

## 6 Reasons Why the 144,000 are Not Jews in the Tribulation Period

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According to the most popular evangelical scheme, the next last-days event will be the “secret rapture” of the church. No believer will be “left behind.” But the “tribulation period” will be a time of second chances, because there will be 144,000 Jews who will evangelize the world. On the other hand, Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that only 144,000 of their members before 1935 will go to heaven, but the rest of their members will still be saved, but will reside on earth. Apparently, there is not enough room in heaven for millions.

But what does the Bible say about the 144,000? There are two passages in the Book of Revelation about the 144,000:

*And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel (7:4ff).*

*Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads (14:1ff).*

The only basis for teaching the 144,000 as Jews is in Revelation 7:5-8, where the names of the tribes of Israel are listed, with each tribe contributing 12,000 people to the 144,000. But here are five reasons why we know that the 144,000 are not Jews, but the great number of Christians from all the nations.

**First**, in Chapter 7, after the Apostle John hears an angel name the 12 tribes, he looks and sees “*a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands*” (verse 9). Therefore, the “12 tribes” that John hears are also the “great multitude” that he sees when he looks.

How is this “great multitude” described? First, they come from all over the world, the same language used in 5:9, where the Lamb is praised, “*for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.*” The multitude is “*clothed in white robes,*” the same language we find in 19:8, where the Bride of Christ “*clothe[s] herself with fine linen, bright and pure.*” No doubt, these are Christians.

**Second**, both God and Satan “seal” or “mark” their followers. God seals all his people with the Holy Spirit (Rev 7:3-4; Eph 1:13; 4:30). In the same way, in 13:16, 14:9, 11, Satan marks his followers on the forehead or in the hand. God seals all who are in his kingdom, and Satan does the same.

**Third**, the 144,000 who are sealed are called the “*servants of our God*” (7:3). Are there only 144,000 Jews who are called “servants of God”? No, all believers are called this name. For example, in the new heaven and new earth, “*the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him*” (see also 1:1; 2:20; 19:2; 19:5).

**Fourth**, the 144,000 are those “*who had been redeemed from the earth*” (14:3; see also 14:4). Who are the redeemed? Of course, all believers had been redeemed by Christ’s blood! “*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us*” (Gal 3:13).

**Fifth**, the 144,000 are also called *“firstfruits for God and the Lamb”* (14:4). Who are called “firstfruits” in the New Testament? None other than all believers, such as in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, *“But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved”* (see also Jas 1:18).

**Sixth and last**, as in all apocalyptic writings like Revelation, Zechariah and Daniel, symbols and numbers are key in interpretation. These books are not to be interpreted literalistically. This applies to numbers in Revelation. The numbers 2 and 12 represent the church, 3 for God, 4 for the earth, 7 and 10 for perfection or completion, and 1,000 for a large number.

So the number 144,000 is a combination of  $12 \times 12 \times 1,000$ . We see this clearly in 21:12-14, a description of the *“holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God”* (21:10):

*It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed... And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

This city is the church, the Bride of Christ, *“the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”* (21:2). On the twelve gates are inscribed the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, representing the Old Testament believers. On the 12 foundations are inscribed the names of the 12 apostles, representing the New Testament church. Combined as  $12 \times 12$ , the number 144 represents all believers from Genesis to Revelation. Also, notice the dimensions of the holy city: it is 12,000 stadia (2,200 kilometers) cube (by the way, much larger than the 3,000-meter Borg Cube).

What about the number 1,000? One thousand is  $10 \times 10 \times 10$ , ten in the Bible usually symbolizing completeness or perfection, such as the Ten Commandments, ten plagues against Egypt, ten talents, etc. In Psalm 50:10, we read that God owns the cattle on “a thousand hills.” Does God own the cattle on the 1,001th hill? Certainly, because he created every single cattle in the world! In this and many other instances, including its use in Revelation, the number 1,000 must not be taken literally.

Therefore, combining 144 with 1,000 represents **a great, complete and perfect multitude of believers from beginning to end**. As Jesus said, *“And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day”* (John 6:39).