

# The 144,000 and the Multitude

## The Most Encouraging and Empowering Prophecy in Scripture for the End Time Body of Christ

by  
Jim Sayles

I remember discussing with pastor Wayne Smith, who was my supervisor in the church where we were both serving at the time, the probability that the prophetic truth of Revelation (and all end times prophetic passages) would not be thoroughly understood until God unsealed them to the generation who would experience those specific events.

At that time I did not know why or how the revelatory truth of the Lord's letter, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," written primarily for the end times church, was hidden from us, but, having been delivered from the spiritual stronghold of Zionist (Jewish supremacy in the covenant intent of the Father) dispensational (multiple covenants of redemption) teaching, I do now understand.

In the past few years, to my amazement and joy, the cataracts of heretical dispensational theology, and its corresponding school of constantly morphing non-revelatory eschatological presumption, have been progressively removed from the eyes of an emerging consensus of Christian believers who are coming to the truth independently as they are led by the Spirit of truth.

But, as it is in all areas of revelatory truth, we are blinded to the absolute, immutable *rhema* truth of God by the false doctrines we have presumed, taught, promoted, and popularly believed.

We are also blinded by the fact that all biblical prophecy contains significant allegorical content, including specific numeric identifications, that have metaphorical, rather than literal, meaning.

Most importantly we need to be aware of the fact that our true, revelatory understanding regarding ALL biblical doctrine requires our rational minds to be supernaturally guided into the absolute, immutable, *rhema* truth by the Spirit of truth.

***“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you...supernaturally... into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come...in the future....”*** John 16:13 NASB (inserts and emphasis are the author's)

The fact we cannot avoid, is that our division into thousands of denominations and millions of rabbinic opinions concerning the truth, covenant promises, and commands of our Lord, is that there is a MASSIVE disconnect from the Spirit of truth throughout the body of Christ.

This is specifically evident concerning things to come for the current body of Christ, demonstrating the effectiveness of the “father of lies” in separating the sheep from the Shepherd and from one another in order to defeat the glorious intent of the Father for the body of Christ in the final days of this present age.

After the events of the 1st through the 6th seals, which include the ride of the four horsemen and the intense world-wide trouble that includes an escalating persecution of the body of Christ, we are introduced to an unusual event that takes place immediately before the 7th and last seal identified as “**great tribulation**,” is opened.

*After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. <sup>2</sup> And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, <sup>3</sup> saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.”* Revelation 7:1-4 NASB

Notice, first of all, that the recipients of this sealing are human “bond-servants” of the Lord still alive after having experienced the rather lengthy 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> seal of events of “**tribulation**,” events that the Lord prophesied to His disciples would be experienced by the future body of Christ who would be persecuted not only by the beast kingdom in all its forms but also by those Christian believers who would become apostate during tribulation.

*At that time...many of My people...will be offended and repelled [by their association with Me] and will fall away [from the One whom they should trust] and will betray one another [handing over believers to their persecutors] and will hate one another.* Matthew 24:10 Amplified

So, the group who are sealed immediately before the opening of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal of “**great tribulation**” are bond-servants of the Lord (i.e. Christian believers). Likewise, the number of those who are sealed is obviously metaphorical rather than literal.

So, who is this mysterious group? Are they 12,000 literal Jewish male virgins from each of twelve tribes of Israel? If so, what is their purpose, and how did they

suddenly appear on the scene without any identifiable relationship to the events taking place prior to their appearance?

As men and women who at that time are identified as “bond-servants” of the Lord will include both Jews and Gentiles. Thus, their identity includes overcoming Jews and Gentiles.

Many modern eschatologists have erroneously assumed the dispensational, Zionist, dual covenant position that these are 144,000 literal Jewish male virgins from twelve literal tribes, though scripture clearly reveals that from the fulfillment of Pentecost forward it is the body of Christ, joining Jew and Gentile together as “*one new man*” in Christ who are now identified as the *Israel of God*.

Many Zionist (Jewish supremacy in the covenant intent of the Father) ignore the Spirit’s metaphorical use of types and shadows throughout scripture, because the appearance of the 144,000 seems to support their Dispensational, Zionist doctrinal position.

These also presume that the woman clothed with the sun is national, ethnic Israel during the tribulation after the antichrist “man of sin” has been revealed and the Jews flee into the Jordanian wilderness in 747’s. (Yes, that really is the belief of some).

Some even believe that the two witnesses who appear suddenly on the streets of Jerusalem are the ones who have been sent by God to select and anoint the 144,000 for evangelizing every nation, tribe, and tongue during the final 3.5 years of the antichrist man of sin’s reign over the world.

Yet, the two witnesses, Enoch and Elijah, the only two men who were taken up to heaven in their earthly bodies, do not appear in Jerusalem until after the 144,000 are sealed, and they appear in sackcloth and ashes, like prophets of old, declaring God’s judgment on the antichrist “man of sin” and the beast kingdom as a whole, demonstrating that there is no connection between the 144,000 and the two witnesses.

The most important concept we must consider concerning this event is whether the literal interpretation reflects what we know as truth concerning God’s covenant intent.

The Jewish supremacy position completely ignores and denies God’s intent that His covenant promises given to Abraham and his “seed,” the offspring of Isaac (natural Israel) were ultimately intended only for THE “seed,” Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, Son of man, and lamb of God, and all those who would be included in Him, whether Jew or Gentile, and whether by God’s sovereign election or by faith.

***For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the...covenant...promise...in Christ...are counted for the seed.*** Romans 9:6-9 KJV (inserts are the author's)

Is Paul, the “Pharisee of Pharisees” a liar? If not, then the “seed” are identified as spiritual, “born-again” Israel, the “***Israel of God***” in Christ including Jews and Gentiles as “***one new man***” in Christ.

***For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.*** Galatians 6:15,16 KJV

What Paul, the “Pharisee of Pharisees” clearly states is that God’s plan of redemption in Christ does not favor Jews or Gentiles (the “circumcision” or the “uncircumcision”). And we are now “***one new man***” in Him, identified as the “***Israel of God***.”

If we, therefore, understand that it was God’s intent from before the foundation of the world to include the entire remnant of fallen mankind, from Adam forward, in a single redemptive covenant in Christ then we cannot rationally presume that He will revoke the commission given to the body of Christ until the end of the age in order to replace the church with Israel for the final round.

Of interest in this regard is the dispensational, pre-tribulation “rapture” view that it will be a church that has failed to faithfully carry out their commission given to them by the Lord to the “***end of the age***,” that will be raptured away (as a reward for their faithlessness?) before the worst of the trouble begins.

