



Chosen: to Finish the Task

144,000 Study



Lesson Two:



**The High
Calling
of the
144,000!**

We discovered in Lesson One that the 144,000 is a small group of God's end-time leaders. They emerge onto earth's final scenes before the "great multitude" (a larger group) makes their début.

The reason God repeatedly distinguishes the "differences" between these two groups is profound! The 144,000 are God's first, spiritually prepared, purified corporate body! They are responsible to "bring into existence" that "great multitude," His final church triumphant!



What the Bible details about that solemn role is the purpose of this lesson. First, we reflect on the sensitivity of expositor White regarding that mission. Note that the small group, by calling, is unique in their personal experience with Christ!



"Power of Prayer" Danny Hahlbohm

“Why were they [the 144,000] so specially singled out? Because they had to stand with a wonderful truth right before the whole world, and receive their opposition, and while receiving this opposition they were to remember that they were sons and daughters of God, that they must have Christ formed within them the hope of glory. They were ever keeping in view the great and blessed hope that is before them. What is it? It is an eternal weight of glory. Nothing could surpass it.”

(1SAT 72-73)

The premier introduction, as previously noted, of the 144,000 number occurs in Revelation 7. That chapter is strategic commentary between Seals 6 and 7, called an “interlude.”



An “interlude” provides additional details on the prophecy under discussion. The seer began that commentary:

“I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow.”
(Rev. 7:1)

“John sees the elements of nature – earthquake, tempest and political strife – represented as winds being held by four angels.” (TM 444) They also symbolize global military conflict! (5T 14; cf. Jer. 25:31-34, 49:36-39, 51:1-2, 11; Dan. 7:2)

At this time, when God is containing those winds, Angel Jesus comes on the scene in a unique way!
(15MR 221-222)



“I saw another angel [Jesus] ascending from the east, having the seal [for the 144,000] of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels.... Hurt not the earth ... till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.” (Rev. 7:2-3)

This angel, coming from the direction of deliverance, represents Christ as the “sun of righteousness.” (Mal. 4:2) But how can He be arising, to then shout to the angels in the sky? That means He is already on this earth!

In a later interlude that actually begins before this sealing, we have the answer!



“I saw another mighty angel [Jesus] come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.... And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth.” (Rev. 10:1, 3)

Then comes this verse under study:

“I saw another angel ascending from the east.” (Rev. 7:2)

When He “descended,” the time had come to bring special power and help to God’s people, who would be those last witnesses. When He “ascends,” the first phase of “setting aside” a holy people (that 144,000) begins!



That “sealing” conveys heaven’s “citizenship insignia.” (Rev. 3:12, 7:2-3). It is given before the great multitude imagery comes on the scene. The 144,000 are prepared by “eating the little book” (Rev. 10:10) and are given “oil” power – the Spirit.

Angel Jesus “descends” with a shout that the whole world hears (Revelation 10) regarding the book of Daniel! When He “ascends” (Revelation 7), He already has been aiding His servants! But, now shouts to the “four wind-holding angels.” The world is in “contained” turmoil!

There are **two 144,000 objectives** that must be accomplished before the great time of trouble comes and those winds blow:

1. The final “preparation” and sealing of those special heavenly servants
2. The “witnessing” of those servants

John notes: *“And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand.”* (Rev. 7:4)

From an unidentified source John hears this **highly symbolic number**. “Twelve” is God’s kingdom number. To emphasize the spiritual significance of a number they would multiply it by itself (squaring it), and to further heighten its meaning, it would be multiplied by 1000. (Anderson, Roy Allen; *Unfolding the Revelation*, Revised, pp 80-81)



Then we are told:

“Just as soon as the people of God [the 144,000 in this setting] are sealed in their foreheads – it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved – just as soon as God’s people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come.” (10MR 252, 1902)

