

144,000

Literal or Symbolic?



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144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

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Preface

In 1991 I, along with my family, joined the remnant church coming from a Catholic background. The Adventist church is relatively small compared to the Catholic congregation. But we learnt only few take the narrow way that leads to eternal life, so we were happy to join the “remnant.”

We also learnt from our Adventist friends that only the 144,000 would be alive when Jesus comes; so, I desperately wanted to be in that number to witness the glorious second coming of Jesus!

Some of my close friends in the faith firmly believed that the 144,000 number was literal, and I too believed the same for more than twenty years. It seemed logical to me that the numbers in the book of Revelation were literal though the imageries there were symbolic.

I believed the 144,000 was a literal number primarily because of a phrase found in the inspired writings of Ellen White which reads— **“144,000 in number”** {EW 14.1}. Also, I did not dig much into this matter because she has admonished elsewhere as well, **“It is not His will that they shall get into controversy** over questions which will not help them spiritually, such as, **Who is to compose the hundred and forty-four thousand?** This those who are the elect of God will in a short time know without question” 1SM 174 (1901).

Inasmuch as Mrs. Ellen G. White never wrote whether the number 144,000 was literal or symbolic, there have been unending discussions on that issue of the topic.

A few years back I had to do a presentation on this topic of the 144,000 in one of the churches in the United Kingdom, where I was invited as a speaker for

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

the *Core of Adventism* program organized by the British Union Conference of SDA. With the intention of proving 144,000 was a literal number I spent a few months prayerfully researching on this topic looking at both sides of the view.

I then soon realized that the literal view had many loopholes in it which I did not see earlier. And I was convinced beyond a doubt that the 144,000 number was indeed a symbolic one.

Though it is not a matter of salvation, the very fact that this number is repeated thrice in the holy Scriptures and a number of times in the Spirit of Prophecy, it is important for us to have a clear understanding of it.

What is most important for all of us to do is to be honest in our study of God's word. It does not matter if we have believed something and taught it to others for a long time. When the Holy Spirit brings to us the truth in its clearness, we should be willing to embrace it.

Truth is not about you and me. Truth is about God and His Word. So, it is not about **who** is right, but it is about **what** is right! Let us never allow pride to hinder us from understanding and embracing the truth as the Holy Spirit reveals it to us from His Word!

This has been a hot issue for long. Even of late this issue has been going on. It is my sincere desire and prayer that my beloved brothers and sisters, whatever view they have held till now, prayerfully read this book. If it convinces you, share this material with others, if it does not, continue to pray for God's enlightenment. May God bless all of us and let us develop that holy character.

"Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand" (RH March 9, 1905).

Michael Pedrin

Foreword

At the outset I would like to thank God my Creator for the honor of editing this book and writing the foreword as well. Joel, one of the minor prophets in the Old Testament, is described as someone “little known.” In comparison, except for the name, I am hardly known or recognized but by the few of our believers and church leaders of whom I had the privilege of working as a secretary to Dr John M. Fowler, the Adventist Bible scholar known across the world. This experience of mine was like that of the apostle Paul who learned at the feet of the great teacher Gamaliel.

When Dr Michael Pedrin and I met two years ago, in the providence of God, his passion for the publishing ministry he has been involved in for the past couple decades, prompted me to help him out in his ministry. He now serves as the director of Stewardship and Communications Ministries with the Bangalore Metro Conference in South India, preceded by his pastoral services in churches. Pedrin, as an ordained minister of the gospel, is regularly invited to share the Word of God across India and abroad as well. He holds a master’s degree in English literature and a doctoral degree in Biblical studies. He has authored a few books which include the well-known and controversial one with the title LUNAR SABBATH: THE BIG LIE. Pedrin and his wife, Sushma, a dentist, have a 13-year-old son, Marc, a child preacher.

Has the mysterious number 144,000 in the book of Revelation ever made you wonder what it stands for? Is it literal or symbolic? What do the scholars say about its real status? It is easy to get lost in the maze of more than one view of the different schools of thought on this important subject. Every

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

serious student of the Bible knows that understanding the Scriptures, as they should be understood, will enable them to rightly divide the word of truth as it is in Jesus Christ the Captain of our salvation. The Irish Times in their October 20, 2020 column quoted Redemptorist Father Tony Flannery, an Irish priest banned from public ministry by the Vatican for denying several doctrines of the Catholic Church, as believing “that rigid doctrinal definitions become a serious obstacle to experiencing the mystery.” But, praise God, the mystery of 144,000 is something to be experienced by the redeemed of the Lord in heaven; and not a mystery to be solved! And there is absolutely no obstacle to understanding the mystery number while the saints live here and now with the divine wisdom granted to the sincere seeker for truth.

Although the subject of the 144,000 is not essential for the salvation of our soul, every doctrinal subject is to be rightly understood by us who are identified by the God of Israel as “My people who are called by My name” (2 Chronicles 7:14). Any misinterpreted passage in the Bible can pave the way for the enemy of our souls to ruin the symmetry of the entire Scriptures because the Holy Spirit, the original Author, has “gathered them” (Isaiah 34:16).

Of the 144,000 cited in Revelation 7 and 14 it states that they “were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.” Some of the well-meaning Christians have misconstrued this statement to mean something strange and weird. While the onus of making everyone know the truth about the 144,000 is not on the author, his insatiable desire is to let the Christian world know what exactly engulfs this group of the living saints on the day of the Lord. Even the slightest doubt about every detail of this important subject is adequately addressed in the pages of this book. We live in an alarming global scenario of disease and death. Let us

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

not allow Satan to flood us with truth in order to float one of his vicious lies; instead, let us allow the Holy Spirit to have our loins “girt about with truth.”

The seven chapters in this marvelous book are designed to help the reader to know everything about the 144,000, also known as the “Great Multitude.” And besides, the thorough study of this particular subject is sure to give the spiritually inquisitive mind considerable impetus to their search for some of the other more important subjects in the book of Revelation and thus prepare to meet our Lord in peace.

