

# “The Ten Virgins,” “Laodiceans,” and “The Great Multitude”

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What is the real *meaning* of the parable of “The Ten Virgins”? What is the fate of the Laodiceans? Who will compose “the Great Multitude” spoken of in the book of Revelation? Those questions will be *answered* in this article!

## The Parable of “The Ten Virgins”

In the parable of The Ten Virgins (Matt. 25: 1-13), “the kingdom of heaven [is] likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom [Christ]” (verse 1). This parable is speaking of *end-time* Christians (although the lesson applies to Christians down *through* the ages).

All *ten* virgins had God’s Holy Spirit (represented by “oil”), but *five* of them had allowed their supply of oil (the Holy Spirit) to run **low**—“our lamps are **going out**” (verse 8 *NKJV*). The phrase “**going out**” is the *best* translation of this verse... and that fact will become apparent as we continue our discussion. (“Going out” is how it is rendered in virtually every Bible version *except* the *KJV*, which renders it as “**gone out**”... which would *erroneously* imply that they had *completely lost* the Holy Spirit.)

These five foolish virgins were instructed to go and acquire **more** oil... that is, to grow closer to God and acquire more of His Holy Spirit.

There was a *brief period of time*—the time of “The Great Tribulation”—which would elapse *between* (1) the instruction to go acquire more oil and (2) the end-time return of Jesus Christ to gather His saints.

During that period of time, **some** of the five foolish virgins *did* acquire more oil... whereas some **completely lost** the Holy Spirit!

Then “the bridegroom [Christ] came [at the time of the First Resurrection], and those who were ready [were resurrected and] went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut” (verse 10).

Consider this: In the above verse, “those who were ready,” *then*—when Christ returned—almost certainly consisted of **more** than five virgins!

“Afterward the other virgins [those who had **completely lost** the Holy Spirit] came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, **I do not know you**’” (verses 11-12). Here, *these* virgins (probably then *less* than five) were being told that Christ did not **NOW** know them... that is, He **no longer** knew them! (Their destiny will then be the Lake of Fire.)

## Philadelphians and Laodiceans

Revelation chapters 2 and 3 address the “seven churches” (Rev. 1: 20). Notice what pastor Richard F. Ames says:

The messages to the seven churches are warnings for all time, and that they also reflect the **predominant** attitudes in each of seven **eras**. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong explained: “These seven messages DO apply to seven successive Church eras. BUT they also apply to the WHOLE CHURCH through ALL eras. In other words, the Ephesus *characteristics* DOMINATED in the first era, and the Laodicean will dominate in the last, but SOME of these characteristics are found in EVERY era. The messages apply to the WHOLE Church (and so I have said and written for more than fifty years) but certain characteristics **predominate** in the various eras” (Herbert W. Armstrong, *The Incredible Human Potential*, p.158).

(Richard F. Ames, “Seven Eras, Seven Attitudes,” *Living Church News*, Nov/Dec 2009).

The *next to the last* era of the Church is the **Philadelphian** Era—a Church with whom God is well **pleased** (Rev. 3: 7-12). The *final* era of God’s true Church is the Laodicean Era. **Not all** Christians who live *during that era* **are** “Laodicean,” but that is the characteristic which *predominates* among **many** during that era.

Those who are “Laodiceans” **are** true Christians—they “**keep** the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev.12: 17). Yet, they are spiritually **lukewarm**—a characteristic which is **highly objectionable** to God!!

Notice how the Laodiceans are described in Revelation chapter 3:

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are **lukewarm**, and neither cold nor hot, **I will vomit you out of My mouth**. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that **you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked**— I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and **chasten**. **Therefore be zealous and repent** (Rev. 3: 15-19).

Yes, there will still be *some* Philadelphians **during** the final, Laodicean Era. Notice what God promises these *end-time* Philadelphians: “Because you have kept My command to persevere, **I also will keep you from the hour of trial [The Great Tribulation] which shall come upon the whole world, to test** those who dwell on the earth” (Rev.3:10). God promises to **protect** them (in a Place of Safety) *from* the Great Tribulation.

What about the **Laodiceans**... will they likewise be protected during the Great Tribulation? No!

Speaking of *the end-time*, notice Revelation chapter 12: “But the woman [God’s Church] was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness **to her place [the Place of Safety]**, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time [3 ½ years], **from** the presence of the serpent [Satan]” (verse 14). Now notice verse 17: “And the dragon was enraged with the woman [God’s Church], and he [Satan] went to make war with the rest of her offspring [the rest of God’s Church], who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Verse 17 is referring to those Christians who **did NOT qualify** to be protected in the Place of Safety. **It is referring to the Laodiceans** (as well as to any individuals who repent and receive God’s Spirit *during* the final 3 ½ years).