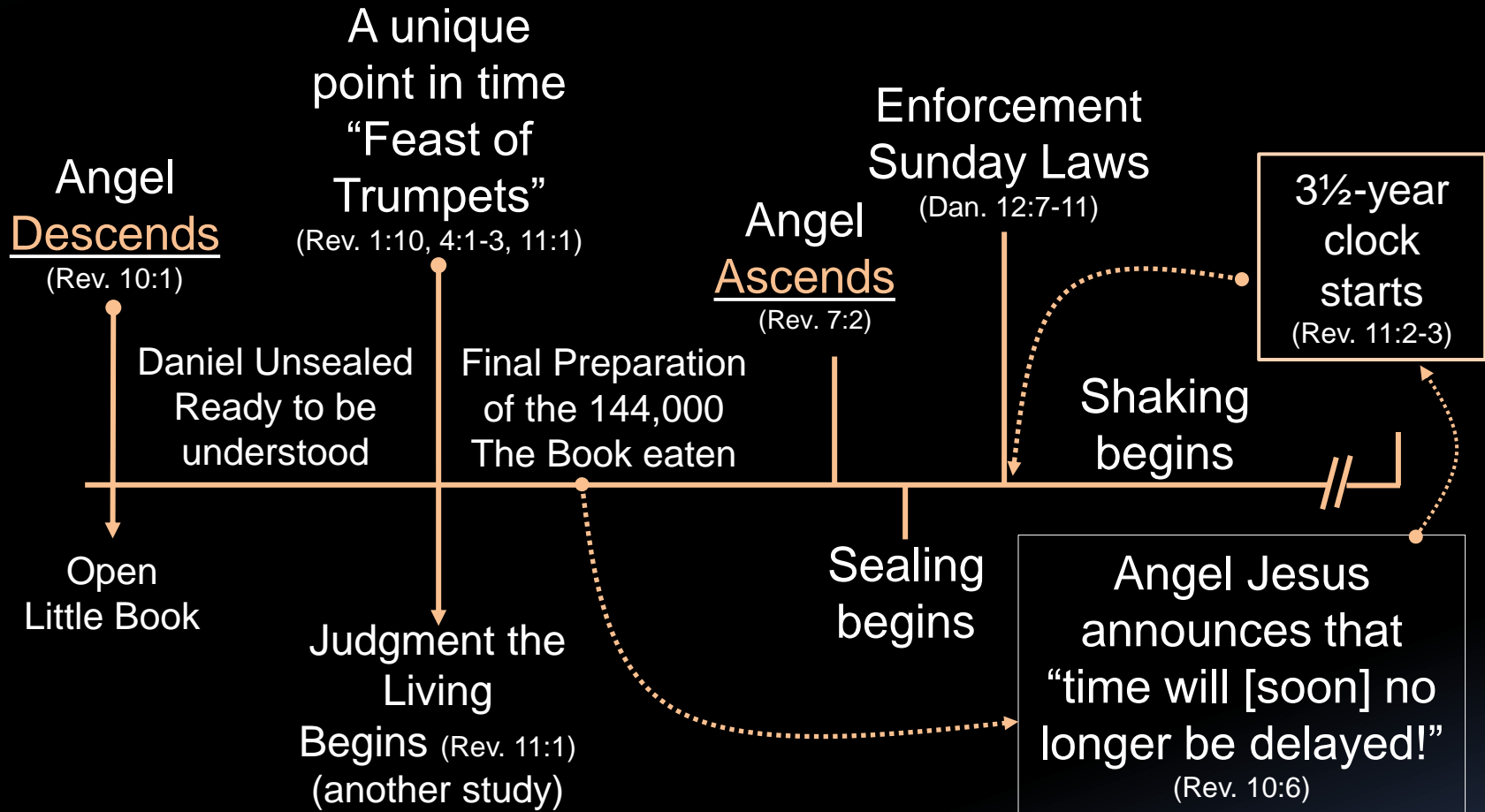
The “shaking” represents the final purification of God’s church.

Since the “shaking” or “sifting” process begins after the enforcement of the Sunday laws (another study), this sealing must begin before then! Those laws will herald the onset of the last 3½ years of earth’s history (42 months or 1260 days – Rev. 11:2-3).

Immediately preceding that period of time (called the “appointed time” – Dan. 8:19, 11:35), the 144,000 will be engaged in that final, special preparation.



From what we have studied to this point, we can construct a sequenced graphic:



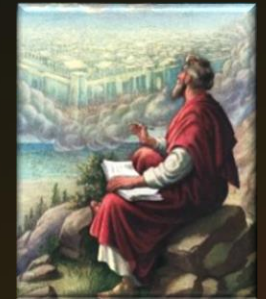
With these amazing “interlude” messages, which are actually “add-on” commentary to the prophecy being unfolded by John, we have to ask some stunning questions:

Are there other prophecies that describe God’s last-day “loyalists?”



