls on those who die faithfully during the beast period, likely the same company standing on the sea of glass.
3. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 describes saints who live through the beast period and are still alive when Jesus returns. If the company of Revelation 15:2-4 were not martyred, why would some survivors go to Heaven early while others had to wait for the Lord's return? This makes no sense to me.

**But, is there precedence for a resurrection prior to Christ's Second Coming?! Yes**:

- Matthew 27:52-53 The tombs were opened, and **many bodies of the holy ones who had fallen asleep were raised**; and coming out of the tombs after [Christ's] resurrection, they entered into the holy city and appeared to many.

**On this basis, I hold** that they were martyred for refusing the mark of the beast. **Could I be wrong** about this? **Yes**, but if I am wrong, they were translated without death just like the 144,000. Either way, they are still part of the harvest and they are for sure standing before the throne of God after refusing the Beast's mark, prior to the outpouring of the 7 last plagues.

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## VII. The Resurrected Saints Since Adam at Christ's Return

- John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "**I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will still live, even if he dies**.
- John 6:40 This is the will of the one who sent me(Jesus), that **everyone who sees the Son, and believes in him**, should have eternal life; and **I will raise him up at the last day.**
- John 5:28-29 Don't marvel at this, for the hour comes, in which **all that are in the tombs will hear his**(Jesus') **voice**, and will come out; those who have done good, to **the resurrection of life**; and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.
- 1 Corinthians 15:52 ... the trumpet will sound, and **the dead will be raised incorruptible**
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14,16 I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning **them which are asleep**... 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so **them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring**(back to Heaven) **with him**(Jesus)... 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and **the dead in Christ shall rise first**...

**These must be an additional part of the harvest of the earth.**

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## VIII. The Surviving Saints at Christ's Return

- 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 ... **We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye**, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.
- Philippians 3:20-21 For **our citizenship is in heaven**, from where we also wait for a Savior, the Lord **Jesus Christ; who will change the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of his glory**...
- 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 For God didn't appoint us to wrath, but to the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that, **whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him**.
- John 14:1-3 "Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many homes. If it weren't so, I would have told you. **I am going to prepare a place for you**. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again, and will receive you to myself; that where I am, you may be there also**.
- Matthew 24:31 He will send out **his angels** with a great sound of a trumpet, and **they will gather together his chosen ones** from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.
- 1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it is not yet revealed what we will be. But we know that, when he is revealed, **we will be like him**; for we will see him just as he is.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18 Then **we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together** with them in the clouds, **to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.** 18 Wherefore **comfort one another with these words.**

**These must be an additional part of the harvest of the earth.**

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## IX. The Great Multitude ( **Rev 7:9-17** )

Revelation 7:9-10 ... I looked, and behold, **a great multitude,** which no man could number, **out of every nation and of all tribes, peoples, and languages,** standing **before the throne and before the Lamb**, dressed in white robes, with **palm branches in their hands**. 10 They cried with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation be to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

- Such a great number of people that no one could count them - from all peoples of the earth - **the entire harvest of saints** from planet earth. These seem to be comprised of:
    1. **The "first fruits" chosen from all the tribes of Israel**, totaling precisely 144,000 - Rev 7:1-8; 14:1-5 .
    2. "**those who overcame the beast, his image, and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass**" - Rev 15:2-4 .
    3. **The resurrected saints**, ever since Adam, at Christ's return - 1Thess 4:13-18 .
    4. **The Beast-surviving saints**, taken up with the resurrected to be with Christ at His return - forever - 1Thess 4:17 .
- The **palm branches** belong to the Feast of Booths ( Lev 23:40 ), the harvest festival, which fits this very scene -- the ingathering of the harvest of saints.
- That is why **the Great Multitude is the whole harvest.** It includes the first fruits, the martyrs who rose from graves, the faithful who died in their beds, and the living saints changed in a moment.

Revelation 7:11-12 All the angels were standing around the throne, the elders, and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before his throne, and worshiped God, 12 saying, "Amen! Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might, be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

Revelation 7:13 One of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and from where did they come?"

