

Who Are the 144,000?

Bruce Bird—November 8, 2025

There's been a long-standing debate within the Churches of God, specifically: who are the 144,000?

- Are there two groups of 144,000, or is there just one?
- How about the great innumerable multitude?
- Will they all stand on the Sea of Glass?

There's much confusion on this subject. A number of Churches of God state that the total number of firstfruits will only be one group of 144,000 and the great innumerable multitude.

Now, back in 1487_{B.C.}, God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. He took them down to his people, and that was on the Day of Pentecost (Exo. 19). But:

Do the Israelites have a heart to obey? *Because God said in:*

Exodus 19:6: “**These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.**” And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words, which the LORD commanded him. And all the people answered together and said, **‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do.’**...” (vs 6-8).

- But did they?
- How long did they?

Deuteronomy 5:29—*God said:* “Oh, that there were such a heart in them **that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always...**”

We can pick up the account in Acts 2. We see the Holy Spirit was not poured out until the New Testament because we find in:

Acts 2:1: “And when the Day of Pentecost, the fiftieth day, was being fulfilled, they were all with one accord in the same place.... [keeping the Day of Pentecost] ...And suddenly *there* came from heaven a sound like *the* rushing of a powerful wind, and filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them divided tongues as of fire, and sat upon each one of them” (vs 1-3).

Now, *there's in different languages because in v 6:* “And when word of this went out, the multitude came together and were confounded, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.” *That was kind of unique. It would be the same today.*

Verse 11: “Cretes and Arabians; we hear them speaking in our own languages the great things of God.”

In conclusion, it was a mixed bag of Israelites and Gentiles, and 3,000 were baptized on that day. We find that here in:

Verse 41: “Then those who joyfully received his message were baptized; and about three thousand souls were added that day”—*Gentiles and Israelites, that they weren't all Israelites!*

We know the resurrection comes at the end of the three and a half year Tribulation.

Matthew 24:30: “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 upon the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet...” (vs 30-31)—*singular!*

Does that sound a little bit like Pentecost?

“...and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to *the* other” (v 31).

Rev. 15 speaks of a resurrection to meet Christ in the clouds and stand on the Sea of Glass. We're familiar with these Scriptures:

Revelation 15:2: “And I saw a Sea of Glass mingled with fire, and those who had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, *and* over the number of his name, standing on the Sea of Glass, having *the* lyres of God.”

In Rev. 7, we have 144,000, and another 144,000 in Rev. 14. Are they one and the same? Let's examine, because Rev. 7 talks about the great multitude and the 144,000.

REVELATION 7

Revelation 7:1: “And after these things I [John] saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that the wind might not blow on the earth, or on the sea, or on any tree. Then 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 given to damage the earth and the sea, saying, ‘Do not damage the earth, or the sea, or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.’ And I [John] heard the number of those **who were sealed: one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel**” (vs 1-4).

Now, there's a time gap between v 3 and v 4;

quite a time gap.

Verse 3 says: “Do not damage the earth, or the sea, or the trees **until we have sealed...**”—*that’s future tense when this was written!*

But, v 4: “...those who **were** sealed...” is **past tense!** So there’s a timeframe here. So, they go into the Tribulation **unsealed**, they come out **sealed**. **IF** we, brethren, have met the qualifications of Heb. 6:1-3:

- repentance from dead works
- faith toward God
- we’ve been baptized

we can be assured we have the Holy Spirit, and we are sealed!

And therefore, the none of them, *none of us could be in this group of 144,000, because **we’ve already been sealed!***

But this group in Rev. 7, are **not sealed** until they come out of the Tribulation. They go in unsealed, they come out sealed. What does sealing mean?

2-Corinthians 1:22: “Who has also **sealed us** and **has given the earnest of the Spirit** in our hearts.”

We’ve been begotten with the earnest of the eternal life. Now, Ephesians 1 goes on to talk about this. We’ve been given the down payment of eternal life.

Ephesians 1:13: “in Whom you also trusted after hearing the Word of the Truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in Whom also, after believing, you were **sealed with the Holy Spirit** of promise, **which is the earnest of our inheritance...**” (vs 13-14).

IF we have the Holy Spirit, *we have been sealed!* Therefore, none of us here can be in this group of 144,000 of Rev. 7. They’re called, future converted in Tribulation and converted by whatever means God uses.

Rev. 7:5-8—All the people are the lineage of Jacob or Israel; 12 tribes, no Gentiles. 12,000 times 12 is 144,000 when I went to school.