And then, after a period of punitive judgment, God will restore Israel as His primary covenant identity.

Then, at the return of the Lord in glory, all of the saints of all time, including the “church saints,” are grafted into that primary covenant with national, ethnic Israel.

But because the entirety of Revelation is given to us in metaphorical language for the express purpose of concealing the truth from all but those for whom the prophecy is intended, we must presume that the 144,000 are NOT 144,000 literal Jewish male virgins from twelve tribes who are suddenly, without any scriptural connectivity or rationale, chosen to complete the commission that was given to the church by the Lord Himself until the end of the age (i.e. until the resurrection on the “last day.”)

This would literally be a denial of the Lord's commission for the body of Christ until the "*end of the age.*"

When examined carefully, we discover that the covenant promise given to Abraham, was intended only for his "seed," Jesus Christ, and those who are joint heirs as the "*Israel of God*" in Him. It was never, even from before the foundations of the world, intended for national, ethnic Israel apart from individual Israelites who have remained in the olive tree, Christ, on whatever basis of faith God has sovereignly required of them and for those debauched Jews who have been grafted back into the olive tree by grace through faith.

Therefore, at the resurrection of Jesus Christ, upon His fulfillment of the Law two millennia ago, God cut a New Covenant between Himself and the only Israelite who was able to walk perfectly in all the law of God. And it is this man, born of the seed of the Holy Spirit and the untainted egg of Mary, who is the mediator of that covenant, written in His blood shed on the cross for the remission of the sins of all mankind from Adam forward.

From that point forward God's covenant with Israel and His promises to Israel, which is now spiritual Israel, the Israel of God in Christ, containing both Jew and Gentile in one body, would only be fulfilled in Christ.

*For as many as are the...(covenant)... promises of God, in Him...(Christ)... they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. 2 Corinthians 1:20 NASB (insert is the author's)*

*Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, Not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was their Husband, says the Lord.*

*But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel...(spiritual Israel, the Israel of God in Christ)...: After those days, says the Lord, I will put My law within them, and on their hearts will I write it; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. Jeremiah 31:31-33 NASB (inserts and emphasis are the author's)*

Because this prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the kingdom of God fell with power upon the 120 upper room believers, incorporating those believers into the body of Christ as the Law was written on their hearts through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, we can clearly see that the "*house of Israel*" and the "*house of Judah*" has been applied through Jeremiah to the spiritual body of

Christ, the church, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles as “*one new man*” in Christ.

It is, therefore, the church, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, to whom the promise, “*I will be their God, and they will be My people,*” applies, and it will continue to apply without interruption until the last trump of God on the last day.

What possible purpose, then, does it serve for God to select 12,000 literal Jewish males from each of twelve literal tribes to act as His evangelical emissaries in the final 3.5 years of “*great tribulation*” in place of the church who was given the commission until the end of the age at the “last day.”

The Revelation of Jesus Christ was given to John in metaphorical and parabolic language, and those who propose a strict literal approach to the interpretation of this book, and to all prophetic scripture, will only be able to “see” what the intellect can perceive apart from the revelatory light of the Spirit of truth who was given to us to “guide” us supernaturally into all truth. (John 16:13)

At the same time these also need to be aware of the curse of Revelation 22:19: *And if any man shall take away from the ... (revelatory understanding of the)... words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.* (insert is the author’s)

I believe this curse, though only applies to those false prophets, inspired by the father of lies to mislead the body of Christ during the final 3.5 years of this age identified by the Lord as “*great tribulation.*” Otherwise, many who are reading this article have already been condemned.

One glaring error promoted by literalists who have ignored even the obvious intellectual truth is their claim that the Revelation of Jesus Christ only applies to the church through Chapter 3.

But as we examine these intellectually perceivable facts, we will discover that Revelation as a whole was intended entirely for the body of Christ:

- 1) Revelation 1:1 announces that the Revelation of Jesus Christ was given to His bond servant, John, an apostle of the church;
- 2) it was given to be written down and sent to the churches;
- 3) it was to be written down, included in the New Testament of the Bible, to be read and heeded by the church.

Then in the final chapter the Lord makes certain that He has made Himself clear, and He tells us that the revelation given to John is FOR the churches, not for national, ethnic Israel.

*I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches.* Revelation 22:16 KJV (emphasis is the author's)

If the Revelation of Jesus Christ is intended for the church, and we have the revelatory understanding that it is for our instruction, why would we presume that the Father will suddenly end our evangelical commission under the headship of Christ to suddenly re-insert and re-appoint national, ethnic Israel to this covenant cause?

What is revealed in this book given to John “*for the churches*” concerning the 144,000 and the woman clothed with the sun, is the most significant and amazing prophetic event of the entire end times, but it has nothing at all to do with national, ethnic Israel.

The Spirit-revealed truth concerning the prophetic future of the church in the end times is, instead, so demonstratively characteristic of **GOD** that only a powerful deception could have prevented us from “seeing” it, and only a fresh anointing of the Spirit of truth can reveal it to the generation of believers for whom it has always been intended.

The prophetic end time events are patterned in Old Testament events, and the primary interpretational key is found in the “appointed times” of the feasts of the Lord given to Israel. These appointed times of annual sabbaths and feasts are a literal blueprint and time chart for the unfolding of every prophetic event related to the redemption of fallen mankind from the crucifixion of Jesus Christ to our eternal home in the New Jerusalem on the New Earth renovated by spiritual fire. Thus, any prophetic interpretation of the redemptive events in scripture that does not fit this God-given calendar is false, and the revelatory truth must come forth from and conform with this calendar as revealed by the Spirit of truth.

As we examine the prophecies related to the 144,000, the number itself, 144,000, is obviously metaphorical, and it represents the perfection of spiritual Israel, the Israel of God. But the literal number of this group could be in the MILLIONS.

That each is from one of the twelve tribes is also metaphorical and a spiritual assignment by God, rather than a natural designation. And we are given a distinct clue in this regard by the fact that the twelve tribes listed in Revelation 7 differs from the original twelve tribes.

The twelve sons of Israel (Jacob) were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher and Joseph. These were the ancestors of the original twelve tribes. However, Reuben lost his rights as firstborn by defiling Jacob's bed. In Reuben's and Joseph's place, Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, became tribes of Israel.

As a result, the twelve tribes became Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Ephraim and Manasseh.

However, Revelation 7 lists the 12 tribes as Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin. This is interesting. For the first time Joseph is listed as a tribe along with his son Manasseh. Why isn't Ephraim listed? Why is Reuben listed, but not Dan?

