

The People of the Apocalypse
“The Great Multitude in Heaven”

In Revelation 7:9-17 the Scripture records the arrival of a certain multi-cultural throng:

“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.” (Revelation 7:9)

This innumerable host, made up of every different people group on earth, having on “white robes” like those given to the fifth seal martyrs of Revelation 9:9-11, is the focal point of this The Glorious Reception as they celebrate utilizing “palms in their hands” similar to the day the Lord Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem (John 12:12-15).

Only in this situation, the ones making their triumphant entrance into heaven itself are this “great multitude”, and they are not doing it quietly:

“And cried with a loud voice, saying: SALVATION TO OUR GOD WHICH SITS UPON THE THRONE, AND UNTO THE LAMB.” (Revelation 7:10)

What is occurring here in Revelation 7:9-17 is The Glorious Reception which is promised by the Lord Jesus Christ:

“Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and RECEIVE you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:1-3)

The Lord is definitely coming again to RECEIVE all those who have been redeemed through His precious blood which He vicariously shed for the sins of mankind. And, those redeemed are seen here, en masse, with Him, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. They are ascribing to the Father and to the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, their great work of salvation, for the very presence of this “great multitude” in heaven indicates the final step of this marvelous salvation which the Lord gives to every saint:

“For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” (Romans 8:29,30)

Here, this grand glorified company stands in the presence of their matchless Savior, and, with all their being, they give great praise and glory to Him, for, He has brought this marvelous event to pass. They are standing in heaven, “Before the throne, and before the Lamb” in the very presence of God Himself!

These saints have fully experienced God’s great plan of salvation, having been delivered from the penalty and power of sin through God’s justification by their faith, and now, being glorified, they are experiencing firsthand their eternal deliverance from the very presence of sin! What a magnificent and most glorious salvation! And, they are evidently not alone in this heavenly celebration:

“And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne of God on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.” (Revelation 7:11,12)

All of the heavenly throne room attendants are present for this The Glorious Reception as the redeemed of the ages are in glory with every living creation of God in heaven giving Him and His Son, the Savior, the Lamb,

whose blood was given to redeem such a company as this, all the praise!

“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which come out of [the] great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:13, 14)

The great multitude’s specific identification is now made clear, according to the chronology the Lord Jesus Christ gave in Matthew 24:3-31 where He too mentions this very time called the great tribulation.

This great multitude are those elect, who are gathered from “*the four winds*” (Matthew 24:31), the resurrected saints [The dead in Christ] and the raptured saints [The living in Christ] who have endured the great tribulation!

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep. 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: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up [raptured] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.” (I Thessalonians 4:15-18)

Notice the parallels in the I Thessalonians 4 rapture passage and the following Matthew 24 rapture passage:

1. Coming is the subject
2. Clouds are the place
3. Angels are involved
4. Trumpet of God sounds

“For as the lightning comes out of the east and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles [vultures] be gathered. Immediately after that tribulation shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together the elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.’ (Matthew 24:27-31)

This is the end of the chronological sequence the Lord gave to His disciples answering their two questions, “*What shall be the sign of Thy coming and the end of the world?*” (Matthew 24:3) His step by step sequence ending with this series of events details the facts concerning His coming:

1. His second coming will not be secret but openly evident and universally seen [As lightning] (v.27)
2. His second coming will not be uncertain but definite [As vultures on corpses] (v.28)
3. His second coming will occur immediately after the great tribulation is shortened (v.28, 21, 22)
4. His second coming will occur the same day the sign of the Day of the Lord/sign of the Son of man are given (v.29, 30)
5. His second coming will occur in the clouds (v.30)
6. His second coming will be with power and great glory (v.30)
7. His second coming will be accompanied by the sound of a trumpet (v.31)
8. His second coming will gather the elect [rapture the saints] shortening the great tribulation (v.31)

Therefore, by utilizing the Lord’s Matthew 24 sequence, the answer given to John by the elder concerning the identity of this great multitude is clear. These are those saints who have just been resurrected and raptured, the elect who have been gathered by the Lord Jesus Christ’s angels, when He rescues/raptures the elect by shortening the great tribulation!

The Lord's Matthew 24 sequence is the same as the order of events in Revelation for the fifth seal martyrs (Revelation 6:9-11) are martyred during the great tribulation, the sixth seal reveals the sign of the Day of the Lord as the heavenly wonders are described (Revelation 6:11-17) for the Lord's wrath is about to begin.