As we saw in Rev. 3:10, those who do **NOT** qualify to be protected in the Place of Safety, will remain outside, **in the world**—to be “**tested**” by God!

Notice Revelation chapter 13: “It was granted to him [the end-time “Beast”] to make **war** with the saints [those true Christians **not** in the Place of Safety] and to **overcome** them...” (Rev.13:7; cf. Rev.12:17).

So, Satan will guide the end-time Beast Power into making *war* with these Laodicean saints, and those saints will be **overcome** by this war-making Beast Power.

Again, God despises the “lukewarmness” of these Laodiceans... and He is going to **test** them during the Great Tribulation. Yet, **how** will they be tested?

Revelation chapter 6 makes it plain that they will be tested by facing **martyrdom!**

When He [Christ] opened the fifth seal [during the Great Tribulation], I [John] saw under the altar the souls of those **who had been slain** for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed [during the Great Tribulation] as they were*, was completed (Rev. 6: 9-11). [See “Footnote” below.]

Yes, God will allow these Christians to face **martyrdom**—in order to be spiritually refined and to prove themselves! “...the hour of trial [The Great Tribulation] which shall come upon the whole world, to **TEST** those who dwell on the earth” (Rev. 3:10). “And *some* of those of understanding shall **fall**, to **refine them, purify them, and make them white**, until the time of the end; because *it is* still for the appointed time” (Dan.11:35).

These particular Laodiceans (that is, all Laodiceans living *during* The Great Tribulation) will be given a **choice**: Either prove yourselves *through* martyrdom, **or** receive the “Mark of the Beast” and end up in the Lake of Fire! Those who prove themselves *will* be in the First Resurrection... and **will likely be a part of Christ’s Bride!**

Consider *again* the parable of “The Ten Virgins.” That parable speaks of the condition of God’s Church during the very end-time. In the parable, HALF of God’s Church is in a very *weak* spiritual condition. They (the 5 “foolish virgins”) are instructed to go and acquire **more** oil... that is, to grow closer to God and acquire more of His Holy Spirit. **Those 5 foolish virgins ARE the Laodiceans during the time of The Great Tribulation!**

And, as we saw earlier, a number of these foolish virgins (*hopefully*, many of them) **WILL repent** during that 3½ year period of Great Tribulation. They will repent and be **martyred**... *refusing* to accept the Mark of the Beast (Rev.13:15; 20:4).

## The *Remainder* of the Laodiceans

Now, what about those Laodiceans who live during the Great Tribulation and who, *instead* of being martyred, **accept** the Mark of the Beast? Well, such individuals will be having their opportunity **then**... and therefore, they will **NOT be in the Second** Resurrection! Instead, their destination will be the Lake of Fire. God will then say to *those* “foolish virgins,” I no longer know you!

Finally, consider all the many Laodiceans who die **prior** to the beginning of the Great Tribulation. What will be *their* fate?

Well, like any other Christian, if they die while still having God’s Spirit within them, they will be in the First Resurrection!

**However**... consider that *those* individuals never repented of their lukewarmness... something that God hates! Could it be that they (unlike the *martyred* Laodiceans) will **not** be a part of the **Bride** of Christ? Even though they *will* be in the First Resurrection, they might not be allowed to *marry* Christ! That, of course, is *speculation*... but it is certainly a possibility!

After all, one might wonder why *these* Laodiceans would be allowed to be a part of the Bride, whereas the Laodiceans *during* the Great Tribulation will have to face martyrdom?!

## The Great Multitude

Consider now, Revelation chapter 7: “After these things I looked, and behold, **a great multitude which no one could number**, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before

the Lamb, clothed with white robes...” (verse 9). Although we in the Church of God have oftentimes referred to this group as “the **innumerable** multitude,” notice that the phrase “innumerable multitude” is **NOT** used in scripture!

Both the *NKJV* and the *KJV* refer to this group as “a great multitude **which no one could number.**” Many other translations say essentially the same thing.

To use the phrase “*innumerable* multitude” would seem to give the impression that this multitude will be *so large* that it cannot be numbered. However, that is not necessarily the case! Instead, this verse *more likely* means that, at the time when this vision was being given to the Apostle John, the *number* of the multitude was (and is) *yet to be determined!* Accordingly, pastor John H. Ogwyn refers to them as “a multitude of **indefinite** number” (p. 28 of his booklet *Revelation: The Mystery Unveiled!*). And, that is certainly the *best* rendering of their description.

Let’s now *continue* Revelation chapter 7, by reading verses 13-14:

Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “**Who are these** arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?” And I said to him, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “**These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**”

When the passage above states that they came “**out of** the great tribulation,” it is *likely* speaking of those whose conversion will **originate** during the Great Tribulation... those individuals who have been *hearing* God’s truths, but who will not **act** on those truths **until** world events begin crashing down around them (during the final 3½ years).