Rev. 14 is quite a different story.

Now, we can turn to Rev. 7 again and you can follow it if you choose to, because I think we know these Scriptures pretty well.

Revelation 7:14: “...‘They are the ones who have come out of the Great Tribulation; and they have washed their robes...’”

Hosea is a Scripture we know. Hosea speaks of our Israelite forefathers. Question: Were they faithful? Well, the answer is *yes and no*. They will

acknowledge their offenses:

Hosea 5:15: “...they confess their guilt and seek My face; in their affliction they will seek Me earnestly.”

Well, brethren, our forefathers were yo-yos. Is this typical of our people? *Yes!* They rise to great power. They get vanquished, driven off. They pray to God. God sends and deliver, and it’s a yo-yo, back and forth.

Proverbs 14:34: “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.”

Isn’t that so true? When you think about us as a nation, brethren, we’re not very righteous. Every summer ‘gay-day’ parades in every city across the land. Then, of course, that’s not even mentioning the abortion that goes on, but it’s a strong indication that modern-day Israel could well be in captivity by the return of Christ.

Notice this Tribulation, 144,000 Israelites are brought to repentance and sealed, and the great multitude, as well. Where from? *The Great Tribulation!* God is going to supernaturally seal these 144,000, because you remember Cornelius, when Peter went to him, Cornelius and his household received the Holy Spirit, and they prophesied, and later they were baptized. So that means baptism is still valid. It hasn’t changed anything.

These are some of the guests who are called at the last minute (Rev. 7). Similar to the laborers in the vineyard, they were all given a job. Some of them spent eight hours, ten hours in the vineyard in the heat of the day. Some came along later, one hour, and they all got paid one silver coin each (Matt. 20).

So, it means some people have been called for many, many years, some get called at the last times. Could this be some of our Protestant neighbors that live into the Tribulation? They’re still keeping Sunday, they’re not headed there now, not to salvation, but they could. But they refuse the Mark of the Beast, and they’ll have to repent and confess, *because you can’t do anything without repentance!*

They’ve got to come from somewhere, brethren. How would we dig up 144,000? That’s a lot of folks. But **IF** they come, **IF** God calls them, I think we’re all going to be happy with it. They go into the Tribulation **unsealed** and come out **sealed!** They will stand on the Sea of Glass, and they, too, can be spirit beings.

REVELATION 14

As mentioned, there is a space of time between the resurrection up to the Sea of Glass, and to when Jesus Christ and the saints touch down on the

Mount of Olives, three and a half months later with another 144,000, because we find that here in

Revelation 14:1: “And I looked, and I beheld *the* Lamb standing on Mount Sion, **and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand**, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads.”

Who?

Verse 13: “And I heard a voice from heaven say to me, ‘Write: Blessed *are* the dead who die in *the* Lord from this time forward. Yes, says the Spirit, so that they may rest from their labors; **and their works follow them.**”

We’re happy to know that *our works will follow us!* So, the Old Testament and New Testament saints and martyrs up to the present time with us today. The firstfruits is a small harvest. **Who would be in this group?**

Verse 2: “Then I heard a voice from heaven, like *the* sound of many waters, and like *the* sound of great thunder; and I heard *the* sound of lyre players playing their lyres. And they were singing a new song before the Throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders....” (vs 2-3).

So, **redeemed** from the earth, *past tense!*

Verse 3: “And they were singing a new song... And no one was able to learn... These are the ones **who were not defiled...**” (vs 3-4)—**with false doctrines of Egypt, and Babylon, and Greece, and Rome!** And the same to this day:

- sun-worship
- sunrise services
- trinity
- rapture
- saint-worship
- heaven or hell at death
- immortality of the soul
- multiple gods

That’s still with us, brethren! It was back there then, it hasn’t changed today.

So, does this not mean that once converted, they do not defile themselves with any of the churches of this world? *We all remember the 1990s, brethren!* We were there! Everything was becoming fluffy, no substance to the messages, people were dropping out. *It was a tragic time!*

I remember one old couple that came (they’ve since died) but, they came from a little village way back in the bush, and they would drive out every Sabbath. Well, it got too much for them, so, they moved into Tisdale, they rented a little house, and they were there every Sabbath.