In Genesis 49:17 we read: “***Dan will be a serpent by the roadside, a viper along the path that bites the horse's heels so that its rider tumbles backward.***”

And, though I find no scriptural proof, it is possible that Judas Iscariot belonged to the tribe of Dan while Matthias, who was chosen by lot to replace him, belonged to the tribe of Reuben.

Whatever the specific answer is as it relates to the final list of the twelve tribes, the assignment is spiritual as is the metaphorical number of spiritual Israel, the Israel of God, being 144,000.

Otherwise God is a respecter of persons, and the selection of this group is based on merit as Jehovah's Witnesses presumptively imagine, but God is not a respecter of persons. Thus, this metaphorical group will not be a select group of “top performers,” nor will it be limited to only 144,000 Christian believers.

***Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:*** (...or favoritism toward ethnic Jews...) Acts 10:34 KJV

Yet, there is a selection process, and that process is defined in His prophetic parable of another group of “virgins” (innocent of sin because they are in Christ, which is spiritual Israel, the ***Israel of God*** in Christ), the metaphorical ten virgins who make up the entire corporate body of Christ at a specific point in time.

However, the selection process is not by God, but by the response of believers to God. The metaphorical “wise virgins” who persevere and endure the extreme testing of their faith during the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> seal events of ***tribulation*** will become the metaphorical 144,000, while those who fall away from faith during the same time, are the “foolish” virgins who become apostate and are ultimately empowered by Satan to persecute the body of Christ.

This ultimate fate of the “foolish” is, then, the most tragic and horrifying in all scripture.

This is also demonstrated in the Lord's response to His disciple's question, “When will these things happened, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

***Then shall they deliver you ... (Christian believers)... up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then ... (during the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> seal events of "tribulation")... shall many ... (of My people)... be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. ... (of My people)... And because iniquity shall abound, the ... (agape)... love of many ... (of My People)... shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*** Matthew 24:9-14 KJV (inserts and emphasis are the author's)

Several things are made clear in this passage. The first is that the awakened "virgins" (those who are innocent before God because they are "in Christ") will be tested and tried during "tribulation." Secondly, the "love" that grows cold is demonstrated to be *agape* love, which is the covenant love we manifest through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. And, thirdly, those who endure "tribulation" are, by context, the ones who will also preach the gospel of the kingdom of God unto the end. (i.e. the "last day")

The simplicity of this truth is denied by the doctrine of the unconditional, eternal security of the believer, or "once saved, always saved." And as one who came to faith in a denomination whose primary doctrine is "once saved, always saved," I had to struggle with this doctrine over a significant period of time before I came to the revelatory understanding that though the covenant between the Father and the Son is eternal and secure, I, as an individual believer must remain in Christ by faith until death if I am going to participate in the covenant blessings as a "joint heir" throughout all eternity.

Also demonstrated is the fact that it is the body of Christ that will preach the gospel to the end, which is the "last day" resurrection of all the saints from Adam forward.

***And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came up and spake to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*** ... (the last day resurrection on some future 1 Tishri, feast of trumpets). Matthew 28:19-20 NASB

What we need to notice about the sealing of the 144,000 is that they are sealed for protection in the final three and a half years of "great tribulation," not removal from "great tribulation."

This has HUGE implications.

One of the so-called “proof texts” given by dispensationalists as an Old Testament precursor for the pre-tribulation “rapture” of the church is Noah and his ark. But they miss the singular fact that Noah was not removed from the flood. He was protected in the flood.

At the same time the wicked unbelievers were “taken away” by the flood. Thus those “left behind” were the righteous.

***For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,...(his protection IN the flood) ...and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Matthew 24:38,39 ESV (emphasis and inserts are the author’s)***

We also notice that the sealing of the 144,000 takes place at approximately the same time that the “wise virgins” are separated from the “foolish virgins,” with the sealing of the 144,000 seeming to correspond with the “wise virgins” who have trimmed their wicks (in response to the repentance demanded in Revelation 2 and 3) and maintained oil in their lamps, while the great apostasy appears to correspond with the “foolish virgins” running out of oil who did not repent in the manner demanded by the Lord in Revelation 2 and 3.

Thus the 144,000 includes all of the “wise virgins” still alive at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> seal events who have responded to the Lord’s demands for repentance in Revelation 2 and 3 as well as His encouragement to endure the hardships, trials, and persecution of the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> seals of Revelation identified as “*tribulation*.”

But there is another astonishing aspect of this sealing of the 144,000 that is unique. We see that they are not only been protected at the time of their sealing, but they are fully redeemed and they are a **firstfruits offering of the wheat harvest** unto God and the Lamb” (indicating that these are “in Christ” at the time of the fulfillment of their redemption) **before** the last day resurrection.

We have read this before, but, because we believed that this mysterious group had something to do with national, ethnic Israel during the tribulation, we ignored the implication as it relates to the church.

Immediately after all four horsemen (the first four seals of Revelation 6) appear, the first three of which are already on the scene, we are given John’s vision of an event that takes place after the fourth horseman has become dominant and after the death of 25% of the world’s population by nuclear war, famine, and disease.

***Now when these things...***(all of the prior events described in Luke 21)... ***begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.*** Luke 21:28 (insert and emphasis are the author's)

In Luke 21:26 we have a description of the powers of heaven being shaken, which corresponds with Matthew 24:29:

***Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened and the moon will not shed her light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of heaven will be shaken.*** (emphasis is the author's)

Thus, the message to the church, as given to us in the Lord's prophecy (related to numerous Old Testament prophecies) is that the church, as an entire body of believers, will still be present after the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> seals of the tribulation of those days, and in the Olivet prophecy the Lord is saying that the church at this point is looking forward to the fulfillment of their redemption.

Revelation 7:1-4 indicates that the 144,000 are sealed immediately prior to the opening of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal. Therefore, this group did not have this seal of protection during the first four seals (the four horsemen), or during the persecution of the church and judgment events of the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> seals of "**tribulation**" during the initial ride of the "ashen" or "pale green" horseman, ultimately, but not initially, revealed to be the antichrist "**man of sin.**"

The sealing and their full and complete redemption as "**firstfruits...**(of the "wheat" harvest)...**unto God and the Lamb,**" though, does not cause them to be removed from the earth. They are still on earth from the time of their sealing through the six trumpet judgments (Revelation 8 – Revelation 11:14) as indicated in Revelation 9:4.