One related to the sealing: In a heavenly imperative given to Satan in the 5th Trumpet, he was warned not to hurt those who had the Seal on their foreheads! (Rev. 9:4)

The 5th Trumpet is very late in the endgame of prophecy. God's people are then, apparently, all sealed! The 144,000 were the first to be sealed; the rest of the saints are sealed by the time of that Trumpet.



Describing God's people, John makes a distinct statement related to the brotherhood of His people: *"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."*

(Rev. 1:9) **This describes the saints' witness.**

Though it's not the purpose of this study to delve into that "word" and "testimony," this is what the 144,000 will present to the earth as His "kingdom citizens!" Those people are described throughout Revelation as "saints" (14:12), "remnant" (12:17), "witnesses" (11:3), "overcomers" (12:11) and the "harvest" (14:15).

Another instructive area: In Christ's discourse of the seven churches, He makes note of things He admires and encourages. Those attributes will be represented in His last day church. One church, especially, stands out:

The Philadelphia Church exemplifies the imagery of that “small group,” the 144,000!

“Thou ... hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name ... Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation.... I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”

(Rev. 3:8, 10, 12)

The latter describes that sealing process!

Christ has no complaints against that church!
No other group has more promises to the
overcomer than the Philadelphia
church. The door into the heavenly
kingdom has been opened to them.



*“These are they which were not defiled....
These are they which follow the Lamb
whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed
from among men, being the first fruits unto God
and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found
no guile: for they are without fault before the
throne of God.”* (Rev. 14:4-5)

There is an amazing narrative associated with the “original prophecy” of the 144,000! It is the story of the “white horse – the 1st Seal!”

This was briefly alluded to in our previous study. Now we must look at it in greater detail.

[Note: There are available in-depth PowerPoint studies on the Seven Seals].



If the Seals are understood, much of the remainder of the Apocalypse would be illuminated!

Right after Jesus' important pastoral study of the seven churches, His first task was to reveal who the "end-time players" would be throughout the rest of the Book – in heaven and on the earth. The 144,000 are one of those many "groups"!

That extraordinary chronicle began in the throne room of heaven – where it really should begin! The story commences with Christ and the Father!



This is how that
new prophetic
scene begins!



“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.” (Rev. 4:1)

Looking, now, at the details of this verse:

“After this I looked ...” (Rev. 4:1)



The seer is simply saying that after he completed the task of writing the stories of the seven churches, something new drew his attention. (Rev. 1:19) A new visionary experience began.

“Behold, a door was opened in heaven.” (4:1)

This is the same door that was opened to the Philadelphia Church. (Rev. 3:8) There, he was told that the “door” had been opened (in the past) and would never be shut. John is observing that same “open door.”

On the other side of that “door” is the throne of God!



A new and final phase in redemptive history is about to come into view!

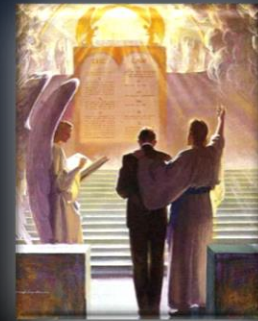
John now receives an invitation from Jesus, known by that “trumpet-like voice”:



“Come up hither and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.” [the future, after the door was opened] (Rev. 4:1)

John saw God the Father's glory as His throne was "set" and He "sat." That is the imagery of a judgment scene.

(Judgment of the Living from deeper studies.) (Rev. 4:2-3)



Then John noted:

“And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.”



(Rev. 4:4)

These 24 elders are the redeemed that ascended with Christ 2000 years ago.

(Matt. 27:52-53, Eph. 4:8, DA 786) They are part of God's "judicial witnesses!"

1. They have **white robes** which tie them to the saints. (Rev. 7:13-15; cf. 3:5, 18)
2. They have **crowns** (*stephanos*) of victory, which link them to similar crowns of the redeemed (Rev. 3:11 – Philadelphia Church; Rev. 6:2)
3. In a song the 24 elders sing, they say:
"Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." (Rev. 5:9)

The drama continues:



“In the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.” (Rev. 4:6-7)

What is God trying to teach us? They have to be immensely important because they are the creatures closest to God’s throne!