R. G. S. Joel, Servant of God

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|--|
| AA | <i>Acts of the Apostles</i> |
| CCh | <i>Counsels for the Church</i> |
| CET | <i>Christian Experience and Teachings</i> |
| COL | <i>Christ's Object Lessons</i> |
| CT | <i>Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students</i> |
| DA | <i>Desire of Ages</i> |
| Ev | <i>Evangelism</i> |
| EW | <i>Early Writings</i> |
| FLB | <i>The Faith I Live By</i> |
| FW | <i>Faith and Works</i> |
| GC | <i>Great Controversy between Christ and Satan</i> |
| GCB | <i>General Conference Bulletin</i> |
| LS | <i>Life Sketches</i> |
| Mar | <i>Maranatha</i> |
| Ms | <i>Manuscript</i> |
| PK | <i>Prophets and Kings</i> |
| PP | <i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> |
| RH | <i>Review and Herald</i> |
| ST | <i>Signs of the Times</i> |
| 4BC | <i>Bible Commentary, Vol. 4</i> |
| 5BC | <i>Bible Commentary, Vol. 5</i> |
| 1MR | <i>Manuscript Releases, Vol. 1</i> |
| 7MR | <i>Manuscript Releases, Vol. 7</i> |
| 19MR | <i>Manuscript Releases, Vol. 19</i> |
| 3SG | <i>Spiritual Gifts, Vol. 3</i> |
| 2SM | <i>Selected Messages, Vol. 2</i> |
| 3SM | <i>Selected Messages, Vol. 3</i> |
| 4SP | <i>Spirit of Prophecy, Vol. 4</i> |
| 1T | <i>Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 1</i> |
| 4T | <i>Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 4</i> |
| 9T | <i>Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 9</i> |

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>Preface</i> | 03 |
| <i>Foreword</i> | 05 |
| <i>Abbreviations</i> | 08 |
| Chapter 1 | |
| <i>Literal or Symbolic Tribes?</i> | 10 |
| Chapter 2 | |
| <i>Hearing and Seeing Pattern</i> | 21 |
| Chapter 3 | |
| <i>Revelation 7, How Many Segments—Two or Three?</i> | 30 |
| Chapter 4 | |
| <i>The Great Multitude: The Five Different Views</i> | 45 |
| Chapter 5 | |
| <i>“144,000 in Number”</i> | 66 |
| Chapter 6 | |
| <i>Dualistic Applications</i> | 92 |
| Chapter 7 | |
| <i>144,000, Perfect in Christ</i> | 103 |

CHAPTER 1

Literal or Symbolic Tribes?

Scholars of many Protestant churches believe that the 144,000 are Jewish, or of Jewish background, because the book of Revelation says, “An hundred and forty and four thousand of **all the tribes of the children of Israel**” Revelation 7:3, 4.

They cannot be Jewish in faith because the Jews, as a nation, have rejected Jesus, the Son of God, but the 144,000 are seen standing on Mount Zion with Jesus, the Lamb of God! Revelation 14:1 reads, “And I looked, and, lo, a **Lamb** stood on the mount Zion, and **with him an hundred forty and four thousand**, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.”

This same group of the 144,000 are called “saints,” later in that chapter, and their faith relates to the faith of Jesus, which means they are believers in Jesus Christ. Revelation 14:12 says, “Here is the patience of the **saints**: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the **faith of Jesus**.”

Some of the Protestant scholars say, they are not Jews, but are of Jewish background. They are Jewish by race but Christians by faith. They say they are Jewish-Christians of the last days, or the Messianic Jews.

Cannot be Jewish-Christians:

The New Testament is abundantly clear that in Christ Jesus we are all one—race, language,

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

nationality, or culture—absolutely nothing matters. Writing about the Jews and Gentiles Paul wrote, “For there is no respect of persons with God” Romans 2:11.

The Jews prided themselves as a superior race because God chose them to be His people when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. They looked down upon the Gentiles as an inferior class. God never created this division; it was their own doing.

Right in the Old Testament God was showing that He loves all people equally. But the Jews thought the places of worship were meant only for them. Through Isaiah the prophet God had to correct their error. He said, about the Gentiles, “Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for **mine house** shall be called an house of prayer **for all people**” Isaiah 56:7.

Jesus, God’s own Son, revealed to us the impartial love of God for the whole world, when He said, in the most famous verse in the Bible, “For **God so loved the world**, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever believeth** in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” John 3:16.

The New Testament church is comprised of both Jewish and Gentile converts. Unfortunately, the Jewish converts to Christianity still felt they were superior to the latter, because of their race. The apostle Paul, who was himself from a Jewish background, was an apostle to the Gentiles. He had to strive hard to bring home the truth of the gospel that there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles in God’s sight. He wrote about the cross of Christ, on which Jesus paid the penalty for the sins of the whole world, and brought all parties together, and removed all man-made barriers: “For he is our peace, who hath **made both one**, and hath **broken down the middle wall of partition**

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

between us” Ephesians 2:14.

Writing to the church of Galatia, which was riddled with Jewish-Gentile tussles, the apostle Paul said, “There is **neither Jew nor Greek**, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for **ye are all one in Christ Jesus**” Galatians 3:28.

Believers of both, Jewish and Gentile background, have the same privileges and blessings of the covenant that God gave Abraham and his seed. It is through Christ, this blessing flows to all, believing Jews and Gentiles. Paul wrote, “And **if ye be Christ's**, then are **ye Abraham's seed**, and **heirs** according to the promise” Galatians 3:29.

It is our faith in the Lord Jesus that makes us the children of the father of faith, Abraham. The apostle wrote, “Know ye therefore that they which **are of faith**, the **same** are the **children of Abraham**” Galatians 3:7.

Writing about the physical descendants of Abraham, the apostle Paul again emphasized the same matter: “They which are the **children of the flesh**, these are **not the children of God**: but the **children of the promise are counted for the seed**” Romans 9:8.

The apostle again stressed his point that circumcision of the flesh means nothing to God, it is a new life in Christ that matters. He wrote, “For in Christ Jesus **neither circumcision** availeth any thing, **nor uncircumcision**, but a **new creature**. And as many as walk **according to this rule**, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon **the Israel of God**” Galatians 6:15, 16. So the “Israel of God” are not the literal Jews who were circumcised, but anyone who believes in Jesus and is a “new creature” (“if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” 2 Corinthians 5:17).

