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THE GREAT MULTITUDE

[This is Part 2 in a series of four articles. All four are connected to a common subject and should ideally be read in sequence. The 4 articles in this series are:

Part 1 = "Great Tribulation" And "The Great Tribulation"

Part 2 = The Great Multitude

Part 3 = The 144,000

Part 4 = The 144,000 Cannot Be Physical Israelites

Articles 2, 3 and 4 are based on the foundation of the article(s) that preceded them.]

In the first article of this series we established that in the Bible the expression "the" great tribulation does not necessarily refer to the very stressful events that precede the second coming of Jesus Christ, the period we in God's Church have commonly referred to as "the great tribulation". Now we are ready to examine the only place in the entire New Testament where this expression is used with the definite article.

And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are they which came **out of great tribulation**, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:14)

The Greek text for "out of great tribulation" reads "**ek tes thlipseos tes megales**". The word "tes" is the definite article, and a word-for-word translation reads "**out of the tribulation the great**".

So here we have another example of obfuscation by the translators. They should have correctly translated this expression as "out of **the** great tribulation". But they didn't do that. By omitting the definite article in their translation, **they implied an unjustified link to Matthew 24:21** and to Mark 13:19, where no definite articles are used.

When Revelation 7:14 is correctly translated as "out of the great tribulation", then we have the following situation:

1) At no stage prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ does the Bible ever talk about "the great tribulation". All we have before Christ's second coming are references to "tribulation" and to "great tribulation", and at least three distinct periods of "great tribulation" are identified in the New Testament, though obviously only one will be "the worst ever". See the previous article for details.

2) It is only at some point after Jesus Christ's 1000-year rule has passed, at a time when a certain group of people stands before the throne of God the Father, that then "one of the elders" before the throne of God introduces the expression "out of **the** great tribulation". But that scene represents a time more than 1000 years after Christ's second coming.

We need to understand two things:

- 1) **Who** are the people in that "great multitude"?
- 2) **What** have those people "come out of"?

The answers to these two questions will clear up exactly what the expression "out of the great tribulation" in Revelation 7 means.

So let's now carefully examine the second half of Revelation chapter 7.

REVELATION 7:9-17

After this I beheld, and, lo, **a great multitude**, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, **stood before the throne**, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; (Revelation 7:9)

The key for us here is to **accept what this verse actually tells us**. It is a mistake to view this verse through the information presented five verses later, in verse 14. For the time being we need to ignore the question of "where have these people come from?". That we can address later, when we get down to verse 14. We should deal with verse 9 before we deal with verse 14.

For now let's try to absorb all the information that verse 9 presents to us. Here is what we have:

1) Here is a huge group of people **standing before the throne of God the Father**. This statement provides us with a major clue as to the timing of this particular scene.

QUESTION: Can this take place at any time before Christ's second coming?

ANSWER: Absolutely not!

QUESTION: Can this happen during the millennium?

ANSWER: Absolutely not!

QUESTION: Can this happen during the 100-year period for those in the second resurrection?

ANSWER: Absolutely not!

Apart from the very short period allocated for the marriage supper at the time of Christ's second coming, where those in the first resurrection get to see God the Father, no human beings ever get the opportunity to be in the presence of God the Father **until** the time of the new heaven and the new earth and the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:3 specifically tells us:

... Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and **He will dwell with them**, and they shall be His people, and **God Himself shall be with them**, *and be* their God. (Revelation 21:3)

This is the scene we have in Revelation 7:9, people from all possible backgrounds dwelling in the

presence of God the Father.

So to spell this out in very plain terms:

The great multitude is pictured as standing before the throne of God the Father in the New Jerusalem on the New Earth.

This is not a vision of something that will take place in heaven! People don't go to heaven! God doesn't want human beings in heaven. This is a scene for what life will be like for all future eternity. This scene represents the completion of God's plan of salvation for mankind.

2) The people in the great multitude are all "**clothed with white robes**". These white clothes represent "the righteousness of saints" (see Revelation 19:8). This means that all the people in this multitude had in their lives come to a real repentance. They are all very obviously spirit beings at the point portrayed in the vision. It is impossible for them to still be physical human beings.