The order in which these creatures are being given is important.

First – like a lion

Second – like a calf

Third – had a face like a man

Fourth – like a flying eagle



This is the order in which they will once again appear as the first four Seals are broken!

What is God trying to illustrate in this strange end-time vision?

The analysis of this is stunning:

As Jacob's life drew to an end, he called his sons to his bedside and began to prophesy regarding the future of each son. From those predictions a "standard" or symbol was later created to represent the character or nature of each future tribe. Key examples:

Judah – lion; Ephraim – calf/ox; Reuben – man (dignity); Dan – serpent (later changed to an eagle) (Gen. 49)

The faces John saw were these four creatures. They happened to represent the four lead tribes of Israel! – But, there's more!

Who were those four lead tribes?

First – like a lion – tribe of **Judah**

Second – like a calf – tribe of **Ephraim**

Third – had a face like a man – tribe of
Reuben

Fourth – like a flying eagle – tribe of **Dan**

Again – these replicated the faces of those four living creatures around God's throne!

God used each of these four tribes as significant metaphors to illustrate end-time prophecy. That's why we must know this precisely!



Also – the directional placement of those tribes around the sanctuary has deep spiritual meaning!

Judah in the east – symbol of deliverance

Ephraim in the west – symbol of apostasy

Reuben in the south – represented waiting

Dan in the north – represented deception

Remember – God is opening up to us who will be the key players during earth's last period of time!

An important observation that we will address later – in that 144,000 chapter of Revelation 7 – is that two tribes are missing!

What happened to Ephraim and Dan?

They are lost. They are not in the list of tribes making up that elite number of the saved!

In this study, our main focus will be on the “lion” (the Tribe of Judah) in the direction of the east. The “living creature” with the appearance of the “lion” will soon play a prominent role in relation to the 144,000!



The four angelic creatures represent God to man.

The 24 elders represent man to God in this very special imagery.

Revelation 5 is a remarkable continuum of chapter 4. Here we find all of heaven searching for a “worthy” individual to open the seven-sealed scroll that God, still on His throne, is holding.



Important to us: Breaking those numbered Seals initiates earth’s last events. Jesus will come during the sixth Seal! The universe is now in waiting for the Lamb to break that first Seal!!!



“And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.” (Rev. 5:1)

The writing “within and without” means that the document is complete. Nothing else can or will be added. Both sides are filled. It is finished and awaits future review.

The Seven Seals – “Seven” is a perfect number. It means that what is written is perfectly protected from understanding. When the last Seal is broken, its mystery contents will unfold!

What is contained in that sealed document?

We know through cross references that it relates to *“laments, mourning, and woes.”*

(Eze. 2:8-10) That, in turn, refers to the “end” of God’s judicial decisions.



Expositor White notes that the scroll contains the prophetic history of the whole world from earth’s beginning to its close. Associated with that were all the “divine utterances” of God’s authority, His laws and the counsel of the Eternal throughout history! AND – “The destiny of every nation was contained in that book!” (19MR 296-297)

Later she notes that the **destiny** of the wicked (such as the Jewish leaders who sent Jesus to the Cross) were also included in that scroll. It was a document of their **divine sentencing** – *the reasons for their eternal loss.*

“In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them [those who killed Jesus] in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” (COL 294, 1900)



Was the decision to sentence the wicked to eternal loss (i.e., they weren't chosen) fair, just, merciful and consistent with the character of God? This book of destiny outlines the basis for God's decisions. Once the last Seal is broken (after the Second Coming), it will be available for review!

The saints, with Christ, will review the records, this "book of destiny," regarding the wicked. (Rev. 20:4) Then all will see that God's judgments were right, His mercy and justice impeccable. His character will finally be vindicated before the universe.



“During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection the judgment of the wicked takes place. The apostle Paul points to this judgment as

an event that follows the second advent.