There cannot be a more straightforward statement than what Paul the apostle emphatically wrote to the Romans about who is considered a Jew or who is really circumcised in God's sight. He wrote, “For

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

he is **not a Jew**, which is one **outwardly**; **neither** is that **circumcision**, which is **outward in the flesh**: But he is a **Jew**, which is one **inwardly**; and **circumcision** is that **of the heart**, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

So, when God makes mention of a Jew or an Israelite in the prophecies of the Scriptures, it is a reference to the spiritual Jews or spiritual Israelites; that is, believers in Jesus Christ, and not a reference to the outward Jews.

The apostle James, writing to the believers in the Lord Jesus, called them the “twelve tribes”. He wrote, “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the **twelve tribes** which are scattered abroad, greeting” James 1:1. He was not exclusively writing to the Jewish community, but to the Christian believers, and he addresses them using the same language as found in the Old Testament.

The apostle Peter called the believers in the Lord Jesus as the “holy nation”. He wrote, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, **an holy nation**, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” 1 Peter 2:9. This is quoted from Exodus 19:5, 6 where the physical Israelites were called the “holy nation”. The Old Testament Israel was a physical nation, but the New Testament Israel, the church, are not a physical nation, geographically or ethnically, but spiritually still called the “holy nation,” scattered around the world.

Having all these abundant infallible proofs from the writings of the apostles, it would be a gross misinterpretation of the Scriptures to suppose the 144,000, who are described in the prophetic book of Revelation, as coming from “all the tribes of the children of Israel” (Revelation 7:4), are literal Israel!

Why would God, in the last book of the

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

Scriptures, undo all that He has done through the apostles in the entire New Testament, by showing there is no distinction of race, in Christ? The burden of apostles Paul, Peter, James, and the Lord Jesus Himself in the Gospels, was to clearly show that there is no difference between Jewish and Gentile believers. And if indeed the phrase, “the children of Israel” (Revelation 7:4) is a reference to the physical Jews, then God is taking a U-turn and undoing what He has done, isn’t He?

No! The 144,000 are not literal Jews, or of the physical lineage of Jacob, but they are spiritual Jews, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, comprising “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”

Three Objections to the Literal Tribes Interpretation:

There are at least three objections as to why the tribes in Revelation 7 cannot be literal Jews.

1. The seventy weeks prophecy of Daniel chapter 9.
2. The order of the names given.
3. The ten missing tribes of the Northern kingdom in the Old Testament.

The Seventy Weeks Prophecy of Daniel Chapter 9:

In Daniel chapter- 9, God outlined the probationary period for the Jews after they returned from the Babylonian exile. He told them, “**Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city**, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy” Daniel 9:24.

The 70 weeks is 490 days (for one week has seven days), and in prophecy a day stands for a year (see Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6), so it would mean

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

490 literal years. This period is from 457 B.C. (the decree of Artaxerxes —See Daniel 9:25 and Ezra 7:7, 8) to AD 34 (the stoning of Stephen—See Acts 8).

Close to the end of the 70 weeks period the Messiah came. Indeed, Jesus the Messiah was baptized the exact year that Daniel prophesied (AD 27) and was crucified 3 ½ years later (AD 31) as foretold. The 70 weeks/490 years period ended in AD 34, when Stephen, the first Christian martyr was stoned to death, and the gospel, from then on, went to the Gentiles.

As the nation Israel rejected her Messiah, God gave the responsibility of the gospel to the church, comprised of both, Jewish and Gentile converts. Jesus told the Jews, “Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” Matthew 21:43.

In AD 34, the stoning of Stephen, signaled the end of the probationary period for the Jews as a holy nation and a peculiar people. Now, to the Christian church, the same privileges and titles are bestowed. Peter wrote to the church members, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Believing Jews and believing Gentiles from every nation, kindred, tribe, and tongue form God’s church, the Bride of Christ. The distinction of one race or ethnic group of people above the other is removed in Christ. If Revelation 7 is about the literal Jews having special privileges of being sealed and standing with the Lamb on Mount Sion, then the essence of the 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel 9 stands null and void!

The Order of the Names Given:

In Genesis chapter 49 and Numbers chapter 1, the order of the names of the children of Israel are

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

given. But the order of the names in Revelation 7:4–8 does not match any list given in the Old Testament. Not only is the order not the same, but names are added and removed in the Revelation list.

We know from the Old Testament, Reuben was the firstborn of Jacob, and his name was always recorded first. But in Revelation 7, Judah, the fourth-born, is given the first place. Probably because of Jesus, the promised Seed, was from the tribe of Judah, we see the preeminence to this tribe.

Also, Ephraim and Dan, the two tribes found in the Old Testament list, are missing in the Revelation 7 list. Probably because they had sunk into idolatry (See Hosea 4:17 and Judges 18:27-32).

There is no tribe of Joseph as such in the Old Testament, though he was the son of Jacob, because Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were reckoned as tribes in Joseph's place (See Genesis 48:5).

Levi, though he was the son of Jacob, was never considered a tribe, and did not get an inheritance when the land was divided, because God was their inheritance as they were given the priesthood, and they lived among the rest (Deuteronomy 10:9). But in the list of Revelation, Levi is counted as a tribe.

With all these variances we clearly can see that the tribes mentioned in Revelation 7 are not historical but spiritual.

Why did God give this order of the list in Revelation 7?

In the Scriptures, names had meanings, and especially the names of these tribes had prophetic significance as well. When you put the meaning of each name given in the list of Revelation 7 and join them one with another, you will notice a significant message emerging out of it. We will first look at the meanings of each of those names and then connect the meanings

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

of those names together.

Let us begin with:

Israel, the father of the tribes. His name was Jacob when he was born, but when he was born again, after his wrestling with God in Genesis 32, he was given the name Israel, meaning, someone who has “prevailed” or overcome (See Genesis 32:28). So those who overcome Satan and sin, as Israel did, will inherit the promises of God. Revelation 21:7 says, “He that **overcometh** shall **inherit all things**; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”

Judah means “praise” (Genesis 29:35).

Reuben means “the Lord has looked upon my affliction” (Genesis 29:32).

Gad means “a troop cometh” (Genesis 30:11).

