The book of relevation is a fanatical account of the vision received by John on Patmos, 1st century audiences might have been able to decipher these crazy four horsemen, the winds, the numbers, the angles, the people and the setting, but is Revelation is just as p[ertinet then as it is today.

Chapter seven begins an exposition of the people who are sealed and saved. We didn’t hear the numbering of the 12 triebes and the 144,000 that was gstherted together,

John has just finished discussing the 144.,000 and this is important because the “number twelve [signifies] completeness, perfection, and totality.”

Furthermore, 144,000 is built upon the perfect square of 12 times 12 times 1000, which is another sign of completeness, and as Sweet points out, multiplication of any sort intensifies a number’s meaning.

Revelation’s use of 144,000 as the number of servants sealed indicates a completeness and a wholeness of those sealed, a particular universality.

Even as far back as the early eight century, the Venerable Bede suggested that the 144,000 was the “infinite multitude of the whole church,”

So we jump from the 144,000 to the great multitude: John is alerting us to the wholeness of the situation and we hear there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages

Think the Hartfield-Jackson Airport in Atlanta. Or the opening ceremony of the Olympics. Everyone is there staning in front a throne.

So we are thinking that we have a king because we hear that everyone has palm branches. It’s the entrance into Jerusalem once again. Waive it wide and high.

The emotion must have been palpable. When we waive our hands, we are excited, we are overtaken by euphoria. Think about a concert, perfroamcne, or game that you have watched live and how many tim,es you move your arms when you are excited. The graeat multi8tude was waiving their hands and wide and hiugh.

To the king

Except it is not a king, but a lmab, or the lamb is the king

The Lamb is Christ and two things to notice here, all are dressed in white. So people are individuality present in their nation, language, tribe, yet,m everyone is dressed the same. Thjey are drapped in White. They have been washed in the blood of the lamb we hear, Jesus’ death on the cross spills the blood that makes us all clean.

Ministers wear whi9te: White Stole, white surplice. We have the black heart, but it’s drapped with the surplice.

Jesus is the lamb and God is on the Throne, and it is a clear as ever that God is the arbiter of Salvation and the Good news is that the blood of the lmab has washed everyone clean. All peoples. You and me.

A foretaste of heavan, John is valutling so far forward to the end. The EschatonHe vaults so far forward that he is at the eschaton – the final event in the world. Last things. The end.

The picture that John is painting is the end. Is the eternal hope of the resurrection that we all clamor for and celebrate on that third day. The last day when we will all be raised up together.

For the first century Christians, It encoucghraes folks to resist Rome and the persecution. It dealt with hope I nteh fce of a hostile world. It provided hope when all seemed dark and it does the same for us, today.

In a world that is full of way too much suffering: high rates of anxiety, sadness, cancers, and diease that ravage our body, we, too, need the hope there is something else, and that it’s as good as we think. We, too, get ot hold fast to what is true and what is true is that we will all be raised up on that last daym and celebrate around the throne with all of God’s people/

We will be together, surrounded by love and in the embrace of the lamb.

That Jesus Christ is the Lamb that was slain for our salvation and that at the last day, when we two have been raised then there will be no more tears no more pain no more suffering.

**All will be well.**

Church was packed on Easter morning, brass players up in the choir loft, ladies with big hats, girls in spring dresses, and when the choir and clergy processed up the aisle, the woman swinging the censer looked like a drum major leading the team to victory, which is what Easter is about, the triumph over death.

Resurrection is not something we Christians talk about in the same way we talk about our plans for summer vacation or retirement, but it is proclaimed on Easter and the hymns are quite confident (with added brass) ….

And then, on my way back from Communion, the choir struck up a hymn, “I am the bread of life,” with a rocking chorus, “And I will raise them up. And I will raise them up. And I will raise them up on the last day.” As the congregation sang, a few people stood and some raised their hands in the air, a charismatic touch unusual among Anglicans, and then more people stood. I stood.

I raised my right hand. I imagined my long-gone parents and brother and grandson and aunts and uncles rising from the dead and coming into radiant glory, and then I was weeping and my mouth got rubbery and I couldn’t form the consonants. I stayed for the benediction, slipped out a side door onto Amsterdam Avenue, and headed home.

That’s what I go to church for, to be surprised by faith and to fall apart. Without the Resurrection, Episcopalians would be just a wonderful club of very nice people with excellent taste in music and literature, but when it hits you what you’ve actually subscribed to, it blows the top of your head off.

So I stood weeping, singing, hand in the air, at the thought of being raised up.