Next is an event not mentioned in Matthew 24, but, the sealing of the 144 Thousand (Revelation 7:1-8) is a necessary event, in order to give them protection (Revelation 9:4) during their Day of the Lord ministry. This happens the same day [just before] the Lord comes to resurrect the dead in Christ and rescue the saints by rapture. (Revelation 7:9-17)

Some theorize that the rapture has occurred at the beginning or the middle of the 70th Week of Daniel. If that is the case, a few questions must be asked: If the saints of the ages have already been resurrected and raptured into heaven as claimed by those who hold the theory of a pre-tribulation rapture, then, where are they during this The Glorious Reception in heaven?

All of heaven has gathered to celebrate this magnificent event, God the Father, the Lamb, all of the angels, the twenty-four elders, the four beasts...but, that's it! There are no glorified saints...other than this great multitude who, as the Scripture confirms, have just arrived! Surely the glorified saints of the ages would be part of heaven's welcome if they had arrived earlier.

Secondly, if this great multitude is made up of only those who have been saved during the great tribulation, how did world evangelism take place in just a few short years producing saints from every corner of the globe, for the great multitude is made up of every type of known people group as (Revelation 7:9) indicates:

'Of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues':

1. Nations is the Greek word "ethnos" meaning ethnic group
2. Kindreds is the Greek word "phulay" meaning those of the same tribe or race
3. People is the Greek word "laos" meaning all those of the same stock and language
4. Tongues is the Greek word "glossa" meaning all those who speak any language or dialect

These four words are all inclusive starting with the largest group of people, a nation or ethnic group and ends with the smallest group having only a language in common. The purpose of using these multiple terms is to show how the Lord has brought His so great salvation to all the different peoples from every corner of the globe!

Number three, the saints of the ages are previously described using these same four terms:

"And when He [the Lamb/Lord Jesus Christ] had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou was slain, and has redeemed men to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation."

(Revelation 5:8, 9)

Here, after the Lord Jesus Christ takes the book [containing the Day of the Lord judgments] from the Father and just before He opens the seals, the worship leaders in heaven sing a new song to Him indicating His worthiness to open the book because He was slain, bringing about this great work of redemption among all of the different people groups or earth throughout the ages!

These four words are used a number of other times in the Revelation (10:11, 11:9, 14:6). In these texts they continue to indicate all the different types of inhabitants on the planet, however, they refer to those who are not children of God, who are living on earth during the end of the age. But, the same purpose applies in both situations, as these four words continue to comprehensively describe all peoples.

The only way that this great multitude could be standing here from every known people group is that the dead in Christ are included, for the saints who have died have now been resurrected just prior to those whom the Lord rescues from the great tribulation by rapture according to Paul's doctrine in (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

In addition, the questions and answer posed by the elder back in (Revelation 7:13) provide another key. The questions: "*What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?*" are asking for their identity, and location.

However, the response he gives does not answer either of these questions, but, the elder instead, reveals the time they arrived which when analyzed in view of the Lord's Matthew 24 passage it becomes clear why he chose this reply.

His reply draws the focus upon the time they arrived and perfectly agrees with the Lord's timing when He step-by-step chronologically unfolded His coming and the end of the age. The Lord shortens (Matthew 24:21, 22) the "*great tribulation*" in order that His elect would be spared. He shortens it by rescuing/rapturing the saints from the Antichrist's deadly persecution.

His angels will "gather the elect" (Matthew 24:29-31) and just prior He resurrects all those who have been saved throughout the ages according to Paul's rapture passage. (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). Therefore, the reason for the great diversity of those standing in the throne room of God is that all of the redeemed from the beginning of time are here, just as they are described earlier in (Revelation 5:8,9) using these same four all encompassing words!

Yes, all the saints of the ages including Adam and Eve, and, if you have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, you will be there too! It's that simple! The remainder of this passage also supports this conclusion: "*Therefore are they [great multitude/saints of the ages] before the throne of God, and serve day and night in His temple: and He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*" (Revelation 7:15-17)

The brief but precise description given here, of the saints continually serving God, in His presence, without having concern for physical sustenance, or experiencing any affliction, being fed and led by the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, with all sorrow completely eliminated, eloquently describes the eternal environment of the blessedness in heaven which God has promised to every one who has been redeemed...who are now standing in His presence as this passage clearly reveals!