Asher means “will call me blessed” (Genesis 30:13).

Naphtali means “wrestling” (Genesis 30:8).

Manasseh means “to forget all my toil” (Genesis 41:51).

Simeon means “the Lord has heard” (Genesis 29:33).

Levi means “is joined” (Genesis 29:34).

Issachar means “God hath given me my hire” (Genesis 30:18).

Zebulun means “my husband shall dwell with me” (Genesis 30:20).

Joseph means “adding” (Genesis 30:24).

Benjamin means “the son of the right hand” (Genesis 35:18).

Let us now put all the meanings of these names together in the same order as given in Revelation 7 and see the profoundness of the meaning they produce. I have added words in between those meanings of the names to bring grammatical accuracy. Here it is:

I will **praise** the Lord who has **looked upon my**

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

affliction. A **troop came** against me, but I was called **blessed** by the Lord, while I **wrestled**. Finally, I **forgot all my toil**, as the **Lord heard me**, and He **joined me** to Himself and has **given me my hire**. My spiritual **husband shall dwell with me**, and I **shall be added** with the **son of the right hand**.

Do you see the message that comes out of these names? It means, the 144,000 will go through a time of affliction and toil, but the Lord will bless them when they continue to wrestle with the Lord, like Jacob did. Finally, the Lord will hear our prayers and will join us to Himself and reward us. We, the church, the spiritual Bride, will dwell with our true Husband, and abide with Jesus forever, who is God's Son, seated at His right hand.

So, the order of the names, and the additions and subtractions of the original list, makes it abundantly clear, these tribes are not historical but spiritual.

The Ten Missing Tribes of the Northern Kingdom in the Old Testament:

In the year 722/721 BC the 10 tribes of the Northern kingdom of Israel were deported from Israel by the conquest of the Assyrian empire. The Bible records it. "In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and **carried Israel away into Assyria**, and placed them in **Halah** and in **Habor** by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes" 2 Kings 17:6.

Also the Scriptures record, "And the king of Assyria brought **men from Babylon**, and from **Cuthah**, and from **Ava**, and from **Hamath**, and from **Sepharvaim**, and **placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel**: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof" 2 Kings 17:24.

The ten tribes were dispersed all over the place

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

and they never returned to the promised land. They intermarried with other races of people and permanently lost their identity.

The Encyclopedia Britannica states, “Following the conquest of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians in 721 BC, **the 10 tribes were gradually assimilated by other peoples** and thus **disappeared from history**”, *Ten Lost Tribes of Israel*.

But, the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, who formed the Southern kingdom, went into Babylonian captivity for 70 years, during prophet Daniel’s time, and then returned to the promised land. But the ten Northern tribes never returned and lost their distinctiveness.

Some people try to suggest that the 12 apostles of Jesus were chosen from the twelve tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. But how is that possible when the 10 tribes disappeared more than seven centuries before Jesus came? Israel had only two tribes in the promised land when Jesus came—Judah and Benjamin. (And Levi as well. But they were not considered a tribe in the reckoning, because the priesthood was given to them).

It is not hard to disprove that the 12 Apostles came from 12 different tribes because we have two sets of brothers in the list of twelve: Simon Peter and Andrew from the same family, and so were James and John. Some try to suggest that these brothers were from different mothers, who were from two different tribes, but even that can be disproved from the Bible.

Remember the occasion when James and John came with their mother to ask for prominent places in the kingdom of God. The Bible says, “Then came to him the mother of Zebedee’s children” (Matthew 20:20). So, from this passage we understand Zebedee was the father of both, James and John, and this woman who came with them, was the mother of

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

them both.

I am not trying to be dogmatic here, but I believe, Jesus and the twelve apostles were from either the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, or Levi.

From the Bible and history, we learn of the disappearance of ten of the twelve tribes. Then how do they reappear in the book of Revelation at the end of time?

No! These are not the literal tribes of Israel, but the spiritual tribes of Israel, the church. Those who had those traits of character that these twelve sons of Jacob had, but have overcome them by the grace of Christ, are spiritually classified under those tribes. All are spiritually speaking, children of Israel, or overcomers!

Conclusion:

The 144,000 are not Jewish or Jewish-Christians, they are spiritual Jews (Galatians 3:28); that is, Christians, from all over the world.

CHAPTER 2

Hearing and Seeing Pattern

In the Scriptures God has often repeated important matters in visions with different symbols employed. For example, right in the first book of the Bible we see this.

We see Joseph had two different visions of the same matter. The first dream was about the sheaves of his brothers making obeisance to his sheaf, and in the second dream the eleven stars, sun and moon were bowing down to him (See Genesis 37:5-9).

Pharaoh too had two different dreams which related to the same truth. The first one was about the seven cows and the second one was about the seven heads of grain (See Genesis 41:1-7).

Even in the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation we see the same matter presented in two different views. For example, in Daniel chapters 2 and 7 we have the four world empires presented in two different ways. In Daniel 2, through a lifeless image, the truth is projected, but in Daniel 7 through four living beasts the same truth is emphasized. Also, the kingdoms of Medo/Persia and Greece are portrayed in Daniel 7 as bear and leopard, both unclean animals, from the wild, but in Daniel 8 these two kingdoms are symbolized by a ram and goat, two clean animals connected with the sanctuary. Also, the little horn of the fourth beast of Daniel 7 is portrayed as a separate beast of Revelation 13. Again, the beast of Revelation

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

13 is shown to be a harlot woman in Revelation 17. So, God has employed different symbols to communicate the same truths, following the principle of “repeat and expand.”

The Audio-Visual Representations:

Apart from using different pictures to reiterate the truth, God has employed the seeing and hearing method as well in Revelation.

The apostle John who had the visions of Revelation also wrote one of the New Testament Gospels and the three epistles bearing his name. In the beginning of his epistles he tells us the content of his information is two-fold: What he has **heard** and **seen**.

He wrote at the outset of his epistle: “That which was from the beginning, which **we have heard**, which **we have seen** with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and **we have seen it**, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which **we have seen** and **heard** declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” 1 John 1:1-3.

The book of Revelation also follows a pattern where John hears things at times, and at other times he sees them in vision. The audio-visual representation is seen throughout the book.