Revelation 7:14-17 I told him, "My lord, you know." He said to me, "These are those who came out of great tribulation. They washed their robes, and made them white in the Lamb's blood.

- **These following witnesses broaden the scope** of ***"great tribulation"*** beyond one end-time window:
    - Revelation 1:9 — John describes himself as already ***"in the tribulation"*** in the first century.
    - John 16:33 : Jesus tells his disciples, "In this world you will have **tribulation**. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
    - Acts 14:22 — *"through **many tribulations** we must enter the kingdom of God"* — Paul uses the same Greek root as the universal description of the saints' path across all ages.
    - Daniel 12:1 — deliverance is tied to **every name written in the book**, a covenant identity marker, not an event-specific one.
- **Washed robes (7:14):** A completed cleansing, not a specific event. **Related texts:**
    - Hebrews 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, **purge your conscience from dead works** to serve the living God?
    - 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he(Father) is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.**
    - Revelation 1:5-6 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. **Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood**, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; **to him be glory and dominion for ever** and ever. Amen.

Revelation 7:15-17 Therefore **they are before the throne of God, they serve him day and night in his temple.** He who sits on the throne will spread his tabernacle over them. 16 **They will never be hungry, neither thirsty any more; neither will the sun beat on them, nor any heat**; 17 for **the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shepherds them**, and leads them to springs of waters of life. And **God will wipe away every tear from their eyes**."

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## X. Conclusion

**The thesis:** The 144,000 are literal Israelites, the first fruits of the harvest of the earth. The great multitude is the entire harvest, gathered in stages and shown complete in Rev 7:9-17 .

**The pattern we found:** In an agricultural harvest, the first fruits are brought in first, and then the harvest continues to be gathered until it is complete. Revelation follows that pattern:

1. **The first fruits.** 144,000 Israelites, sealed on the earth ( Rev 7:1-8 ) and seen with the Lamb in Heaven ( Rev 14:1-5 ), "redeemed from among men, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb." Since they were on the earth when sealed, and in Heaven when next seen, and nothing in the text hints that they died, they were most likely translated, as Enoch and Elijah were.
2. **The next fruits.** "Those who overcame the beast, his image, and the number of his name," standing before the throne on the sea of glass ( Rev 15:2-4 ). The bracketing of 15:1 and 15:5-6 places them in Heaven before the seven last plagues. They were most likely martyred ( Rev 6:9-11; 14:13 ), though if they were translated, they are still part of the same harvest.
3. **The resurrected saints since Adam.** The dead in Christ, who rise first at His return ( John 5:28-29; 1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16 ).
4. **The surviving saints.** Those alive and remaining, who are changed in a moment and caught up together with the resurrected ( 1 Cor 15:51-53; 1 Thess 4:17 ).

**The whole harvest in one scene:** Rev 7:9-17 shows all four groups together: a multitude no one could number, from every nation, with palm branches (the harvest festival, Lev 23:40 ), washed in the blood of the Lamb, before the throne. The "great tribulation" they came out of is likely the path every believer walks ( Rev 1:9; John 16:33; Acts 14:22 ), and the cleansing that makes them white is the same for all ( Heb 9:14; 1 John 1:7; Rev 1:5-6 ).

**The precedent for early arrivals:** Scripture already shows God bringing some of His people to Himself ahead of the general gathering, through the translation of Enoch and Elijah and through the saints raised at Christ's resurrection ( Matt 27:52-53 ).

**What remains open:** The text does not tell us how the 144,000 were taken, or whether the sea of glass company died or were translated. I have given the reasons for my conclusions, but I hold these two points more loosely than the main thesis.

**Why it matters:** The same Lamb who sealed the first fruits is the One who gathers the whole harvest. Every group in this study ends in the same place: before the throne, with the Lamb in the midst, and with God wiping away every tear ( Rev 7:15-17 ).

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*Drafted with Claude (AI) as my research assistant, with all theological positions, Scripture selections, and final wording reviewed and approved by Sid Nash — Desiring to live by every word that comes from the mouth of Yahweh.* ( Deut8:3; Matt4:4 ). Version date: 11/14/2026 Latest version: https://sidnash.org/docs/FirstfruitsToFullHarvest.html