But things started to change, and they could see it, and suddenly, they didn’t come anymore. We drove over to their house, and you look in the windows, and the furniture’s gone. They vamoosed! They threw everything in their truck, they headed back to their little town, or their little house, and they disappeared. Later, they did appear in the Church that we were in, and we got them established in Prince Albert, and they later on died in the faith, full of years, so that was good! ***So, some people can see it,*** and a whole lot couldn’t see it.

Now, this group of Rev. 14:

- have the name of God written on their foreheads; Rev. 7 doesn’t
- they sing a new song(v 3), that they only can learn
- they’re redeemed, past tense, from the earth over a period of years, say, last 6,000 years
- not defiled with false churches
- they remained virgins after they were baptized
- they follow the Lord (Rev. 14: 4)
- they’re purchased from among men
- they’re the firstfruits without guile

I think in Matthew Christ talks ***of beholden Nathaniel, a man without guile!*** There’s precious few of us without guile. We all have to work on that, but you all remember that movie called Forrest Gump, and there was truly a man without guile. Now, I don’t mean Tom Hanks, I mean Forrest Gump.

Let’s understand that *not all those in the first resurrection* are the Bride of Christ. The 144,000 of Rev. 14 are a mix of Israelites and Gentiles. It’s the same within the Churches of God. We have ethnic diversity, and it’s a wonderful thing. You compare this to Rev. 7 because all 12,000 of each of the 12 tribes ***are all Israelites!*** Now, when you consider such patriarchs as Abel, Enoch, Noah and Abraham, they wouldn’t qualify because they’re not Israelites. See, Israel hadn’t been born at the times of these men.

Israel had not yet been born, yet, so these individuals would have to be in the group in Rev. 14 because they are not Israelites.

Now, I discussed this at length with one of the higher profile individuals in our former association. I said, ‘There’s two groups.’ he said, ‘No, there’s only one.’ We debated it and we left it at that. He said:

Well, maybe, Bruce, I’ll tap you on the shoulder in the Millennium and I’ll say, you were right, but that’s not what we teach and that’s not in our books.

I thought: No, that isn’t in your books and that’s not what you teach. *That doesn’t make it right!*

You know, there's other high profile individuals that since were deceased in one of our Churches of God says:

Our people aren't ready for it. I know all about it, but our people aren't ready for it.

Another one who was on the council of elders, as well, all these were council members, said:

It's good enough for Herbert Armstrong, it's good enough for me.

Brethren, it wasn't.

Do any of you remember the autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong? It's a long read and there's two of them. This is volume two. There's a story in there written around the story about 1927. Mrs. Armstrong was sick unto death. She had just hours to live, maybe a day or two. HWA was concerned, of course, and finally they found a man who worked at the Billy Sunday Tabernacle. When he prayed and laid hands on people and anointed them, they got well.

He was summoned, he came, he prayed over Mrs. Armstrong, and she got well. The next morning, she got jumped up, had a breakfast, she got her clothes on, she was absolutely healed, even of some long-standing problems.

A tremendous miracle. Now, we would say this is a man of God. HWA certainly thought so. And you know how he would do researching. He would write reams of information and Scriptures and he took this to the man of God and said:

This refutes Sunday keeping. This shows we haven't got a leg to stand on to keep Sunday. Would you study it?

And the man says, 'Well, I'm not much of a scholar, but the pastor and I will go through it. I'll go through it with him.'

Herbert W. left it with him, went home. And a few days later, he's excited, he thought, 'Oh, I'm going to find this man of God.' He went there, and this 'man of God' said, 'Yeah, well, we studied it.' *Well, did you find anything wrong?* 'No, brother Armstrong, we didn't. Scriptures were good, good research. Then H.W.A. said, 'Well?'

Brother Armstrong, we just feel you shouldn't be messing with this. You're going to get you all confused. Just leave it alone. We can't go and change everything.

Question:

- Was Herbert W. opening a door for these individuals in the Billy Sunday Tabernacle in Portland? *I'd say, yeah, he was!*

- Did they walk through it? *They nibbled into it, and they slammed it shut!*

They don't want to go there!

Herbert Armstrong went home dejected, discouraged, depressed. He said, 'There was a man of God,' and he felt kicked in the stomach.

Life went on. Later on, he did come across this man at the Billy Sunday Tabernacle, and this man was discouraged and down and just dragging around. And he said, 'Brother Armstrong, God no longer hears me. He's left me. I don't know what's wrong.'

H.W.A. said, as he went home, 'I knew what had happened. He'd opened a door, and they rejected it, because:

Hosea 4:6: "...Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being as a priest to Me...."