Right in the first chapter you see this seeing and hearing emphasized. John wrote, “Blessed is he that **readeth**, and they that **hear** the words of this prophecy” Revelation 1:3.

In the last chapter as well the seeing and hearing model is underscored. “And I John **saw** these things, and **heard** them. And when I had **heard** and **seen...**” Revelation 22:8.

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

“Saw” and “heard,” “heard” and “seen” is the audio-visual experience that John had in the visions throughout the book of Revelation. Many times, what John sees and hears are the same thing, but few other times what John hears is one thing and what he sees is something else. These are different perspectives of the same matter.

The Revelation Pattern—Seeing and Hearing:

It is said that around 55% of the book of Revelation is what John saw and wrote, and around 43% of the book is about what John heard, which he penned down. And the remaining 2% is the introduction and conclusion part of the book.

Here are some examples of the two distinct sources of his information. Following are some verses that tell us it was what he **heard** that he wrote down:

Revelation 1:10 “I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and **heard** behind me **a great voice**, as of a trumpet.”

Revelation 5:13 “And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, **heard I saying**, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”

Revelation 14:13 “And I **heard a voice** from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, **saith the Spirit**, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

Revelation 16:1 “And I **heard a great voice** out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.”

Revelation 21:3 “And I **heard a great voice** out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”

Here are some other Bible verses that tell us that what John wrote was what he **saw/beheld**:

Revelation 1:17 “And **when I saw him**, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last.”

Revelation 6:12 “And **I beheld** when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood.”

Revelation 10:1 “And **I saw** another mighty angel 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.”

Revelation 13:11 “And **I beheld** another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.”

Revelation 21:1 “And **I saw** a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”

And there were other visions where both the **hearing** and **seeing** come together. For example, he wrote:

Revelation 4:1 “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 shew thee things which must be hereafter.”

Revelation 6:1 “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.”

Revelation 8:13 “And **I beheld**, and **heard** an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!"

Revelation 9:16, 17 "And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and **I heard the number** of them. And thus **I saw the horses** in the vision..."

The Juxtaposition of the Visions:

Here are some visions where the seeing and hearing is combined. And in these examples, we see that what is seen and what is heard are apparently two different things/scenes, but they are the same—one truth from two different perspectives.

Trumpet/Son of Man:

Revelation chapter one begins with this pattern where John hears something but sees something else. Revelation 1:10-13 "... and **heard** behind me a great voice, as of a **trumpet**, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I **saw** seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto **the Son of man**."

John first heard a voice that sounded like a trumpet. Probably he expected to see a trumpet when he looked back to see from where that voice proceeded. But when he turned to see that trumpet-like voice, he sees no trumpet at all, but the Son of man speaking!

The trumpet-voice and the Son of man represent the same person, Jesus Christ.

Lion/Lamb:

In Revelation chapter five we have the same pattern in the sealing vision. John was told to look for a Lion. But, when he looked, he saw not a Lion, but a Lamb! John wrote: "And one of the elders **saith unto**

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

me, Weep not: behold, **the Lion** of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And **I beheld**, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood **a Lamb** as it had been slain” Revelation 5:5, 6.

Though what he hears and sees are two different animals, so opposite to each other, they both represent the same Person, Jesus Christ. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who is regal, royal, majestic, and kingly, and at the same time He is the Lamb of God who is meek, lowly, and humble in nature. He came the first time like a Lamb to die for our sins, but He is coming back the second time like a Lion to reign.

The same pattern of hearing one thing and seeing another thing, altogether, is noticed in this Lion-Lamb scene as well.

144,000/Great Multitude:

In Revelation 7 the hearing and seeing pattern is again demonstrated. “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” Revelation 7:4.

After hearing about the number, of God’s special people, John then sees something else. He wrote: “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.

He hears a definite number but sees an indefinite number.

There are remarkably interesting parallels between Revelation chapters five and seven—the chapters that cover the Lion-Lamb scene and the

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

144,000-Great Multitude vision:

1. **Both** are part of the **sealing vision**, one at the beginning of the sealing vision, the other at the end of the sealing vision.
2. There is a **question asked** in both these places, and the questions are similar. The question in one place is: “**Who is worthy** to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?” (Revelation 5:2). And the question in the other place is: “For the great day of his wrath is come; and **who shall be able to stand?**” (Revelation 6:17).
3. In Revelation chapter 5 the Lamb takes the **sealed book from God**; in Revelation 7 the 144,000 are **sealed with the seal of God**.
4. In Revelation chapter 5 the **Lion** comes from **one** of the **twelve tribes**, the tribe of Judah; in Revelation 7, the **144,000** come from the **twelve tribes**.
5. In Revelation 5 the Lamb has seven Spirits of God which are sent forth into “**all the earth**” (Revelation 5:6). And in Revelation 7, the great multitude come from “**all nations**” (Revelation 7:9).
6. There is **singing before the throne** in the second half of both the chapters.
7. The **hearing** and **seeing patterns** are demonstrated in both these places: In Revelation 5 John **hears about a Lion** but **sees a Lamb**; and in Revelation 7 He **hears about the 144,000** but **sees a great multitude**.

Lamb's Wife/Holy City:

At the end of the book this pattern of hearing one thing and seeing something else is again repeated. One of the angels first tells John about the Lamb's wife. Then He shows him who the Lamb's wife is, which is not what John expected to probably see.

Revelation 21:9 “And there came unto me one

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and **talked with me**, saying, Come hither, **I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.**"

After hearing about the Lamb's wife John gets the opportunity to see her. He sees not a woman, as the Lamb's wife, which would represent God's people, but He sees the capital city of God. The Scripture continues, "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and **shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem**, descending out of heaven from God" Revelation 21:10.

Earlier to this John had a vision of the marriage of the Lamb. He wrote, "And I heard as it were the voice of a **great multitude**, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the **marriage of the Lamb** is come, and **his wife hath made herself ready**. 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**" Revelation 19:6.

So, the **saints**, who are dressed in white, are portrayed to be the **wife of the Lamb**, in this vision of Revelation 19.