But there will be only two occasions, three if we include Jesus Christ, when human beings are changed or resurrected to spirit life. The Apostle Paul listed those three occasions in 1 Corinthians 15. Notice:

But **every man in his own order**: (1) Christ the firstfruits; (2) afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. (3) Then *come* the end (ones), when He (Christ) shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. (1 Corinthians 15:23-24)

Paul's expression "**the end ones**" refers to the group that **completes the Family of God**. They are the people who will submit their lives to God in the millennium and also during the 100-year period attached to the millennium.

Revelation 7:9-17 is a vision of those "end ones" standing before God the Father. The actual scene in Revelation 7:9 is **the moment when Jesus Christ hands over the whole Kingdom of God to God the Father**. From then onwards that "great multitude" will serve God "day and night in His temple" (see Revelation 7:15).

3) This perspective of a time after there are no more physical human beings will have a major influence on what is important to "people" then, and what things will have been totally forgotten. Specifically ...

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for **the former things are passed away**. (Revelation 21:4)

All former things, **everything that happened before that point in time**, will be forgotten; it will be as though it had never happened, the principle of Obadiah 1:16.

Specifically, **nobody in that group will remember their former identity**, who they had been married to, who their children had been, who their parents had been, where they had worked, what trials they might have endured, what race and what nationality they had been, whether they had been related to anyone who was destroyed in the lake of fire, what great things they might have achieved or accomplished; what great honors might have been bestowed on them in their physical lives, what skills they might have had. People will have new names because all old names will be erased from memory.

The entire Old Testament and the entire New Testament will be completely forgotten. God's two great laws will be upheld without any references to "the Scriptures".

All those things are a part of "the former things" that will have passed away.

Neither David nor Uriah nor anyone else will ever again remember that David had committed adultery with Uriah's wife. Neither Paul nor anyone else will ever remember that Paul had initially persecuted the Church of God. Neither you nor I nor anyone else will ever remember any of the sins you and I have committed in the course of our lives.

At that point in time nobody will even know that in the past there had been a time (or many times) of great tribulation. Anything and everything that could produce "tears" or fear or embarrassment for anyone will be erased from memory.

There is no place in the Family of God for any kind of human memories!

In that environment there will never be any references to "a great tribulation" or to "the great tribulation at Christ's second coming", or to any other times of stress and trial and punishments for rebellious human beings. All those things will be as though they had never happened. The past will be a total blank for those who will by then have become members of the Family of God.

We also need to understand that **God the Father** and **Jesus Christ** Themselves also want to blot out of Their own memories everything that preceded the completion of God's plan of salvation for mankind. **They too want to forget the past, and forget it perfectly!**

When God says "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (see Hebrews 10:17, etc.), it means that the knowledge of the course of human history will have been removed from God's memory, because human history is an endless chronicle of sins and iniquities. God is **not** referring to **selectively forgetting** some things! **God is talking about a blanket amnesia for everything that preceded the time of the New Jerusalem!** And that will apply to God and to all those in His Family, and to all the holy angels.

God the Father will also forget the trials that Jesus Christ willingly endured so that we human beings might have access to salvation. He doesn't ever again, from that point onwards, want to remember that Jesus Christ was crucified for us. That specific knowledge will also be a part of "the former things" which are destined to pass away.

Future, endless eternity lies ahead. And it will be totally unfettered from anything that happened in the past. Nothing in the past will then matter in any way! Never again will anything that happened in the past, before the creation of the new universe, be mentioned or even thought of. All past relationships will be meaningless and erased from memory. The only relationship that people will be aware of at that point will be that of being "children of God".

AN ANALOGY

Consider the following.

God created this entire physical universe. God also created all the life forms on this planet Earth. We can readily see that a baby has the potential to develop into a full-grown mature adult. Every part of the body just has to grow, until maturity is reached.

But God also created the process we call metamorphosis. When we see a little tadpole, then that doesn't give us any indication that at some point that tadpole will change into a frog with four legs. And

once it has become a frog, then it no longer functions like a tadpole.

Or we might think of how a caterpillar changes into a butterfly. The caterpillar spins a cocoon, and in time a much more attractive butterfly emerges from that cocoon.