***And it was commanded them...***(the locust-demons from hell)... ***that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.*** ...***(the 144,000)...***Revelation 9:4 KJV (inserts and emphasis are the author's)

Only one group is identified as having the seal of God on their foreheads, and that is the 144,000 who were sealed prior to this 7<sup>th</sup> seal event reported in Revelation 9:4.

The event reported in Revelation 9:4 above takes place during the 5<sup>th</sup> trumpet judgment of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal, which means that on some future Pentecost, when the 144,000 are sealed and redeemed as firstfruits of the **wheat** harvest unto God and the Lamb prior to the 7<sup>th</sup> seal being opened, these are still in the earth after the 7<sup>th</sup> seal is opened and after the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet judgment.

Then this is followed by the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet, which is the “last day” resurrection of the saints of all time on 1 Tishri. And this is followed nine days later on 10 Tishri by the return of the Lord with all of His saints on the “***great and terrible day of the Lord***” to destroy His enemies and establish the millennial kingdom in the earth.

So, at this point we see that the 144,000 were not sealed until the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> seal, which includes the persecution of the church and the 6<sup>th</sup> seal shaking of all that can be shaken, including an earthquake off the Richter scale, the sun turning to darkness, and the moon turning to blood. (i.e. “signs in the heavens” - Isaiah 13; Ezekiel 32:7; Joel 2; Matthew 24:29)

Therefore, the 144,000 are present but not sealed during “***tribulation***” (Matthew 24:9-14) and present but sealed during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Woes of “***great tribulation***” (Matthew 24:15-31).

Revelation 6:1-8	Revelation 6:9-17	Revelation 7:1-8	Revelation 8- 9:11
1 <sup>st</sup> Seal – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Seal <b><i>beginning of birth pains</i></b>	4 <sup>th</sup> Seal - 6 <sup>th</sup> Seal <b><i>tribulation</i></b>	Interlude prior to opening of 7 <sup>th</sup> Seal	7 <sup>th</sup> Seal 7 trumpet judgments <b><i>great tribulation</i></b>
First three horsemen World Wars and intense trouble in the world (current status)	Fourth horseman rules over the first three horsemen; worldwide chaos; Persecution – the “virgins” “awakened” and tested	144,000 sealed; Philadelphian church is “kept” from harm; the woman is transported to the wilderness on eagle’s wings	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Woes 1-6 Trumpets 144,000 still present and a multitude of tribulation saints are saved by the witness of the 144,000

Another group, specifically identified as the Philadelphian church, the church that has endured and persevered under extreme persecution is promised that they will be “kept” by God during the “***hour of trial that will come upon the whole world.***”

That “hour” or “appointed time” is the final 3.5 years of “***great tribulation***” that the “whole world” will experience.

But “kept” does not indicate removal. Strong’s G5083 indicates that this word means the following:

- a. to attend to carefully, take care of, to guard;
- b. metaph. to keep, one in the state in which he is; to observe;
- c. to reserve: to undergo something.

This is exactly the same word used when the Lord said, “*If anyone loves me he will keep my word.*” (John 14:23)

Therefore, the manner in which the Lord will “keep” the Philadelphian church, the church that has endured and persevered through the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> seals of Revelation, is through protection, in “*great tribulation*,” not removal from tribulation, which is exactly what the metaphorical 144,000 experience.

Therefore the metaphorical 144,000 are those who emerge from the testing and trials of the first six seals, those who have endured and persevered in the spiritual battles that take place during the 4<sup>th</sup> through the 6<sup>th</sup> seals, which includes the Gog-Magog war, famine, disease, anarchy, the rise of the final “little horn” beast kingdom to power, and the worldwide persecution of the church.

But these are sealed immediately before the antichrist “man of sin” is revealed as he calls down fire from heaven in the viewing presence of the entire world and declares himself to be “Messiah” from the “secret chambers” of the Third Temple rebuilt at some point in our near future, presumably with the leadership of the Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful organization, an organization that many in the body of Christ are currently supporting (i.e. tithing to Satan).

Thus the purpose of the Lord’s specific address to the seven types of the church in Revelation 2 and 3 is to **WARN** us to repent, to endure, and to persevere in the trials to come so that we can be included in the metaphorical 144,000, a.k.a. the Philadelphian church, and not included in those who become apostate from the faith because of tribulation.

*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.* Revelation 2:5 KJV

*Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them* ...(those who do not repent)...Revelation 2:16 KJV (inserts are the author’s)

*Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.* Revelation 3:3 KJV  
(the warning to the sleeping virgins in the parable to the ten virgins)

***As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.***  
Revelation 3:19 KJV (the Lord's specific warning to the Laodicean type of church)

***See, I have warned you beforehand.*** Matthew 24:25 Amplified (which warning the reader has just received)

The implications of the Lord's warning to the church as revealed in the Olivet prophecy and in the Revelation of Jesus Christ is unmistakable. The end time church is in for a time of serious testing, and, unless we wake up, repent, and endure, things will go badly for us.

This is the difference between the experience of the "wise virgins" and the "foolish virgins." The wise virgins wake up from their spiritual slumber, repent as directed, and, with the help of the restored fullness of the former and latter rains, endure the trials and tribulations through the 6<sup>th</sup> seal of Revelation.

The foolish virgins "wake up," but, like the foolish young ruler, they fail to repent as directed, and, during the trials and tribulations that follow, they not only become apostate, but they become those who betray and persecute the wise virgins of the true church just as the Pharisees persecuted our Lord, Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry and persecuted the true church.

Many of the "wise" will be martyred before the sealing of the metaphorical 144,000, but their martyrdom will be a glorious witness and a victory, not a defeat.

***And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*** (Revelation 12:11 KJV)

I have covered this elsewhere, but "the word of their testimony," is not their testimony about how they were saved. The word of their testimony will be the word of faith about who they are in Jesus Christ spoken against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the last days.

Another unusual appearance takes place during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Woe (Revelation 9:12-11:13). This is the appearance of two witnesses, which is not a subject of this study.

These have been falsely presumed by some to be the ones who proselytize the 144,000 Jewish male virgins.

What we need to notice, though, is that we do not hear about the two witnesses until the 2<sup>nd</sup> Woe, but the 144,000 are sealed prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Woes of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal.

And, instead of proselytizing, the two witnesses walk the streets of Jerusalem in sackcloth and ashes after the antichrist "man of sin" has declared himself to be "God" and "Messiah" and Jerusalem becomes the epicenter of ***Babylon the great*** and the fullness of the 7<sup>th</sup> and final beast kingdom.

