

Who are the 144,000 and the Multitude?

First, let's establish the rules of interpreting prophecy:

1. The book of Revelation is told in imagery and symbol.
2. A symbol cannot represent itself. If it did, it would not be a symbol.
3. Interpretation of the symbol must come from the Bible.
4. The prophecy must be interpreted within the context in which it was given.

Now let's take a look at Revelation 7:1 through 8:6.

Rev 7:1-3 The earth, the sea, the trees

Let's compare Rev 17:15 The angel says straight out that the waters are peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues.

Matt 21:18-21

and 24:32 Parable of the fig tree – obvious connection to Israel.

Rom 11:11-24 Wild and cultivated olive trees connected to Gentile and Jewish people.

Jude 4, 12-13 Ungodly men are trees without fruit and raging waves of the sea.

Gen 22:17

and 32:12 Descendants of Abraham and Jacob to be as the sand of the sea.

1 Chr 16:31-33 Heavens, earth, sea, field, and trees to rejoice for the Lord is coming.

Thus the angels are being instructed here not to harm any people or alter any social structures until the servants of God are sealed.

Rev 7:4-8 The 144,000

The number 144,000 is 12 X 12,000, as is clearly stated in the way it is presented. It has long been accepted that 12 is the number of governmental perfection as is evidenced from the following:

Gen 35:22-26 12 sons of Israel who were the patriarchs of the 12 tribes of Israel.

Josh 4:1-9 12 stones removed from the Jordan and 12 others put in.

Josh 10:8-14 The sun and moon stood still for “about a whole day” - a day is considered a 12-hour interval by the Jews.

Num 13:1-21 12 spies sent to the promised land.

Exo 28:15-21 12 stones in the breastplate.

But it seems to be little known that the number 12,000 is the number of war. Consider the following:

Num 31:5 12,000 armed for war

Count = Compute (Strong's #5585) Computation involves two or more numbers but only one seems to be given here. What is the other number?

Another number appears in the next verse (14:1): 144,000 have the name of the Father in their foreheads. There is an obvious connection here to the mark or name of the beast in the previous verse. Both marks are placed in the forehead.

So, then, what is the computation with these two numbers: 666 and 144,000?

Everything in the prophecy of Revelation is told in symbols. Therefore, the number 666 must represent something. What does it signify?

We are told that it is the number of A MAN.

It is not the number of: MEN	as in a group or organization;
nor is it the number of: MAN	as in a spiritual characterization;
nor is it the number of: THE MAN	as in identifying a unique individual;
but it is the number of: A MAN	as in only one man, but no one man in particular.

Similarly, the number 144,000 must represent something in this relation. One might ask the simple question, "If 666 = one man, how many men are in the 144,000?"

Performing this computation yields: $144,000 / 666 = 216.216216 \dots$, which is not overly informative until we realize that: $216 = 6 \times 6 \times 6$.

Now we're on to something, thus:

Those bearing the seal of the name of the Father = $12 \times 12,000 = 144,000$

Those bearing the mark of the beast = $6 \times 6 \times 6 \times 666$ (six sixes!) = 143,856

The difference = 144

There is a very striking relationship between the 144 and the 144,000. It is a specific remnant - 1 out of every 1000. It is a common recurring theme in Scripture that only the remnant is saved, because the vast majority are worshipping false gods.

But isn't this impossible amongst those who have been sealed with the name of the Father upon their foreheads? Not if the mark of the beast is indistinguishable from the name of the Father because the beast is using the name of the Father to make its mark.

144,000 is a representative number of the remnant that will be redeemed of all those who claim they worship the one true God. However, most worshipers making this claim are, in fact, worshipping the beast. Which brings us back to the multitude in verse 9!

Multitude = an unruly mob, a rabble (Strong's #3793) as opposed to a conglomerate of people, a throng (Strong's #4128). This multitude is an unruly, tumultuous crowd. Some more examples of where this word appears, showing its negative connotation, are:

Acts 24:18 Paul was found in the temple, without multitude or tumult. When you compare Acts 21:26-34, he was peacefully in the temple full of people until Jews from Asia stirred them up. He is saying the mob scene that followed was not instigated by him – he was there peaceably.

