

The 144,000

In our article 'Revelation 14', the 144,000 gain a passing mention, for the Apostle John had a whole series of visions of the end time, each one alternating, one event in heaven, the next event on earth and so on.

However, some people have been confused with another group of 144,000 mentioned in Revelation 7, so today we will examine both groups. We should understand there is a story flow in the book of Revelation, but it is complex with much overlapping, for example Revelation 14:1-5 starts the chapter but obviously, in time, comes *after* the first resurrection, verses 15-16, '*And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.*'v15-16 '*And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.*' This harvest of the firstfruits comes before the Great Tribulation in verses 17-20, '*And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.*'

Thus we see that verses 1-5 comprise a quite separate vision of events that take place in in heaven, on the sea of glass before God's throne, separate from the rest of the chapter which covers the whole seven years of events on the earth, both the '*tribulation of those days*' mentioned in Matthew 24:29, (*the first five seals of Revelation 6*), and the seventh seal or Great Tribulation.

The Revelation 14 144,000 are those who participate in the first resurrection. They are Christ's *firstfruit harvest* and become His Bride (verse 4 and 15).

It is important to understand that God the Father calls many, but very few are chosen to be the Bride of Christ. John 6:44, '*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.*' Matthew 22:14, '*For many are called but few are chosen.*' Through the instrument of Jesus Christ's choice of His Bride, God the Father brings the firstfruits into His family as His daughter in law. Ephesians 1:4-5, '*Just as he chose us in the Messiah before the creation of the universe to be holy and blameless in his presence. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself through Jesus the Messiah, according to the pleasure of his will.*' ISV. John 15:16, Christ said, '*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, ..*' Even then, those chosen must endure to the end of their lives in their calling and service, as did Christ Himself, Revelation 17:14, '*These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*'

As we can see, this process is very selective indeed, for there has to be a special bond and relationship between a man and his fiancé for the marriage to be successful, 1 Peter 2:21, '*For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.*' They need to be so compatible that they are of one mind, just as is Christ with His Father, which makes

them very special indeed among all those who were called, as is pictured by Proverbs 31:29, *'Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.'*

As a result, from Adam to the first resurrection only a relatively small number ever qualify to become the Bride of Christ. We see that brought out in Revelation 14:4, *'These are they which were **not defiled with women; for they are virgins.** These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.'* As we saw from the Apostle Peter's writing, these spiritual 'virgins' follow the pattern and example of their Saviour. They reject false teaching, wherever it occurs, even in God's church so that they remain undefiled, because it contradicts Jesus Christ's words; Matthew 20:25-28, *'But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. **But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:** Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'*

The refusal to honour this teaching **defiles most of God's church** even to this day. Those who accept the dominion of hierarchy, which controls their belief, have lost their spiritual virginity and become unprepared for the return of their Lord, Matthew 25:12, where Christ answered them, *'But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, **I know you not.***' And so it is that those who become part of the 144,000 who will marry Jesus Christ, have learned to *look directly* to Jesus Christ, His words, His pattern and His example rather than any physical Church or organisation. They have been *'bought from the men'* as the Greek in Revelation 14:4 brings out. So they will join the faithful down the ages on the heavenly Mount Zion after their resurrection, Hebrews 12:22, *'But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.'*

There, in heaven, on the sea of glass, they are married to Jesus Christ, Revelation 19:6-7, *'Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.'* We should note that the word 'white' in verse 8 is not the same word as 'white' in Revelation 7:14, which describes the robes given to the other 144,000 who came out of the Great Tribulation. Rev 19:8, *'And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and **white:** for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.'* Even as the King James margin reveals in Revelation 19:8, the clothing of those who marry Christ, glows with a brightness, not usually seen in white robes, using the Greek word 'lampros', meaning, shining, magnificent, bright, and splendid, as against the Greek word 'leukos' white, bright, for the robes mentioned in Revelation 7:14, *'And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. 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'.*

The marriage takes place before God the Father's throne on the sea of glass, Revelation 14:3 and 4:6, *'And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.'* ...*Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.'* After the marriage, as now members of God's family, they gain the heavenly Fathers name, now written in their foreheads. They have become foundation members of the Kingdom of God and will share rule with Jesus Christ here on this earth for the 1000 years of the millennium, Rev 20:4, *'And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.'*

No one else will ever be able to gain that special position, or achieve a closer relationship with Jesus Christ, which will never be taken away, Revelation 3:12, *'He that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the*

city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.'

When we think about these qualifications for that unequalled position, we realise that this group of 144,000 have truly earned their reward, Revelation 22:12, *'And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.'* Their contribution is not the average. Their dedication and faithfulness is quite outstanding, but of course only God knows who they are and certainly it is not a matter of which organisation they are members of!

The Second 144,000

We see a second group of 144,000 listed in Revelation 7, for by this time the first 144,000 have taken part in the first resurrection, as mentioned in the *previous* chapter. We notice that 12,000 of each tribe are sealed here in Revelation 7, and that the tribe of Ephraim is here called Joseph – that makes 12 tribes of 12,000, a total of 144,000, though the tribe of Dan is missing, some have suggested because of its idolatry. Revelation 7:4, *'And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.'* We are told here that prior to the commencement of the 7th seal they are *'sealed in their foreheads'* (verse 3). This means that they had received God's Holy Spirit before the Great tribulation, which is the 7th seal (cf verse 14), and is about to start. Ephesians 4:30, *'And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.'*

In order to receive God's Holy Spirit, one must have repented and been baptised, Acts 2:31, *'And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'* By this time, 3 ½ years have passed since the End Time began, with the flight of the first angel of Revelation 14:6-7. The first five seals listed in Revelation 6 and Matthew 24 soon followed, and those who were deceived and unprepared had plenty of time to repent in the wars and captivity which followed.

We cannot know how many of this 144,000 were Laodiceans who *previously* possessed God's Holy Spirit (Revelation 3:14) and were unprepared when Christ returned for His Bride, Matthew 25:10, *'And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.'* Such Christians will join others who repent *during* the tribulation of those days (Matthew 24:29) after hearing the message broadcast from Jerusalem by God's servants there. This would be just before the preaching of the two witnesses begins, who play a similar role during the next 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation.

These repentant Christians, together with the great multitude of Revelation 7:9, come out of the Great Tribulation, verse 14, having 'washed their robes', ie. repented of their sins. *'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.'* *'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.'* Does this mean that their lives are preserved at that time, the most dangerous time that will ever exist upon the earth for mankind? The possession of God's Holy Spirit does not ensure that, as many of the saints in Jerusalem find out at the 5th seal.

The last 3 verses of Revelation 7:15-17 share similarities with Revelation 21:4,23. *'Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'* Revelation 21: v4....*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....23'And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.'* That similarity and the future tense in Revelation 7, imply that they gain their reward only after the 2nd resurrection, at the end of the millennium. Their martyrdom would fit in to the actions of Satan the devil

described in Revelation 12:17, *'And the dragon was wrath 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.'* Their sacrifice brings the reward of serving God in His temple – His headquarters in the New Jerusalem. These are the conclusions we *may* correctly draw from our study of these scriptures, but we must remember that we see so much of prophecy 'through a glass darkly' as the Apostle Paul said, so we must not be dogmatic. Whichever group of 144,000 we *may* fall into with God's help, if we are so blessed, as members of Israel, we would have gained a reward beyond our comprehension and an eternal future beyond our grasp. Our great goal!

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