‘Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.’ (1 Cor. 4:5) ... At this time the righteous reign as kings and priests unto God. John in the Revelation says:

“I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.’ ‘They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.’ (Rev. 20:4, 6). It is at this time that, as foretold by Paul, ‘the saints shall judge the world.’ (1 Cor.6:2). In union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book of death.” (Mar. 335)

Presently, the Lamb comes to “the one” sitting on the throne and takes from His right hand the scroll. This creates an immediate worship, then praise response from the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders:



“And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.”

(Rev. 5:8)

That is imagery of heaven's "inner circle."

The simple act of Jesus, the Lamb, taking the scroll brings amazing drama to heaven from the four "chiefs of staff" and the select of the redeemed.

Carefully ponder: What is it about that "gesture" which brings such a dramatic reaction from that "inner circle" to "fall down" and worship? Prostration before the Majesties of heaven is a common picture in this Book. (7:11; 11:16; 19:4, 10; 22:8) What is so instructive here is "why" the scroll transference was so sacred and captivating!



This is a final step in a judicial process. That scroll will be the “last court brief” to be presented in the case of God vs Satan. Only the Lamb can represent that “legal brief”! He has proven Satan’s case fraudulent. All of the redeemed will be “witnesses” to its content!

The Lamb now holds the sealed scroll. The next step is in His hands. A divine purpose has entered a new phase.



Redemptive history can now move forward toward its climax!

Breaking the scroll Seals will usher in specific end-time steps. A clock will also begin “ticking” which has been “still” during a “tarrying time” for nearly twenty centuries.

The drama is high within the precincts of heaven. When the first Seal is broken the “appointed time” will be ushered in (Dan. 8:19, Hab. 2:2-3). Redemptive history will end 3½ years later. All of heaven is aware of this!

The first four Seals will be grouped together. They will be tied to the “four living creatures.” Frontiers of amazing apocalyptic information are about to open!



Seal One →



**The Worthy Lamb is about
to break that first Seal!**



“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.” (Rev. 6:1)

“And I saw when” is a common “break” or “transition” in John’s visionary writing. It also affirms that he was an eyewitness to the event at a particular point in time.

When John “saw” the Seal opened, he then “heard” something. The phrase “as it were” is a simile. Whatever it was, it sounded like thunder.

John had previously experienced a polysensory event when he first observed God's throne with all its glory. Out of that throne came thunder, lightning and voices. (Rev. 4:5)



That imagery was characteristic of divine judicial activity. The “voices” meant that eternal “sentences” were being passed.

This first Seal's thunderous sound strongly suggests that a courtroom matter is passing to another phase. Jesus is about to bring the “*tarrying time*” to an end. Then the seer hears:

“... one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.” (Rev. 6:1)

The phrase *“and see”* is missing in older manuscripts. The call to *“come”* appears to be the signal which **activates** Seal event number one.

The Lamb determines the timing of when the Seal will be broken. The “beast” or “living creature” is the commander of who that Seal represents and gives orders to “them” to begin their mission!

John already told us that the first living “beast” was “*like unto a lion.*” (Rev. 4:7)

We have seen that this was the **ensign** or **standard** of the tribe of Judah, to the east. Whatever we are going to see happen, will be tied to that tribe, the east and its great symbol of “**deliverance.**”



It will be intimately associated with Jesus, the “*lion of the tribe of Judah*”!

John is now a witness to the appearance and activity of this white horse. The rider isn't described, but he is holding two divulging items.



“And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.” (Rev. 6:2)

“And I saw and behold” – John is seeing this in *real time* and is saying: “in your mind’s eye, would you imagine what I am seeing?”

Horses – in prophecy represent people, especially in battle imagery. (SS 1:9, Isa. 63:13, Zech. 10:3, Joel 2:1-4)

White – represents “purity” (Ps. 51:7), perfect righteousness of Jesus (Rev. 7:14, 19:8), victory (Isa. 1:18) and holiness (Rev. 7:13) or God’s holy character (white stone) (Rev. 2:17)



As God transfers our attention to the key end-time “players,” this white horse is first!

John talks about a special people identified as the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb. They are the 144,000 pure virgins with the Father’s name written on their foreheads! (Rev. 14:4).

How pure are they? “*They are without fault before the throne of God!*” (Rev. 14:5) They are the ones dressed in white!