Also, through the apostle Paul, God compared the relationship between husband and wife with Christ and the church in Ephesians chapter 5, because the church, the body of believers, are indeed the wife of Christ, spiritually speaking. As the husband and wife are one flesh in marriage, so Christ and His people will be finally united as one, when sin, that brought the separation, is fully removed. Likewise, in many other parts of the Old and New Testament Scriptures we see this symbol employed by God. But in Revelation 21 John hears about the Lamb's wife and sees not the church, but the city of God.

As the Lamb and the Lion both portray Christ,

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

so do the church and the holy city both represent the Lamb's wife.

Conclusion:

Those who view the 144,000 to be a literal number opine that the 144,000 and the great multitude of Revelation 7 cannot be the same group because the 144,000 is a defined number given in the Scriptures, whereas the great multitude are beyond numbering.

If the trumpet voice can be that of the Son of Man in Revelation 1, if the Lion can be a Lamb in Revelation 5, and if the Lamb's wife can be the Holy City in Revelation 21, then for sure, by the same rule of juxtaposition of hearing and seeing, the 144,000 must be the great multitude of Revelation 7!

(For more on the relationship between the 144,000 and the great multitude read the chapter: "*Revelation 7, How Many Segments—Two or Three?*").

CHAPTER 3

Revelation 7, How Many Segments—Two or Three?

Many of the literal exponents of the 144,000 say that Revelation chapter 7 has three segments as follows: Revelation 7:1-8 (about the 144,000), Revelation 7:9-12 (about the great multitude) and Revelation 7:13-17 (again about the 144,000).

But those who believe in the symbolic interpretation of the 144,000 believe that Revelation chapter 7 has only two segments. They are Revelation 7:1-8 (about 144,000) and Revelation 7:9-17 (about the great multitude).

Why is it crucial to know whether there are two segments or three in Revelation chapter 7? If there are just two segments to that chapter, then the symbolic view becomes stronger. But if there are three sections to that chapter, then the literal view can be sustained.

Two or Three Segments?

Let us investigate both views from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

Why do the literal proponents say there are three sections, and not two, in Revelation chapter 7? The reason is if there are two sections (verses 1-8 and verses 9-17) as the symbolic viewers believe, then it must be concluded that the 144,000 and the great multitude are one and the same group of people as

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

Ellen White freely describes the 144,000 using the verses of Revelation 7:13-17. If the verses 13 through 17 belong to the great multitude then we must conclude that the great multitude is another name for the 144,000!

Look at how Sister White describes the 144,000 by using the verses of Revelation 7:13-17. "None but the **hundred and forty-four thousand** can learn that song; for it is the song of their experience, an experience such as no other company have ever had. "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." These, having been translated from the earth, from among the living, are counted as "the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb." **"These are they which came out of great tribulation;"** [Revelation 14:1-5; 15:3; **Revelation 7:14-17.**] they have passed through the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation; they have endured the anguish of **the time of Jacob's trouble**; they have stood without the Intercessor through the final outpouring of God's judgments. But they have been delivered, for **they have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."** "In their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault" before God. **"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."** [Revelation 14:1-5; 15:3; **Revelation 7:14-17.**] They have seen the earth wasted with famine and pestilence, the sun having power to scorch men with great heat, and they themselves have endured suffering, hunger, and thirst. But **"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 14:1-5; 15:3;

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

7:14-17] {GC 648.3}.

According to the above passage from the pen of inspiration it is the **“hundred and forty-four thousand”** that have **“come out of the great tribulation”** and have **“washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”** **“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.”** It is this group of the 144,000 of which it is written that **“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”**. This great tribulation is specifically pointed to by Ellen White as **“the time of Jacob's trouble”** in the above passage of Great Controversy, page 648.

In another place, Sister White has again confirmed that it is the 144,000 that go through the great tribulation of Revelation chapter 7. She wrote, **“I saw there tables of stone in which the names of the **one hundred and forty-four thousand** were engraved in letters of gold. After we beheld the glory of the temple, we went out, and Jesus left us, and went to the city. Soon we heard his lovely voice again, saying, 'Come, my people, **you have come out of great tribulation**, and have done my will, and suffered for me; come to the marriage supper; for I will gird myself and serve you”**” {LS 80, 217.2}.

Based on the above two passages (GC, 648; LS 80, 217) we must conclude one of the following to be true: 1) The verses of Revelation chapter 7: 1-8 and verses 13-17 exclusively talk about the 144,000. The in-between verses of 9-12 only describe the great multitude. If that is true, then the 144,000 and the great multitude are two distinct groups! Or, 2) The verses of

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

Revelation 7:1-8 describe the 144,000 and verses 9-17 is a description of the great multitude. Since Sister White used the verses of the great multitude to describe the 144,000 then these both are one and the same group in two different symbols!

Which Interpretation is More Forceful?

Let us investigate and see which of the above two interpretations is true from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy—whether there are two sections or three in Revelation chapter 7?

Carefully analyze these verses of Revelation 7:13-14. “And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 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.”

Are these, who wear white robes, and who have come out of the great tribulation, the 144,000 or the great multitude? The literal proponents say it is the 144,000 group, whereas the symbolic advocates say it is the great multitude.

The Bible rule is always to take any statement in its context, if not, we will be in danger of misinterpreting it. In the context of Revelation chapter 7, who are the ones presented wearing the white robes—the 144,000 or the great multitude?

Let us allow John, who had this vision, to answer that for us. Revelation 7:9 “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”. So, the ones wearing white robes are the great multitude.

When you read Revelation 7:1-8, which

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

describes the 144,000, there is no mention of white robes! (Yes, we believe all the redeemed will wear white robes in heaven as given in Revelation 3:5. But in the context of Revelation 7, only the great multitude are dressed in white robes).

Kindly note that in Revelation 7 John does **not see** the 144,000 at all, he **only hears** about them. It says, “And **I heard the number** of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand” Revelation 7:4. But it is the other way around when it comes to the great multitude. He **does not hear** about them, but he **sees them!** Revelation 7:9 says, “After this **I beheld**, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number”.

When you carefully analyze the dialogue between John and one of the elders, you get another confirmation that the ones wearing the white robes and who pass through the great tribulation are the great multitude.