Acts 16:22 The multitude rose up against them and the magistrates tore their clothing.

Matt 5:31 Jesus was jostled about by a multitude of unruly people. That's why he took note of the single, individual woman who touched him in faith.

Luke 3:7 John outrightly calls the multitude wanting baptism a generation of vipers.

Now let's go back to Rev 7:9,10. What else is said about this disorderly, tumultuous crowd? They are clothed in white, a symbol of righteousness. They are carrying palm fronds, a symbol of prosperity and unity with God. As the mark of the beast spread throughout the Roman Empire, Christianity lost its pureness and was mixed with beliefs from other sources. These misbelieving Christians all believed they were God's people (white robes) and that God was with them (prosperity and unity). Where else is such a crowd assembled?

Let's look at John 12:12-18 and Matt 21:8-11. Hosanna = Oh, save! (Strong's #5614) and comes from Hebrew and carries the connotation of a plea for help. The multitude putting their clothing in front of Jesus and laying down palm fronds were begging him to become King immediately to save them from Roman dominion. The parallel is obvious in Rev 7 where this multitude also is expectant of Christ's imminent arrival and Kingdom and they are pleading for salvation (rescuing or saving – Strong's #4991). They are crying for help from God and the angels, Elders and living ones in verses 11-12 are worshipping God in response to their plea.

Then one of the Elders makes the enquiry, "Who are these people in white and where did they come from?" What = Who, which, or what, in the interrogative (Strong's #5101) implies not knowing. White = white (Strong's #3022) but white in Rev. 15:6 and 19:8, where the angels' clothing and the bride's clothing are described = radiant (Strong's #2986). Hence, these are not immortals. Whence = from which (Strong's #4159) and comes from a root word meaning "to drink". The Elder doesn't recognize these people who wear garments representing righteousness and proclaim unity with God and he wants to know who they are and from which waters they have drank! There is an implication here of the "living waters" verses the unclean, polluted waters of mixed belief.

In verse 14, John indicates that the Elder knows, but know = a mere mechanical, passive, casual vision (Strong's #1492). It indicates a surface appearance, not a knowing of the heart. So the Elder responds with what they APPEAR to be: a group of people who have come through tribulation (pressure – Strong's #2347), washed (plunged – Strong's #4150) their robes and whitened them in the Lamb's blood, and now stand before God. They APPEAR to publicly serve Him (Diaglott) in His temple for which He, in turn, will pitch His tent over them (Diaglott). It APPEARS they will no longer be hungry (famished / craving – Strong's #3983) or thirsty – both in a spiritual sense, the sun (prime political power) will not light on them (direct it's gaze at them), nor will heat (lesser powers). It APPEARS Christ will tend them and escort them to the source of living water and comfort them. Immediately upon this superficial observation, the seventh seal is opened.

Let's consider a couple parallels:

One is on an observation level. Have you ever had opportunity to see Israeli goats and sheep? At first glance, they are difficult to tell apart. Yet Christ, because he doesn't casually observe, but knows the hearts of men, can easily tell them apart, unerringly putting the goats on the left and the sheep on the right. (Matt 25:31-34)

Let's consider some parallel parables.

Matt 7:21-23 Not everyone who thinks they "qualify" will be accepted.

Matt 25:1-12 Not everyone who is part of the “entourage” will be accepted.

Matt 25:31-46 Not everyone who thinks themselves “servants of Christ”, are.