In this book, they are called “saints,” the “holy ones.”
(Rev. 14:12)



Is it really possible that there can be such a wonderful group of people? The Bible says it is! In fact, they come from every “tribe” of Israel – meaning from all types of personalities, represented by those 12 tribes. (Rev. 7) The white horse represents this first group of individuals who eternally commit their lives to Jesus – the Lamb of God! This Seal focuses deeper on the lead tribe of Judah, to the east, as the 144,000.



Pat Marvenko Smith www.revelationillustrated.com

“The 144,000 were all sealed [the great sealing mission of Revelation 7 has been completed!] ... On their foreheads was written, God, New Jerusalem, and a glorious star containing Jesus’ new name.”
(2SG 32) [Fulfillment of the Philadelphia Church’s “overcomers!”]

“They were full of the light and the glory of the Holy One.” (RH, March 19, 1889)

Who, then, might the **rider** be? It can be none other than Jesus Christ. How do we know? We have a clue found in the 19th chapter of this book when He is coming back to earth (Second Advent imagery) (Rev. 19:11-13). There, He is also on a white horse. John further notes in Seal One:

“... and he that sat on him” (Rev. 6:2) has focused meaning. The “rider” is guiding that group of people. They are working together to finish a task!



“Faithful and True”

There is quite a division among scholars as to who this rider is. This is to warn you that some might even call him Satan. But scholars such as Alford, Hendriksen, Hodges and Bachmann have clearly shown that it is Christ when the triumph of the gospel will go forward. (Matt. 24:14) (Osborne 275-276, 2002)

We've seen Jesus (as a Lamb, and a Lion, who is receiving praise from the vast angelic host) directing John through the open door – and now as a rider – “the” leader of His special people!





Note these additional observations that John made:

- The horse is active
- The rider has a crown (to be awarded)
- The rider has a bow without arrows!

This horse begins the end-time drama, which will lead up to the deliverance of God's people! Since horses are also connected with war (Job 39:19-25; Psa. 76:5-6; Pro. 21:31), it is going out to battle! Christ and His witnesses are going out to finish the work against resistance that begins with the next horse!

This is crucial imagery to understand! Christ and His people are fighting for holiness and right. At the same time, we are told that:

“The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Rev. 12:17)

Please note what is happening! Everything is at stake! God’s character, His people, the future of the angels and what they stand for – plus, with absolute clarity, the whole universe must see what Satan’s character is like!

The final battle is over moral worth, judicial integrity and subject allegiance. This battle has been waging ever since Lucifer's heavenly rebellion began. God's end-time people are pivotal to the "war outcome"!

He has already given a "victory statement"! BUT – please notice who is "front and center" in that victory:

"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."

(Rev. 12:11)

The “crown” (*stephanos* – G) that Jesus carries is one of victory. The military mission portrayed by the horse’s activity will be totally successful! We see that from this “crown” alone!

What does that “bow” without arrows mean?

There are several ancient symbols related to this picture. But *in Jewish tradition* it represents an arrow that has already left the bow and has hit its target! Amazing! Another symbol of victory!



The final work of bringing the gospel to all the world is assured. These symbols are a configuration of victory, just as the rest of the verse notes:

“... and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.” (Rev. 6:2) These words describe the **unequivocal success of earth’s last “spiritual battle”** for the 144,000, which the white horse represents.



This imagery is an extension of the prophecies of Daniel 8:14 and chapter 9. There, the adjudication of holiness is saint-dependent!

The “white horse” people are the first earthly group that comes onto the apocalyptic scene. They are pure, prepared and ready for war!

Through many other prophecies, this group has gone through a judicial process, is sealed and accepted as heavenly citizens. The 144,000 are soon to be a unique end-time force.

Embellishing this wonderful study is this urgent thought:

“They [the 144,000] are prefigured before us as standing on Mount Zion [Rev. 14:1-5], girt for holy service, clothed in white linen, which is the righteousness of the saints. But all who follow the Lamb in heaven will first have followed Him on earth, in trustful, loving, willing obedience, followed Him not fretfully and capriciously, but confidently, truthfully, as the flock follows the shepherd.
(3SM 424)



Will you be among that special group,
finishing the work and being part of
God's eternal family?

The End

Next Lesson:

**God's Final Witnesses and
Their Holy Calling**

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