The door shut! Could this happen to any of our Churches of God?

You think about the Pentecost resurrection to a Sea of Glass. It's so plain in the Bible: two groups of 144,000! The Mark of the Beast, and more.

Will any more doors open to these brethren, and the hierarchy? They need our prayers, and the brethren need prayers, because they look up to the hierarchy with respect. You know, it wasn't just me that took this information. I know of another elder, and he tried, and he said:

The brethren aren't ready for it. I know all about it. I know all about it. Don't tell me. The brethren aren't ready for it.

And another individual and his wife went to another man on the council. He said, 'It's good enough for Herbert Armstrong, it's good enough for me.' *And that's where it stayed.*

Does Rev. 3:14 come to mind when we consider the seven churches of Rev. 2 & 3? The last specific one, 'rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing,' you can't help them? *It does to me.*

Is it only the 144,000 of Rev. 14 who will be the Bride of Christ and the rest are guests? *Maybe, maybe not!* It has not yet clearly been revealed just yet. ***It will be who God chooses!***

THE GREAT INNUMERABLE MULTITUDE:

Rev. 7—one more group, *the great innumerable multitude*, we've covered it, they come into the Tribulation unsealed, they come out sealed, they, too, can stand on the Sea of Glass with us.

Looks like to be a mixture of white and black and oriental and brown and red and many different

languages and cultures. All repented, baptized, and sealed with the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 19:9: “And he said to me, ‘Write: Blessed *are* those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’”

So this great multitude will have to be resurrected, be in the first resurrection, so they are not going to enter the Millennium as physical.

Rev. 11, the seven trumpets are blown and the saints are resurrected. This means once converted they do not defile themselves with any of the churches of this world as what happened in our Worldwide Church of God in the 90s.

We have a beautiful church. It's the United Church of Canada building in Melfort, Saskatchewan. Great brick edifice, beautiful, probably 100-years-old. There are steps leading up, many, many steps leading up to the main doorway. And guess what they're painted? '*Pride*' colors! How could they fall so low?

1-Co. 3 speaks of laying of a sound foundation and if we do, it will show.

1 Corinthians 3:13: “The work of each one shall be manifested; for the day *of trial* will declare *it*, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall prove what kind of work each one's is. If the work that anyone has built endures, he shall receive a reward. If the work of anyone is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but *he* himself shall be saved, yet, as through fire” (vs 13-15). *Our works will endure!*

- the 144,000 of Rev. 14 are a mix of Israelite and Gentiles, and *no innumerable multitude!*
- Acts 2:9-11 shows this group of 3,000, had to be in the above group of Rev. 14, because they were a mix of Israelites and Gentiles.

All converted, all baptized, a mix, and all dead for almost 2,000 years. They have to be in the Rev. 14 group.

Rev. 19—what a terrific chapter this is, because those who are called to the wedding supper will participate in the *first resurrection* in power and glory, and what an encouraging chapter!

Revelation 19:6: “And I heard a voice like that of a great multitude, and like *the* sound of many waters, and *the* sound of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘Hallelujah! For *the* Lord God Almighty has reigned. Let us be glad and shout with joy; and let us give

glory to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.’ And it was granted to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, pure and bright; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. And he said to me, ‘Write: Blessed *are* those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb’” (vs 6-9).

So, the Apostle John spelled it out for us! There are two groups of 144,000 *and* a great innumerable multitude who will stand with us on the Sea of Glass as firstfruits.

In conclusion, “...**Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb....**” *It's a win-win situation!*

Scriptural References:

- 1) Exodus 19:6-8
- 2) Deuteronomy 5:29
- 3) Acts 2:1-3, 6, 11, 41
- 4) Matthew 24:30-31
- 5) Revelation 15:2
- 6) Revelation 7:1-4
- 7) 2-Corinthians 1:22
- 8) Ephesians 1:13-14
- 9) Revelation 7:14
- 10) Hosea 5:15
- 11) Proverbs 14:34
- 12) Revelation 14:1, 13, 2-4
- 13) Hosea 4:6
- 14) Revelation 19:9
- 15) 1-Corinthians 3:13-15
- 16) Revelation 19:6-9

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Hebrews 6:1-3
- Revelation 7:5-8
- Matthew 20
- Revelation 3:14
- Revelation 2 & 3
- Revelation 11
- Acts 2:9-11

BB:bo/po
Transcribed: 11-12-25

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