Now it is God who created all life and who created this process of metamorphosis. The Apostle Paul tells us that the physical creation can help us to understand even God's "eternal power and Godhead".

For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (Romans 1:20)

I believe that God wants us to learn something from this process of metamorphosis. We human beings start out as "one species", i.e. we start out as physical mortal human beings. And God's intention is that we will morph into a completely different species, i.e. we are to become spirit beings in the Family of God.

Now a frog doesn't remember what life was like as a tadpole. And a butterfly doesn't remember what life was like as a caterpillar. The changes they underwent blotted out the past and created a totally different focus. What was important for the caterpillar is totally unimportant for the butterfly.

There is a lesson here for us.

When we are changed into spirit-born sons and daughters of God, then what life was like when we were only "caterpillars" or "tadpoles" will have been totally obliterated from our minds and from our memories. The things and the relationships that seem so extremely important to us today in our here-and-now physical existence will have no meaning to us once we are changed into spirit beings.

That is something the process of metamorphosis is supposed to help us understand. The old life form is left behind, and **nothing is carried over** to the new life form, except for the attributes of godly character which we developed.

My point here is this:

When we get to the point in time where the great multitude stands before God's throne, then nobody in the Family of God will be interested in knowing anything about any "tribulations" that took place before the first universe "passed away" (see Revelation 21:1).

Any reference to "the great tribulation that preceded Jesus Christ's second coming" will at that point arouse no more interest than trying to remind a butterfly of what life was like as a caterpillar. Such a reference to some tribulation wouldn't mean anything to anyone at that point.

But let's now continue with the description of that great multitude.

We are told that this great multitude includes people from "**all nations**" (Greek "ethnos", nations of the world) and **kindreds** (Greek "phule", a tribe, race, nation), and **people** (Greek "laos", another word for groupings amongst people), and **languages** (Greek "glossa", referring to languages and dialects).

What is the point here? What is God trying to tell us? Why didn't God just tell us that this multitude comes "from all nations"? Wouldn't that have conveyed the same message? Why belabor the point by adding "all kindreds" and "all people" and "all languages" to this description?

What is the point?

The point is this: God wants us to understand that this group is made up of people from thousands of different ethnic and social and racial backgrounds, representing thousands of languages and dialects, representing every racial and every ethnic and every national group that has lived on this earth **since the time of Noah's flood.**

Consider one other point that is usually overlooked when people claim that this great multitude has come out of "the great tribulation" which will take place shortly before Jesus Christ's second coming.

The tribulation that precedes the second coming of Jesus Christ is supposed to be "**the time of Jacob's trouble**" (see Jeremiah 30:7). The tribulation is supposed to be the persecution of Israel. And the Day of the Lord then is the time of trouble for the rest of the world. You've heard that explanation many times, right?

Here is the problem:

If the great tribulation is the time when Israel is persecuted and in slavery, then how on earth could the people coming out of that tribulation possibly be from "all nations & kindreds & people & languages"?

Can you see the problem?

"**The** great multitude" of Revelation 7:9 is simply not compatible with any Scriptures that refer to the time of Israel's trouble before the second coming. Is it "all nations & all languages" or is it "Israel"? We can't have it both ways.

A careful evaluation of the relevant Scriptures makes clear that the great multitude of Revelation 7:9 cannot possibly refer to Israelites who have come out of the specific tribulation on Israel that will occur before Christ's second coming. Think this through carefully.

Anyway, let's continue.

This great multitude includes people from ethnic groups and from tribal groups that have died out, where there are no representatives alive today. Think of the novel "The Last of the Mohicans" by J.F. Cooper. Assuming the premise of that book to be correct, there are no descendants of the Mohicans today, but there will be Mohicans in the great multitude, if you can follow this line of thought.

That's what God means with the description "of all nations & kindreds & people & languages".

The great multitude represents some people who lived in completely different ages from other people in that great multitude. What this tells us is that this great multitude can only be brought together by means of **a resurrection from the dead.** Nothing else is able to bring together people from "all nations & kindreds & people & languages".