It's time to look at a bit of Roman history. If you look at the events after 192 AD, you will witness the decline of the Roman Empire. In a period of 104 years, there were 29 Emperors. Although it was Nero in 64 AD who actually started persecuting non-pagans, at that point Jews and Christians were lumped together into one “undesirable” group. Christianity was considered a sect of Judaism. It wasn't until the time of Hadrian (117 AD – 138 AD) that it was acknowledged that Jews and Christians were two separate groups. Marcus Aurelius (165 AD – 180 AD) also severely persecuted Christians, but it wasn't until the reign of Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus, known as Diocletian, (286 AD – 305 AD) that “The Great Persecution” took place. He and his son-in-law, Caesar Galerius, attempted to annihilate Christianity.

Flavius Valerius Constantinus, known as Constantine, became Emperor in 307 AD. That's just 2 years after the reign of Diocletian ended. Unlike Diocletian, Constantine was tolerant of the Christians. For the first 5 years, he mostly ignored them. Then, in 312 AD, he claimed he dreamed “the sign of Christ”, which he adopted as his standard and used as his insignia. He claimed himself “a man of the god of the Christians” but he waited until his deathbed to be “baptized”, and not by immersion. Most historians feel his change in 312 AD was motivated by politics and not any sense of belief. He had many Christian converts in his army and on his staff and he wished to be popular with both pagans and Christians as a means of protecting his rule. In 313 AD he released the Milan Edict. This edict of toleration guaranteed religious freedom, but at the same time disallowed conversion to Judaism. He was also responsible for assembling the 318 bishops to debate and clarify with politicians the Christian faith. The document that resulted from that conference is known as the Nicene Creed and is the basis of the Roman Catholic belief system. Eventually, during the latter part of his reign, which ended in 337 AD, he turned against the pagans and outlawed their system of worship, forcing Rome to be Christianized.

You can read much of this yourself on websites such as www.roman-empire.net.

Rev 8:1-6 The seventh seal

The preceding events place the seventh seal in the time of Constantine. The multitudes had just survived The Great Persecution - the tribulation. The seal is opened when Constantine releases the Milan Edict. There was a period of silence for about 1/2 an hour (Rev. 8:1) – about 15 years, when the persecutions stopped and pagan and Christian co-habited in relative peace, while their beliefs became more and more mixed. It APPEARED that the tribulations were over and “everyone” (the multitude) would be saved.

Using the day for a year principle, here's what the 1/2 hour equates to:

a Hebrew day is considered to have 12 hours,

a Hebrew year has 360 days,

$1/2$ of $1/12$ of 360 = 15,

1 day = 1 year,

the silence lasts for about 15 years.

During this time, many pagan temples were raided and/or converted for Christian use. Idols were renamed with Apostles' names. The clergy gained pre-eminence and influenced political decisions. People started to believe that Christ's return was imminent and the way was prepared for Him. They believed the hand of God was at work preparing the world's dominions to be turned over at His Son's return. A "Christian" was the thing to be. The mark of the beast had been Christianized. True believers (the 144,000) and the misbelievers (the multitude) all bore the APPEARANCE of the name of God in their foreheads.

This silence was in "heaven", the political realms. It is the result of the opening of the seventh seal and takes place before the first trumpet is blown. An angel offers the prayers of the saints with incense (a sweet-smelling savour to the Lord). Then the angel fills the censer with holy fire and throws it to the earth (God's rejection – Lev 10:1-3 and Num 11:1-3), resulting in voices, thunderings, lightnings, and earthquakes (severe social upheaval). The censer carries both the prayers to God and, in turn, God's answer to the people.

Christ didn't return, and didn't return, and didn't return,... The people, led by the clergy, prayed and prayed, but he didn't come back. It was put about by the clergy that it was the people's fault that Christ hadn't returned when expected. The world was not yet ready. It had to be cleansed. The clergy mandated themselves to purge out all iniquity and heresy remaining in the world. And who were fingered as the heretics? Anyone who didn't follow the teaching of this self-appointed clergy who mixed true Christianity with paganism. And so, persecution started again with renewed vigour against both the true Christians (the 144,000 prepared for war) and the natural seed of Abraham, the Jews. Thus started the social upheaval that the angels had been warned not to start yet in 7:3 – The Inquisition had begun – and the first trumpet was blown.