Therefore, their witness is not one of repentance unto salvation but a witness of coming judgment upon the antichrist “man of sin” and all who are in covenant with him, which, unfortunately, includes the religious Jews who are participants in the revived temple worship and sacrifice system.

We do not see the 144,000 again until we see them in Chapter 14, which is a heavenly scene that gives details not given in Chapter 7 or Chapter 9.

***I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. Revelation 14:1-4 KJV (inserts and emphasis are the author's)***

Revelation, like the prophetic aspects of the book of Daniel and much of the Old Testament, is given to us in metaphorical language with types and shadows for the express purpose of “sealing” (not revealing) the specific truth of those passages to the church except as the Father allows the Spirit of truth to reveal it for His purposes. (Daniel 12:9,10)

Literalist speculations, then, made prior to the specific revelations of the Spirit of truth, are not only erroneous, but “strongholds” of error assaulted against the true knowledge of God. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

Note the following:

1. The “seal” (described in Chapter 7 as giving them an identification for protection) is the name of Jesus and the name of the Father written spiritually on their foreheads;
2. They have been “redeemed” as a “***firstfruits unto God and the Lamb.***” Their spiritual “virginity” and sinless perfection, then, is the result of their completed redemption, just as it will be for all the saints, living and dead who are resurrected on the last day. Thus, it has nothing to do with their natural condition at the time of the sealing.

All born again, regenerated believers in Jesus Christ are sealed by the Holy Spirit, but our sealing at the moment of saving faith is different from this sealing in the foreheads of the 144,000 for the completion of their redemption.

Notice that an angel is carrying the seal, which is one obvious difference between this seal and the sealing of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of regeneration. The sealing is also visual, being on their foreheads, whereas the sealing of the Holy Spirit for regeneration is invisible.

If we compare the passages that describe our “sealing” by the Holy Spirit at the moment of saving faith with this “sealing” upon the foreheads of the 144,000 we will clearly note the difference.

***Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.***  
2 Corinthians 1:22 KJV (emphasis is the author’s)

This passage uses the preposition transliterated from the Greek as *en* (Strong’s G1722), meaning “in,” and notice that the sealing takes place in the heart.

***Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."*** Revelation 7:2,3 ESV (emphasis is the author’s)

This passage uses the preposition transliterated from the Greek as *epe* (Strong’s G1909), meaning upon, and notice that the sealing is upon the forehead. The difference in the two prepositions and the location where the sealing takes place are conclusive evidence that the nature of the two sealings is different.

We also note the Lord’s own words concerning the fact that ALL the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem (From Adam through the last millennial saint) will have His name written on their foreheads. It is, therefore, a symbol of completed redemption in Christ.

***No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.*** Revelation 22:3,4 ESV (emphasis is the author’s)

Initial Sealing of our Hearts	Subsequent Sealing of our Foreheads
A deposit or conditional promise of final and complete redemption.	The symbol of complete and final redemption.

Being sealed or spiritually marked in the forehead is similar to the marking of the door frames of the Israelites in Egypt with the blood of a sacrificial lamb. It is a sealing or marking for protection against the judgments of God.

This is also seen in Ezekiel’s vision during the Babylonian captivity concerning a future judgment against the inhabitants of Jerusalem (symbolic of the institutional church) because of idolatry, with emphasis on the idolatry of the priests.

*And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem,...(which we should receive as a type of the church)...and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry...(in an attitude of repentance)... for all the abominations that be done in the midst...(of the church)... thereof...(which is the response of the “wise virgins”).*

*And to the others...(those “foolish virgins” who are unrepentant concerning the same abominations)... he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite...(kill)...: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and BEGIN...(this act of judgment)...AT MY SANCTUARY. Ezekiel 9:4-6 KJV (inserts and emphasis are the author’s)*

It should be of particular interest to us that the judgment of God is to begin at His sanctuary, and my mind jumps immediately to the parable of the ten virgins.

It is the ten virgins (ten is the number of corporate completion) who are awakened from their spiritual somnolence by some universally recognizable event, presented metaphorically in the parable as the groomsman’s (Holy Spirit) announcement: “*Behold! The bridegroom is coming.*”

The ten virgins all wake up and begin to trim their wicks (their response of repentance to the Lord’s letter to the churches) by cutting away the false doctrines and false practices, and the “doctrines of demons” that have been introduced into the church, which is idolatry, idolatry that has been introduced by “*the cunning and cleverness of unscrupulous men,*” men and women under the demonic influence of Satan for the purpose of dividing and emasculating the church (Ephesians 4:14).

The “wise” virgins respond in repentance during a time of great difficulty and persecution. The “foolish” virgins fail the testing of their faith and not only become apostate but become persecutors of the wise virgins.

It is of interest, too, that there is an opposite marking of the forehead noticeable in the Old Testament. Leprosy in the forehead, for example, was a physical sign of spiritual uncleanness, and in Revelation we see that the whore of Babylon, the apostate church (to which the “foolish virgins” become attached), is marked in the forehead with her name, “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

Likewise, those who submit to the antichrist “man of sin” are marked with a spiritual seal in the forehead, and this seal is permanent. They cannot change their minds and experience faith in Christ once they have taken his seal. This seal is, therefore, not just a means of submitting to the one world system of economics. It is a spiritual covenant action in which the ones receiving the mark of the beast confess allegiance to the antichrist “man of sin” and the beast kingdom after he declares himself to be both “God” and “Messiah” returned to the earth to rule the world with an iron rod.

Therefore, we see the vivid contrast between the “wise virgins” receiving the seal of God in their foreheads and the “foolish virgins” receiving the seal (mark) of the beast kingdom in their foreheads in the ultimate fulfillment of Ezekiel 9:4-6 above.

The most interesting and confirming information that we are given in Revelation 14:5 is that the 144,000 are a “**firstfruits**” of redemption unto God and the Lamb. Some who are still deceived by the dispensational deception of a pre-tribulation “rapture” will instantly conclude that these firstfruits of redemption are those who are raptured out of the tribulation.

There are two distinct reasons why this is not true. First, the 144,000 are not “raptured.” They are redeemed, but they continue to be present in the world. Second, Paul gives the order of the resurrection-“rapture” on the last day as the dead in Christ first, then the living, in order.