I might add that it also requires a resurrection from the dead for that great multitude to be able to stand before God's throne in the first place. And no resurrection is ever limited to members of a specific generation.

To spell this out in plain terms:

It is utterly absurd to believe that "the great multitude" consists of "Laodiceans who repent during the Tribulation". It is equally absurd to believe that this group consists of people who were all alive at the same time.

Let me add another shocker!

I believe that "the great tribulation" will only motivate very, very few people, if any at all, to repent!

NO REPENTANCE DURING THE TRIBULATION

Troubles, trials, tests and tribulations almost never lead to anyone repenting; they almost never lead to anyone really changing their mind regarding how they relate to God.

You didn't know that, did you? You have always thought that when the tribulation starts, then a fair portion of those lukewarm Laodiceans will finally get around to repenting, right?

Sorry to disappoint you, but that's not how repentance works.

Yes, I do believe that **in a very small number of cases serious trials can trigger the process of repentance in certain people**. But in the overwhelming number of cases (my guess is in 98 - 99.9% of cases) trials do not lead people to genuinely repent. Trials only make carnal people angry and bitter.

When a human mind is carnal and "enmity against God" (Romans 8:7) before a severe trial starts, then that trial will cause that carnal mind to be more hostile and more resentful towards God. No trials will motivate the carnal mind to repent.

Here is what God tells us:

And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues **yet repented not** of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: (Revelation 9:20)

Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts. (Revelation 9:21)

Here are people going through some of the most severe trials ever poured out upon carnal humanity (here we're discussing Trumpet #6), with people all around them dying all the time; and people will not change their ways of thinking, no matter how severe their trials might be.

And men were scorched with great heat, and **blasphemed the name of God**, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. (Revelation 16:9)

And **blasphemed the God of heaven** because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. (Revelation 16:11)

This is how 98 - 99.9% of carnal people will always respond to trials from God.

In these verses we are talking about the seven last plagues being poured out. And after plague #4 and plague #5 people still refuse to repent.

And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, *every stone* about the weight of a talent: **and men blasphemed God** because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great. (Revelation 16:21)

And when the final last plague is poured out, the seventh one, these people still blaspheme God and curse God.

The point is that dealing with trials never produces real repentance in the people enduring those trials. Consider ancient Israel after they had left Egypt. Their story was one of trial after trial, interspersed with acts of divine help and intervention. How many people in ancient Israel came to a real godly repentance **because** God had exposed them to trials?

Very few, if any. That's because trials don't produce real repentance in people.

Understand something else about God.

God doesn't really want submission and obedience that is produced as a result of severe stress and trials on that person.

God really desires to see us submit our lives to Him **when things are going well for us!** If we only submit to God because God brings severe trials on us, then **the motivation** for our submission is **questionable**. If God then takes those trials away, will we continue to submit ourselves to God, or will our attitude change? Is our submission perhaps based on selfishness, because of what we hope to get for submission?

If you have ever exercised any authority over other people: have you ever dealt with people who only obeyed you when you threatened to punish them? In such situations how much is their obedience really worth to you? And do you really trust such people?

So if people really did repent because of "the great tribulation", **how much would such repentance really be worth to God?** Not very much at best! Real repentance is not something we can be pressured into.

Recognize the following: God is not counting on trials to bring carnal people to repentance. Let's understand the real purpose for trials.

THE PURPOSE FOR TRIALS

Notice what Jesus Christ said:

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. **In the world you shall have tribulation**: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

"There you are", you might say, "Jesus Christ told us that we would have trials. And I can list a whole lot of other Scriptures to support this."

I am not disputing that the Christian life entails facing trials. But notice that Jesus Christ said "you", as in "**you** shall have trials".

The point is: Christ said this to people who were prepared to repent **before any trials come along!** The

repentance comes first, and the trials then come on the heels of repentance.

The purpose of trials is not to produce repentance in carnal, unrepentant people. **Trials and tests are for people who are already repentant.** And the purpose for those trials then is to refine and to purge and to purify the minds that are already submissive to God. Think of trials as "purging" fruitful branches, to make them even more productive (see John 15:2).