One of the elders points to the group that John is looking at and asks him a question, “**What are these** which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?” Revelation 7:13. It is obvious from the language used that John was **beholding** this group of people and the elder was **pointing to them** while he asked that question. In the context of Revelation 7, of the two groups that are presented, John only **saw the great multitude**, but he **heard** about the **144,000**. So, the white-robed ones of Revelation 7 are the great multitude.

Some suggest that the white-robed saints must be the 144,000 because, they say, the question itself gives us the clue. What is the question? “**Whence came they?**” (Revelation 7:13), or where did they come from? They say, we know from where the great multitude came, for the Scripture itself has given the answer, in Revelation 7:9— “of all nations, and

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

kindreds, and people, and tongues". So, they say, the question must be a reference to the only other group that is mentioned in the same chapter, 144,000.

But our friends who say this, probably have forgotten to see that John also knew the whereabouts of the 144,000. The Bible gives that answer as well—"of all the tribes of the children of Israel" (Revelation 7:4).

So, the question "Whence came they?" is not a reference to the location that they have *come from* but a reference to the experience they have *come through*. The very answer given by the elder to John confirms it. The elder does not talk about their location in his answer but about their experience. He replied, "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 third confirmation that the saints in white robes are indeed the great multitude is the natural flow of the passage itself.

The literal supporters say that verses 1 through 8 and 13 through 17 are about the 144,000. The in-between four verses of 9-12 of Revelation chapter 7 are about the great multitude. Why is there a breakup of the texts in between to present another group and then reconnect? If those four verses of 9-12 were only a parenthesis, then when John reintroduces the 144,000 in verses 13 through 17, he should have mentioned anywhere in that passage that this was the 144,000 group. The very fact that he does not mention this portion of 13-17 as a reference to the 144,000, constrains us to simply conclude, by the flow of the scene, that it must be the great multitude description from verses 13-17, for that is the natural flow of thought in the context. Also, since the passage of 13-17 talks about the white-robed group, it must be, beyond an iota of doubt, a direct reference to the great multitude who

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

are portrayed in Revelation 7:9 as the white robed saints.

SOP Confirmation:

We also have a confirmation from the pen of inspiration that the ones clothed in white, in Revelation 7, who come out of the great tribulation and serve God in His temple, are the great multitude.

Here are three passages from her writings:

"The prophet John saw the **multitude** of the redeemed, and inquired who they were. The prompt answer came: "**These** are they which **came out of great tribulation**, and have **washed their robes**, and made them **white** in the blood of the Lamb" {1T 78.1}.

"John says: "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 cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." "**These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes**, and made them **white** in the blood of the Lamb. 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" {4T 125.2}.

"As John saw the **multitude standing around the throne of God**, the question was asked, "**What are these which are arrayed in white robes?** and whence came they?"--"**These are they which came out of great tribulation**," the angel answered, "and have

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

washed their robes, and made them **white** in the blood of the Lamb." At an infinite cost a fountain has been prepared for our cleansing. In the blood of the Son of God we may wash our garments of character, and make them white. If now we crucify self, and live for Christ, God will give us a place in the mansions He is preparing for those who love Him" {ST, April 17, 1901 par. 18}.

Also, in her book, Acts of the Apostles, Mrs. White wrote, "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 cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Revelation 7:9, 10. **"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.** 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 7:14-17 {AA 602, par. 2, 3}.

And this is the exact description that Sister White gives of the 144,000 as seen earlier in the book Great Controversy, p. 648! Let me put that passage here as well, for you to note the comparison.

"None but the **hundred and forty-four thousand** can learn that song; for it is the song of their experience,—an experience such as no other company have ever had. "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." These, having been

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

translated from the earth, from among the living, are counted as “the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.” **“These are they which came out of great tribulation;”** [Revelation 14:1-5; 15:3; **Revelation 7:14-17.**] they have passed through the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation; they have endured the anguish of **the time of Jacob's trouble**; they have stood without an intercessor through the final outpouring of God's judgments. But they have been delivered, for **they have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”** “In their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault” before God. **“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.”** [Revelation 14:1-5; 15:3; **Revelation 7:14-17.**] They have seen the earth wasted with famine and pestilence, the sun having power to scorch men with great heat, and they themselves have endured suffering, hunger, and thirst. But **“they shall hunger no more; neither thirst anymore; 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 14:1-5; 15:3; **7:14-17**] {GC 648.3}.

Revelation 7:4 says, “There were **sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand** of all the tribes of the children of Israel”. And then John writes about the great multitude that he beheld: “After this I beheld, and, lo, **a great multitude**, which no man could number, of **all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues**” Revelation 7:9.

Now notice the language of Ellen White where she combines the above two verses as one. She wrote, “Of the **number** of them that shall be **sealed** will be those who have come **from every nation and kindred**

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

and tongue and people” {CT 532.1}.

According to John it is the great multitude that come from “all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues”, and Ellen White says these are the sealed ones!

Unless the great multitude **is** the 144,000, with another name, it makes no sense!

According to Revelation 7:15, which we saw describes the great multitude, it says the great multitude are in the temple before God’s throne. Ellen White also, in her book, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 602, confirms that it is the great multitude that are inside God’s heavenly temple, before His throne.

From another passage of the Spirit of prophecy writings, we know that there will **not be two groups** of people **who enter the temple**, but **only one**. She wrote, “And as we were about to **enter the holy temple**, Jesus raised His lovely voice and said, “**Only the 144,000 enter this place**,” and we shouted, “Alleluia”” {EW 18}.

Unless the 144,000 and the great multitude of Revelation 7 are one and the same group in two different descriptions, you cannot reconcile what the pen of inspiration has said!

So, we must conclude, Revelation chapter seven has only 2 segments—verses 1-8 about the 144,000 and verses 9-17 about the great multitude, and not three sections, as the literal interpreters believe.

Why 2 Segments in Revelation 7?

If they are one and the same group, why 2 segments and not just one?

In **Revelation 7:1-8** God’s last day saints are pictured **on earth**, being sealed, before the winds of strife are let loose, and the time of trouble commences. In the next segment of **Revelation 7:9-17** these same saints are pictured **in heaven**, before God’s throne, as

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

victorious and glorified. They are one and the same group seen first on earth as a **church militant**, and then in heaven, as **church triumphant**. That is the reason why these are two pictures of one and the same group of people.