***For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...***  
1 Thessalonians 4:16,17 ESV (emphasis is the author’s)

Therefore, the 144,000 who are sealed as “firstfruits unto God and the Lamb” are a group who are sealed in the forehead, indicating the completion of their redemption, but not removed from the world. Thus this group is not merely protected during the trumpet judgments of the seventh seal, they are a completely redeemed group still interactive with the rest of the inhabitants of the world during the trumpet judgments, which take place in the final three and a half years of “**great tribulation.**”

While we were still under the dark cloud of dispensational delusion that this event and this group was unrelated to the church, it had no impact on us. Now, we are stunned by this amazing prophecy.

We must also presume that Satan is aware of this prophecy and that he has been planning and scheming for two millennia to conceal this prophetic truth and prevent it from happening.

The grievous truth is that he will be successful in preventing the “foolish virgins” from realizing and experiencing this glorious prophetic event, but he will not be able to stop the “wise virgins” of the end time Philadelphian church.

Paul told us that the things that happened to the Israelites were written down for the instruction of those upon whom the fulfillment of the ages has come, and we find two unusual events in Daniel that represent the truth concerning both the “wise virgins” and the 144,000.

Daniel’s refusal to eat the king of Babylon’s meat caused him to be thrown into the lion’s den, but God supernaturally inhibited the lions (representative of demonic forces) from killing Daniel. This represents the individual “virgin’s” obedience to the revelation of God’s will at a time when the beast kingdom will be openly persecuting Christians.

Similarly, the Hebrew children were thrown into the fiery furnace for refusing to worship a statue of the king of Babylon as “god.” This is representative of the “wise virgins” who refuse to take the mark of the beast and are sealed and redeemed to protect them from the wrath of the beast. The presence of the Lord with them in the fiery furnace is specifically representative of the Lord’s presence in and with the metaphorical 144,000 during the three and a half years of “*great tribulation*.”

We also note that these emerged from the fire without even the smell of smoke on their clothing, indicating that they were not impacted in any way by the fiery furnace though the fire was so hot that the guards who threw them into the fire were destroyed by it (picturing the fate of those who are servants of the beast kingdom during the great tribulation).

I made the claim at the beginning of this commentary that all the major events of God’s redemptive plan in Christ fit into the prophetic blueprint of God’s appointed times, Sabbaths (national, not weekly), and feasts. So, where is this mysterious firstfruits redemption of Christian believers found in the pattern of the appointed times and feasts given to Israel?

The Hebrews were instructed in the Torah to observe the “appointed times,” with special emphasis on three “solemn assemblies,” also known as Sabbaths, on three occasions each year.

The three times of the year were Passover (which includes the Feast of

Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Firstfruits), Pentecost, and Tabernacles or Booths (which includes the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Atonement).

In Israel fall is the seed time, and spring and early summer is the harvest. Thus on the Hebrew calendar the first three spring feasts take place in the month of Nisan.

These first three appointed times or feasts all occur in succession beginning on 14 Nisan, and all three have been fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

The feast of Passover on 14 Nisan was fulfilled when Jesus was crucified on the day of preparation for the Passover, and He fulfilled Passover at the very same hour that the *pesach* lambs were being slaughtered all over Israel for the Passover meal that evening (15 Nisan). And on 16 Nisan Firstfruits was fulfilled by His resurrection on the third day after His crucifixion, which is an amazing confirmation of how the Holy Spirit provided Israel with the exact pattern and timing of the most important prophetic event in all history. Yet, all but a few completely missed it.

Those events were foreshadowed by the historic events related to God's rescue of Israel (the inheritors of God's covenant promise to Abraham at that time) out of bondage in Egypt (a type of the world under Satan's influence). Then the historic events were memorialized in the appointed times and feasts given to the Israelites afterwards, which would ultimately be fulfilled as prophetic events in the future.

And, yet, the fulfillment of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits went totally unrecognized by the Pharisees, the intellectual giants of Israel, just as the prophecy concerning the 144,000 has gone undetected by the intellectual giants of spiritual Israel, the church, who are blinded by the demonic strongholds of Dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, Preterism, Historicism, and a number of other "isms."

It is also interesting to note that Caiaphas, the high priest, waved the firstfruits grain offering of a barley sheaf in the temple on 16 Nisan (Firstfruits), not knowing that Jesus, the Messiah, was being resurrected at that very time.

Yet, Caiaphas must have been a little rattled by the massive earthquake and solar eclipse that had taken place on 14 Nisan immediately prior to the twilight start of 15 Nisan. And it must have disturbed him to find that the heavy curtain separating the holy place in the temple from the holy of holies, had been torn from top to bottom as if slashed by a giant sword.

From Passover on 14 Nisan is the counting of Omer (49 days) to the Feast of Weeks, which is to be celebrated beginning the fiftieth day ("Pentecost" or fifty). Thus Passover (fulfilled by the Lord's crucifixion) is directly linked to the Feast of Weeks (Harvest) which begins on Pentecost.

***You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end. Exodus 34:22 Amplified***  
(emphasis is the author's)

The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) was observed after the Israelites settled in the Promised Land. On this day, no work was permitted. The people gathered at the Tabernacle to thank God for the harvest. It marked the time when the firstfruits of the wheat harvest were gathered and offered to the Lord. It also commemorated the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai.

The firstfruits of the wheat harvest was presented by the high priest as an elevated or wave offering of two wheat loaves containing leaven. Though they did not know it at that time, the two loaves were a metaphoric representation of Jews and Gentiles who are now both “wheat” (Jew and Gentile as “***one new man***” in Christ).

**Note** the difference. The firstfruits offering of the barley sheaf representing Jesus Christ as the “firstfruits” of the entire harvest on 16 Nisan, the “firstfruits” of redemption, contained no leaven (sin). But the “firstfruits” offering of the two wheat loaves on Pentecost (6 Sivan,) during the Feast of Weeks, specifically contained leaven (sin), indicating the firstfruits harvest of sinful but redeemed mankind, including both Jew and Gentile in Christ.

Following the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ the disciples were commanded to tarry at Jerusalem until the Spirit came (Acts 1:4), and they knew exactly how long they would have to wait. The disciples waited as they were commanded, and on Pentecost (Feast of Weeks), 6 Sivan, the Holy Spirit descended on those 120 believers just as it had always been prophesied through the appointed times and feast days given to the Israelites.

This was also the fulfillment of the coming of the “kingdom of God” with power. (Daniel 2:44)

Before Jesus was crucified He told His followers that the kingdom of God was “near,” not meaning by His presence, but meaning that the kingdom of God would be present in the body of believers from Pentecost forward all the way to the last day resurrection of the saints of all time.