Although *most* people of the world will **not** repent when the world comes crashing down (Rev.16:9), there will be *some* who **will** repent (Rev.11:13).

Such people (those who **begin acting** on God’s Word **during** the final 3½ years— **and** who are subsequently **martyred**) will almost certainly be a part of the First Resurrection. However, it *might* very well be that they will **NOT** be a part of Christ’s Bride.

These people “who come **out of the great tribulation**”— who **initiate** their repentance during the great tribulation (and are then martyred)— are *likely* the ones who will **constitute** the “**great multitude which no one could number...**” (Rev.7:9).

The *size* of that “Great Multitude” will certainly be large (but not *necessarily* massive).

As for “the 144,00”— they will **certainly** be in the First Resurrection and be part of Christ’s Bride! However, it seems unlikely that we can know, *with any degree of certainty*, *much more* about the 144,000— other than what is specifically stated in Rev.7: 9-15 and in Rev.14: 1-5.

Regarding the 144,000, notice the following pertinent *excerpts from Revelation chapter 14*:

“one hundred *and* forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads... These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These... [are] firstfruits to God and to the Lamb” (verses 1-4).

**Footnote:** The *martyrdom* of the saints will *primarily* be confined to the period of time between the opening of the Fifth Seal and the opening of the Seventh Seal. At the very opening of the *Seventh* Seal, there is a brief “silence in heaven” (Rev. 8:1). **During** that brief “silence in heaven” is when God’s servants are **sealed!** (Rev. 7: 3-4 ). That “sealing” certainly *includes* the sealing of the 144,000 (Rev. 7: 4-8)... but it *likely also* includes the sealing of the “great multitude” (verses 9 to 14).

So, this future, great *martyrdom* of God’s saints will almost certainly **be completed** during that “silence in heaven.” Herbert W. Armstrong stated the following: “... this MARTYRDOM OF SAINTS — must occur **and be completed** BEFORE God pours out the vials of His Wrath [which He will pour out for a one-year period that will **begin immediately after** the brief ‘silence in heaven’]...” (Herbert W. Armstrong, 1972 booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled at last!*, Worldwide Church of God)

Thus, there will *apparently* be **NO martyrdom of saints (nor any new converts to true Christianity)** *during* the final one-year period preceding Christ’s return!

By the way, **both** of the following two events will certainly be **VERY BRIEF** in duration: “the Sixth Seal” and “the silence in heaven.” Consequently, **“the martyrdom of the saints”** will occur **PRIMARILY** during the Fifth Seal!

## APPENDIX

By doing a computer-search of the book of Revelation, it can be seen that the following are the **ONLY** passages which specifically mention “the 144,00” and “the Great Multitude”:

### (1) **The 144,000**

(Rev. 7: 3-8 NKJV) <sup>3</sup> saying, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees **till we have sealed** the servants of our God on their foreheads.” <sup>4</sup> And I heard the number of those who were sealed. **One hundred and forty-four thousand** of all the tribes of the children of Israel **were sealed:**

<sup>5</sup> of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand *were* sealed;  
of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand *were* sealed;

of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand *were* sealed;  
<sup>6</sup> of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand *were* sealed;  
of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand *were* sealed;  
of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand *were* sealed;  
<sup>7</sup> of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand *were* sealed;  
of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand *were* sealed;  
of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand *were* sealed;  
<sup>8</sup> of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand *were* sealed;  
of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand *were* sealed;  
of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand *were* sealed.

(Rev. 14: 1-5 NKJV) <sup>1</sup> Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him **one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.** <sup>2</sup> And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. <sup>3</sup> They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and **no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand** who were redeemed from the earth. <sup>4</sup> **These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.** <sup>5</sup> And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

## (2) The Great Multitude

(Rev. 7: 9-15 NKJV) <sup>9</sup> After these things I looked, and behold, **a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes**, with palm branches in their hands, <sup>10</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" <sup>11</sup> All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, <sup>12</sup> saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *Be* to our God forever and ever. Amen." <sup>13</sup> Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "**Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?**" <sup>14</sup> And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "**These are the ones who come OUT OF the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.** <sup>15</sup> **Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple.** And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.

(Rev. 9: 1-9 NKJV) After these things I heard a loud **voice of a great multitude in heaven**, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power *belong* to the Lord our God!" <sup>2</sup> For true and righteous *are* His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and **He has avenged on her the blood of His servants *shed* by her.** <sup>3</sup> Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" <sup>4</sup> And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" <sup>5</sup> Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" <sup>6</sup> And I heard, as it were, the **voice of a great multitude**, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" <sup>7</sup> Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, **for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself**

**ready [it does NOT say whether this Great Multitude *themselves* will be a part of the bride].”**

<sup>8</sup>And to her [the Bride] it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. <sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed *are* those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”