By contrast, for unrepentant and carnal people trials are one form of punishment and chastisement for their transgressions of God's laws, and for their hostile attitude towards God. But with such people those trials and tribulations are not aimed at coercing them or pressuring them into repentance.

Abraham was already submissive to God, before God gave him the most severe test of his life, to sacrifice Isaac to God.

Let me try to explain it like this:

There has to be "something" present in a human mind that will respond with submission to God when exposed to trials. But trials don't actually create that "something" in the human mind. All that trials can do is create circumstances that will bring that "something" to the fore. But that "something" has to be there, although unrecognized, before the trials come along.

Consider an analogy.

When I lived in Johannesburg, South Africa back in the 1950's, there were numerous gold mines that went more than two miles vertically down into the granite rock to look for gold. In those days a rich vein in the rock would yield **one ounce of gold for every one ton of rock** that was crushed and then processed. Without quibbling, a ton amounts to more than 30,000 ounces.

Back then it was considered very profitable to find one ounce of gold for every 30,000+ ounces of rock that were crushed to powder. Times have changed, and today, 60 years later, gold mines may crush over 300,000 ounces of rock just to get one ounce of gold.

Now whether we are talking about one part in 30,000 or whether we are talking about one part in 300,000, the point is that you need to crush a very large amount of rock just to get a very tiny amount of something precious, gold.

Now those minute grains of gold must be present in the rock to start with. If those tiny grains aren't present in the rock to start with, then no amount of crushing and processing will yield any gold. The crushing to powder cannot produce any gold. The rock itself must already contain the gold to start with.

Solomon wrote:

The fining pot *is* for silver, and **the furnace for gold**: but **the LORD tries** (i.e. examines and tests) **the hearts.** (Proverbs 17:3)

We are all somewhat like that ton of granite. Whether we contain one ounce of gold, or whether we only contain one-tenth of an ounce of gold is not the issue. But in most cases it will take a trial (like the rock being crushed to powder) to bring the gold out into the open. The crushing of the rock doesn't create the gold; the crushing only brings the gold to the surface.

To continue our analogy:

Gold mines are quite selective. They don't just arbitrarily crush all the rock they can get their hands on. No, they do their research, and they evaluate all the rocks to which they have access. It is only when their research tells them that a specific rock vein does indeed contain tiny amounts of gold, that then they will mine that rock and then crush it to powder. But they don't waste their time and their resources crushing rocks that are highly unlikely to contain any gold at all.

To get back to our original point here: trials are for those who already contain within themselves that "something", where the prospects for producing gold are fairly good. But trials are not for those who don't contain within themselves any gold to start with. When such people, who don't already contain some gold within themselves, are exposed to trials, then that is commonly a penalty for transgressing God's laws, rather than that being a test of faith.

So when people are more repentant and more committed to God after going through a trial, then the trial is not the cause for that greater commitment. The trial is only the means for bringing out into the open something that was there to start with. And that "something" is a certain frame of mind, **a certain way of thinking and reasoning**, which way of thinking can be brought into harmony with God's way of thinking. And trials are a tool for bringing that way of thinking into harmony with how God thinks and reasons.

SOME HUMAN MINDS LACK THAT "SOMETHING"

God will do everything to lead as many men and women to salvation as possible. But God also recognizes that there are always going to be some people who simply lack that certain "something". In those cases even God is not able to get them to change the way they use their minds, to change their way of thinking.

It is not weakness, and it is not a matter of giving in to temptations. It is simply that some minds will never see life from God's point of view.

For example:

Presently the millennium has not yet started. Once Jesus Christ has returned, He will rule over mortal human beings for 1000 years. During that time conditions will be absolutely perfect. There will be nothing to complain about. People will always have easy access to abundant food supplies, etc.

And yet, when that 1000-year period comes to an end, more than a billion people, "the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (Revelation 20:8), will **spontaneously listen to Satan** and rebel against God. That is what God has predicted!