What Daniel 2:44 reveals is this was the specific time, planned by God from before the foundations of the world, for the kingdom of God to be present in the world in the form of the *ekklesia* of Christ (the church), and this form of the kingdom of God would not be: 1) destroyed; 2) left to another people (i.e. returned to national, ethnic Israel); 3) break all these other kingdoms (i.e. the beast kingdom) in pieces; and 4) stand forever.

***And in the days of these kings... (ending with the Roman empire)... shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the***

***kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Daniel 2:44 KJV***  
(insert is the author's)

This truth does not leave room for the possibility that God will somehow select 12,000 Jewish male virgins from each of the twelve tribes of national, ethnic Israel to represent the kingdom of God in the final 3.5 years of “**great tribulation**” before the last day resurrection.

But because we have presumed that the Feast of Weeks was completely fulfilled spiritually by the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, uniting Jews and Gentiles into one new spiritual body we have not imagined that this was an initiatory event followed by the ultimate fulfillment, metaphorically revealed as the sealing and completion of redemption for the metaphorical 144,000.

At the same time, we have not recognized that the coming of the Holy Spirit was not the fulfillment of a “firstfruits” offering of the wheat harvest. The Lord’s fulfillment of the wave offering of the barley sheaf on 16 Nisan, as the firstfruits of the entire harvest, was the literal fulfillment of Firstfruits.

Thus the literal fulfillment of the wave offering of the two wheat loaves on Pentecost has not, yet, taken place.

None, other than Jesus Christ have been “harvested.” The regeneration of the upper room believers was not a “harvest.” And, to my knowledge, there were no Gentiles present in the upper room, because it was not until later that the disciples even acknowledged that Gentiles were included. Therefore, even the possibility that the coming of the Holy Spirit to the upper room believers was the complete fulfillment of the wave offering of the two wheat loaves, as the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, does not exist.

Likewise, most have not recognized that REGENERATION is not the fulfillment of REDEMPTION. It is the initiation of what will ultimately be redeemed (harvested) at the resurrection on the last day.

The Feast of Weeks is also a celebration of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, and the coming of the Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of that event on Mount Sinai with the New Covenant fulfillment being the Law written on our hearts by the presence of the indwelling Spirit.

The coming of the Holy Spirit was a promise or guarantee of a future redemptive harvest, but it was not the harvest itself.

***And not only the creation, but we ourselves too, who have and enjoy the firstfruits of the [Holy] Spirit [a foretaste of the blissful things to come] groan inwardly as we wait for the redemption of our bodies [from sensuality***

*and the grave, which will reveal] our adoption (our manifestation as God's sons). Romans 8:23 Amplified (emphasis is the autor's)*

Receiving the Holy Spirit at the moment of our regeneration is the sealing of our hearts as a deposit or title-deed to the sealing of our foreheads upon the completion of our redemption, which is the “harvest.”

Thus, the coming of the Holy Spirit on that first Pentecost was an initiatory event, not a harvest event. The resurrection of all the saints, living and dead, on the last day is the “harvest.”

The “harvest” does not take place at the moment of saving faith and regeneration. It takes place when our redemption is complete at the resurrection on the last day. Therefore, a “firstfruits” offering of the entire harvest has already taken place on 16 Nisan two millennia ago when Jesus was resurrected, but the “firstfruits” offering of the Feast of Weeks, the wheat harvest, must take place before the wheat harvest is complete (i.e. before the last day resurrection).

This is an amazing kingdom mystery, and many who are reading this will presume that there is some way to explain this mystery away. But I have learned that all the mysteries in scripture are a Holy Spirit signpost indicating the presence of a significant revelation of “hidden manna” that we will only receive at the time in which it is intended to be revealed, and to the people for whom it was intended.

The foreshadowing of Pentecost	The initial fulfillment of Pentecost	The ultimate fulfillment of Pentecost
The Law is received in the wilderness	The Law is written on our hearts	The firstfruits of the wheat harvest are sealed and redeemed, but not removed from the earth

Even that intellectual giant of Dispensationalism, Chuck Missler, whose smug retort to those who do not believe in a pre-trib “rapture,” is, “We’ll explain it on the way up,” confesses that some future Pentecost is the likely timing of the “rapture,” with the last day resurrection being for all the saints not included in the church.

He is, of course, incorrect in his presumption, because the 144,000, who are the “firstfruits unto God and the Lamb,” are not “raptured.” They are sealed for protection from the wrath of both God and Satan during the 7<sup>th</sup> seal events and redeemed as “firstfruits” at that time, but they remain in the earth until the resurrection on the last day.

Review the order demonstrated in the appointed times of the feast days:

1. Feast of Passover (14 Nisan) – originally pictured in the first Passover in Egypt - fulfilled by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ;
2. Feast of Unleavened Bread – fulfilled by the sinless perfection of Jesus of Nazareth;
3. Feast of Firstfruits (16 Nisan) – memorialized by the wave offering of the barley sheaf (without leaven); literally fulfilled by the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the “firstfruits” of the entire harvest (Colossians 1:18 1 Corinthians 15:20);
4. Feast of Weeks - Pentecost (6 Sivan) a.k.a. Feast of Harvest – **initiated** by the coming of the Holy Spirit, writing the Law on our hearts, but yet to be fulfilled by a literal “firstfruits” offering of the wheat harvest (the wave offering of two loaves of wheat representing Jews and Gentiles), the metaphorical 144,000, unto God and the Lamb;
5. Feast of Trumpets – (1 Tishri) to be fulfilled at the final trump of God (the “last day” resurrection of all the saints from Adam forward;
6. Feast of Atonement – (10 Tishri) to be fulfilled and witnessed by the entirety of the elect remnant of mankind as we return to the earth on the great and terrible day of the Lord;
7. Feast of Tabernacles – to be initiated when the Lord Jesus Christ establishes the millennial Davidic kingdom and completed when the earth is renovated by fire and the New Jerusalem comes to the renewed earth as we tabernacle with Him for all eternity.

As born again, regenerated believers in Christ we have the Holy Spirit’s presence with us as a “firstfruits” promise of the experience to come, received as a “sealing” of our spirits (hearts) by the Holy Spirit.

***That [Spirit] is the guarantee of our inheritance [the firstfruits, the pledge and foretaste, the down payment on our heritage], in anticipation of its full redemption and our acquiring [complete] possession of it--to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:14 Amplified*** (emphasis is the author’s)

Thus the sealing of the Holy Spirit experienced as the baptism of the Spirit when we are baptized into the spiritual body of Christ is not the final inheritance and completion of our redemption as adopted sons of God, but a promise or title-deed guaranteeing that final inheritance and the completion of our redemption as long as we remain in the faith.

Jesus of Nazareth is the firstfruits of that final inheritance, but we, and those who are dead in Christ, from Adam forward, are yet to receive the completion of our redemption.

***But the fact is that Christ (the Messiah) has been raised from the dead, and He became the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep [in death].***

***But each in his own rank and turn: Christ (the Messiah) [is] the firstfruits, then those who are Christ's [own will be resurrected] at His coming. 1 Corinthians 15:20,23 Amplified (emphasis is the author's)***

But the 144,000 will have been redeemed as a “***firstfruits unto God and the Lamb***” prior to the last day resurrection, and that event will take place on some future 6 Sivan. This is not the “promise” of redemption, but the actual fulfillment of redemption.

***These are they who have not defiled themselves by relations with women, for they are [pure as] virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These are they who have been ransomed (purchased, redeemed) from among men as the firstfruits for God and the Lamb. Revelation 14:4 Amplified (emphasis is the author's)***

The 144,000 are not, yet, sealed in the foreheads through the opening of the first six seals of the scroll, which means that they are present during the ride of the four horsemen and the initial persecution of the 7<sup>th</sup> and final beast kingdom. Therefore, these metaphorical 144,000 will have been tested by both “tribulation” and “great tribulation” prior to their sealing, but we do not know why some believers are allowed to be martyred prior to this time while the metaphorical 144,000 are not.

***When the Lamb broke open the fifth seal, I saw at the foot of the altar the souls of those whose lives had been sacrificed for [adhering to] the Word of God and for the testimony they had borne.***

***They cried in a loud voice, O [Sovereign] Lord, holy and true, how long now before You will sit in judgment and avenge our blood upon those who dwell on the earth?***

***Then they were each given a long and flowing and festive white robe and told to rest and wait patiently a little while longer, until the number should be complete of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed as they themselves had been. Revelation 6:9-11 Amplified***

The seals are opened progressively, and it is not until immediately prior to the opening of the seventh seal, which will be the beginning of the three and a half years of “**great tribulation**” when the antichrist “man of sin” is “revealed,” that the 144,000 are sealed for protection and redeemed as firstfruits unto God and the Lamb.

The heavenly scene of Revelation 14 takes place after the antichrist “man of sin” has waged war on the saints. But it is the multitude that the Antichrist is allowed to wage war against in the final three and half years, not the 144,000.

It has always been God’s purpose to reveal His love and express His victory over Satan through an elect remnant of mankind in Christ, and not only to reveal it, but to rub it in the enemy’s face like a fourth quarter, last minute, game winning touchdown.

***...to bring to light for everyone what is the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, ...(Why?)...so that through the church...(not through national, ethnic Israel, but through the “Israel of God”)...the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known...(to whom?)...to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. (i.e. Satan and all the fallen angels with him) Ephesians 3:8-10 ESV (inserts and emphasis are the author’s)***

Tertullian, AD 160-220, a church father still living under the apostolic tradition, penned this purpose of God succinctly, though he was unaware of the astonishing way it would be carried out in the final three and a half years of the age:

*“By allowing a permission for the operation of [Satan’s] designs, God acted consistently with the purpose of His own goodness. He deferred the devil’s destruction for the very same reason that He postponed the restitution of man. For He afforded room for a conflict, wherein man might crush his enemy with the same freedom of his will as had made him succumb to Satan...[And it enables man] to worthily recover his salvation by a victory. In this way, also, the devil receives a more bitter punishment, by being vanquished by him whom he had previously injured. By these means, God is discovered to be so much the more good.”*

Thus the purpose of the firstfruits sealing and redemption of the metaphorical 144,000, who represent and minister the fullness of Christ in the final three and half

years of “**great tribulation**,” is to manifest God’s eternal purpose for the “Israel of God” in Christ in the face of the enemy’s own fully manifested presence in the earth.

This will be the great, heroic completion of the great commission given to the body of Christ until the end of the age.

Immediately after the sealing of the 144,000 we notice an emerging “multitude” or a “vast host” of uncountable numbers from every nation, tribe, and tongue. These appear later in heaven before the throne of God, and they are identified as the saints who have come from the tribulation.

***And they have overcome (conquered) him by means of the blood of the Lamb and by the utterance of their testimony...***(about who they are in Christ)..., ***for they did not love and cling to life even when faced with death [holding their lives cheap till they had to die for their witnessing].*** Revelation 12:11 Amplified (insert is the author’s)

***He...(the Antichrist)... was further permitted to wage war on God's holy people (the saints) and to overcome them. And power was given him to extend his authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation...***Revelation 13:7 Amplified (insert is the author’s)

Here we see a paradox. We see that the Antichrist is permitted to wage war on God’s holy people (the saints who have been sealed in their hearts with the pledge of their future redemption, but have not, yet, been redeemed) from every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And, at the same time, we see an uncountable number from every tribe and people and tongue and nation being saved.

So who is it that is preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ with great anointing and power to this uncountable number of tribulation saints from every nation, tribe, and tongue without themselves being hurt or martyred by the Antichrist who is now possessed by Satan himself?

It is the metaphorical 144,000 who have been “sealed” for protection and redeemed as a firstfruits unto God and the Lamb, who then minister the truth of the gospel to the multitudes from every nation, tribe, and tongue in the midst of the Antichrist’s reign over these same people.

If this was the only revelation we had concerning the glorious future of the “wise virgins” of the church, it should be enough to light a fire in the heart of any sleeping virgin who receives it. But there is MORE as we examine another mysterious group, the woman clothed with the sun, whom dispensationalists and Zionists have erroneously identified as national, ethnic Israel.

Among the prophecies related to the 144,000 are the promise to the Philadelphian church of protection in the tribulation, the “wise virgins,” the 144,000,

the woman clothed with the sun, the Bozrah sheepfold (Micah 2:12,13) , and the last exodus (Jeremiah 23:1-8 ).

There are also a multitude of types and shadows related to this astonishing end times group such as the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace for refusing to worship Nebuchadnezzar as “god.” These are IN the furnace, but they cannot be hurt by the fire. And they are in the presence of the LORD though they are still in the world.

Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the 144,000 company:

*Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.  
For behold, darkness will cover the earth  
And deep darkness the peoples;  
But the LORD will rise upon you  
And His glory will appear upon you. Isaiah 60:1,2 NASB*

May He grant you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you study and meditate on what has been written here, because everything fits together perfectly in the prophetic scheme, just as the One who knows the end from the beginning has intended.