How does God know this in advance? That incredibly huge number of rebels never agreed with God's way of thinking for centuries on end! **And God can predict this before those people themselves are even born.**

All of the people in that rebellion against God will lack that certain "something" in their minds. That "something" is not what people supposedly have or don't have from birth onwards. No, it is "something" that is fully under the control of each individual's own free will. You and I and every other human being chooses to have or not have that "something" in the way we use our minds. It is within our own power to choose to use our minds the way God uses His mind, or to use our minds the way Satan uses his mind.

God has no control over whether or not we will have that "something". That lies totally within our own

power.

The fact that even Jesus Christ's perfect 1000-year rule is not able to persuade a mind-boggling multitude of people to accept that "something" into their minds, proves that a portion of people will never accept God's way of thinking, no matter what God will do for them.

And God is able to predict this in advance, without in any way taking away from the free will of those people to make independent decisions. God can predict that a considerable number of human minds will never think the way God thinks, no matter what conditions may prevail. They are not prepared to generate that "something" themselves, to guide and to direct the way they will use their minds.

Let's continue with Revelation chapter 7.

And cried with a loud voice, saying, **Salvation to our God** which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. (Revelation 7:10)

The Greek text for "to our God" is "tou theou hemon", which is really the genitive case, and it should read "**of our God**", rather than "to our God".

This great multitude is saying with a loud voice:

"God's plan of salvation has been completed with us."

It is the plan of salvation that was devised and then implemented by "God who sits upon the throne" and by Jesus Christ. This vision in Revelation 7 shows us **how God's plan of salvation ends**. It is the salvation "of our God" because it comes from God, and the whole plan belongs to God, and it was implemented jointly by God the Father and by Jesus Christ.

Revelation 7:11 shows all the angels and the other spirit beings in the presence of God acknowledging that God's plan of salvation has now been completed. And they all worship God.

Verse 12 then acknowledges God's supreme position, with seven things bestowed on God: blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might.

Now that God's plan of creating the Family of God has been completed, one of the spirit beings at God's throne backtracks by asking John: do you know who the people in that "great multitude" are? That brings us to verse 14.

And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, **These are they which came out of the great tribulation**, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:14, corrected)

So this spirit "elder" now introduces the expression "the great tribulation". Let's note:

1) These people are **all those who repented** and had their sins forgiven by Jesus Christ's sacrifice. This description applies to every single member of the Family of God (God the Father and Jesus Christ obviously excluded). It applies to all human beings who will eventually be granted salvation by God. It applies to those in the first resurrection, and it also applies to "the end ones", those from the millennium and from the second resurrection, who end up in God's Family.

2) Now those in the first resurrection are identified as 144,000 in Revelation 14:1-4. More on this later.

3) This means that the "great multitude" is made up of **everyone in the Family of God, except for the 144,000**. It is made up of everyone who repents at any point after the time of the first resurrection.

So what is "the great tribulation" that they all come out of?

"The great tribulation", to which this "elder" refers in Revelation 9:14, is a reference to the human existence from Adam up to the lake of fire.

For that matter, it could even be said to have started when Satan originally rebelled against God and severely damaged this universe. **"The great tribulation" refers to everything that is going to be burnt to ashes in the lake of fire.**

"The great tribulation" of Revelation 9:14 is not a reference to some three or five or seven year period in human history. And it is not a reference to any specific events that precede the second coming of Christ. It is a reference to the whole human life experience, from the time when Adam sinned up to the time when the 100 years for those in the second resurrection will be completed.

To be clear:

"The great tribulation" refers first and foremost to the **approximately 6,000 years** from Adam to Christ's second coming. That is "the age of man".

Then comes the 1,000 year period when Jesus Christ will rule. The millennium is certainly not a period of "great tribulation" because Jesus Christ will bless abundantly all those people who freely submit themselves to God.

However, the millennium is a period when **the carnal human mind** will still be hostile to God. This hostility shows itself in the huge rebellion that will take place during the millennium (see Ezekiel chapters 38-39). And this hostility shows itself again in the almost spontaneous rebellion when Satan "shall be loosed out of his prison" (Revelation 20:7), with a staggering number of people, who had lived in outward obedience to Jesus Christ, following Satan at a moment's notice (verse 8).

The necessity for God to destroy that huge multitude with "fire from heaven" (see Revelation 20:9) is obviously an unpleasant occurrence. The carnal mind will be present in a certain number of people throughout the entire millennium.

Then comes the second resurrection, when people are given 100 years to repent and to submit their minds to God. All the people in the second resurrection will have lived during a specific portion of the earlier approximately "6,000 years of great tribulation", which great tribulation went from the time of the creation of Adam and Eve right up to Christ's second coming.

The portion of that approximately 6,000-year period during which the people in the second resurrection had lived covered the time from after the flood in Noah's time up to Christ's second coming. In other words, the people in the second resurrection will be from the approximately last 4,400 years (in round numbers) of that approximately 6,000-year period.

And some of the people in the second resurrection will repent, and others will not repent. But all of them certainly came out of "the" great tribulation, because they had all lived between the time of the flood and Christ's second coming.

So when I say that in one sense "the great tribulation" **covers** a period of **approximately 7,100 years**, I do not mean to imply that the millennium will be a time of tribulation for people then living. I don't mean

that "the great tribulation" **lasts** for 7,100 years, I only mean that it **covers** 7,100 years, with the 1,100 years of Jesus Christ ruling not being years of tribulation themselves.

I mean to highlight that **the effects of carnal human minds rebelling against God** are still in evidence right through the millennium, and then right through the 100 years for those in the second resurrection. Those effects of rebellion against God are only totally erased by the lake of fire.

So the great multitude has come out of "the" great tribulation that covers a period of 7,100 years because:

A) All those in that multitude who come from the second resurrection had lived their first lives under Satan's sway.

B) All those in that multitude who come from the millennium itself had been exposed, albeit only briefly, to Satan's influence at the end of the 1,000 years. And they had all witnessed the burning up of that huge army of rebels.

The effects of "the" great tribulation are only completely removed when the lake of fire burns up this entire universe. That is in essence the meaning with which "the elder" used the expression "the great tribulation" in Revelation 7:14.

To continue:

We are all living in that particular great tribulation right now. And every other human being lives or has lived in that great tribulation.

You think that it's not really that bad?

See it from God's point of view. What God had intended to be a happy, carefree, pain-free, utopian existence for human beings, turned out to be an existence filled with pain and violence and diseases and suffering and starvation and fighting and killing and deceit and greed and covetousness and immorality and perversions and slavery and vanity and corruption.

So when that approximately 7,100-year period comes to an end:

- Billions of people have been killed by warfare and by murder.
- Hundreds of millions of babies have been aborted.
- Hundreds of millions of people have died of malnutrition/starvation.
- Billions of people have died from sicknesses and diseases.
- Hundreds of millions have gone through life blind, deaf, or dumb.
- Hundreds of millions of people were tortured horribly by other people.
- We have thoroughly polluted the creation God entrusted to our care.
- Hundreds of millions have lived in slavery to other people.
- The lives of hundreds of millions were destroyed by unfaithful spouses.

- **Billions of people will never be in the Family of God.**

That is the picture God and the holy angels of God see!

And God and the holy angels also know "**what the human experience could have been like**", if only men would have had a mind that is willingly and eagerly submissive to God.

And the God who is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9) has the awareness that multiple billions of human beings will never attain unto salvation.

Yes, from God's perspective this entire approx. 7,100-year period of human existence will have been an endless "great tribulation" (apart from the 1,100 years when Jesus Christ was ruling). It only ends when the lake of fire burns up everything physical.

The great multitude could not possibly "be numbered" **in advance**. And they could not possibly have been numbered even by God Himself at the time when John had this vision.

Yes, those in the first resurrection could be numbered in advance, because God controls how many people He will call. And any from that number who drop out along the way will be replaced, so that God will have exactly 144,000 in the first resurrection.

But all those who become "the end ones" cannot be numbered until the time of the lake of fire. Only then will it be known exactly how many members there will be in the Family of God. So when it says that "no man could number them", it means that **the size of this group cannot be determined in advance**. It really depends on how many people during the millennium, and then during the 100-year period will come to a real repentance. Today, at this point in time, that number is still totally open.

Now we are ready to move to the next article and examine the question: who are the 144,000? And so the next article is simply titled "The 144,000".

Frank W Nelte