The church on earth (Revelation 7:1-8) is painted with the literal imagery borrowed from the Old Testament—Israel and his 12 sons, with 12 thousand chosen from the 12 tribes, thus the total, 144,000. But the church in heaven (Revelation 7:9-17) is shown to John in plain description, comprising of people from all over the world, from every nation, kindred, people, and tongue, a vast multitude that cannot be numbered. One is portrayed in symbols, the other is shown as they are.

In Revelation chapter 14, the opposite is pictured. The 144,000 are first pictured triumphant in heaven, on Mount Zion. “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” Revelation 14:1. And that same group are later pictured on earth as “saints”, who went through trials and tribulations. It says, “Here is the **patience** of the **saints**: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” Revelation 14:12.

How do we know that these saints, the 144,000, have gone through tribulation? It says these have developed “patience” (Rev. 14:12). How is patience developed? The apostle tells us in Romans 5:3 “Knowing that **tribulation worketh patience**”. It is the tribulation of the mark of the beast, of no buying and selling and the death decree (Rev. 13:15, 17), that these have endured, and have developed patience!

And these saints, “the hundred and forty and four thousand”, “were redeemed from the earth” (Rev. 14:3). Which part of the earth have they come from? They came from “every nation, and kindred, and

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

tongue, and people” as the everlasting gospel goes to the whole world (See Rev. 14:6, 7).

And in the TWO groups given in Revelation 7, the 144,000 are pictured as from only one nation, one ethnic community and one language—the nation of Israel, the Jews, the Hebrew race. John wrote, “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**” (See Rev. 7:4). But the Great multitude of Revelation 7 come from “**all nations**, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” (Rev 7:9). Therefore, we must conclude, the 144,000 and the great multitude are one and the same group of people, who are symbolically portrayed as coming from all the tribes of Israel, but in reality, they are from every nook and cranny of the whole world. Symbolically they are portrayed as 144,000 in number (Rev. 7:4), but they are, in reality, “a great multitude, which no man could number” (Rev. 7:9).

In Revelation 14, the 144,000 are pictured before the throne singing an exclusive song. “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” (Rev. 14:3). But in Rev. 7 it is the great multitude that are pictured before the throne singing a song! “And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (Rev. 7:10).

In Rev. 7 the great multitude have “palms in their hands” (verse 9). And in Rev. 14 the 144,000 are portrayed as having “harps” (verse 2). Some people, therefore, think this must be two different groups, one with palms and the other with harps. But let us see what the inspired author tells us about the 144,000: “He gave us **harps** of gold and **palms** of victory. Here on the sea of glass the **144,000** stood in a perfect square” {CCh

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

34}.

So, the 144,000 have both—harps and palms—palms shown to be associated with the great multitude in scripture (Rev. 7:9), and harps connected with the 144,000 in scripture (Rev. 14:2). They are clubbed together as one group by the inspired pen, because these two groups are one and the same.

Also, those in the white-robed multitude of Revelation 7:9 are portrayed to be the ones standing on the sea of glass, by Sister White, who sing that exclusive song. She wrote, "The prophet of Patmos beholds the **white-robed multitude** that have "gotten the victory," standing on the "sea of glass mingled with fire," having "the harps of God. And **they sing the song of Moses**, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (Revelation 15:2, 3), {Conflict and Courage 93.3}.

Four Groups Before the Throne:

Before we wind up Revelation 7, the chapter of the 144,000/the great multitude who are seen before the throne of God, we need to look at a passage from Sister White's writing which mentions 4 distinct groups before God's throne.

Those who believe that the 144,000 and the great multitude are two distinct groups often quote this passage of The Great Controversy to show the great multitude is indeed a different group of saints from the 144,000. Here is the passage:

"Nearest the throne are those who were **once zealous in the cause of Satan**, but who, plucked as brands from the burning, have followed their Saviour with deep, intense devotion. **Next** are those who **perfected Christian characters in the midst of falsehood and infidelity**, those who honoured the law of God when the Christian world declared it void, **and the millions, of all ages, who were martyred** for their

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

faith. And **beyond** is the '**great multitude, which no man could number**, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, ... before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.' Revelation 7:9. Their warfare is ended, their victory won. They have run the race and reached the prize. The palm branch in their hands is a symbol of their triumph, the white robe an emblem of the spotless righteousness of Christ which now is theirs" (GC 665).

Let us put it down in sequence: a) **nearest** the throne—those who were once zealous in the cause of Satan, plucked out, then followed the Saviour with intense devotion. b) **next**—those who perfected Christian characters in the midst of falsehood, and honoured the law of God, when the law was made void, c) the millions of saints of all ages who were martyred for their faith. d) **beyond**—a great multitude, which no man could number.

In this sequence, the "great multitude, which no man could number," are positioned last. The argument brought forth by those who believe the 144,000 and the great multitude are two distinct groups, say, if this group of the "great multitude" are indeed the 144,000, they should be closest to the throne and not the farthest, as they are the most special group of all, as revealed in many other passages according to the pen of inspiration.

Using this passage from the book, The Great Controversy, p. 665, and to conclude that the 144,000 and the great multitude must be different, is a weak evidence, simply because there is no mention of the 144,000 in these 4 groups!

The ones nearest the throne, according to the above passage are those who were "once zealous in the cause of Satan, but who, plucked as brands from the burning, have followed their Saviour with deep, intense devotion". This surely is not the description we

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

have of the 144,000 in any part of the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy. So, that passage of GC, p. 665, does not prove the distinction between the 144,000 and the great multitude.

Conclusion:

The evidence is overwhelming, from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, that the 144,000 and the great multitude are one and the same group, the last days saints, who will be translated alive when Jesus comes, pictured to us as two groups. One presented in symbolic language, with a symbolic number, whereas the other is shown to us in plain language.

CHAPTER 4

The Great Multitude: The Five Different Views

Among good Adventist scholars and Bible students of prophecy, there are five different views that I have come across regarding the great multitude of Revelation chapter 7. Logically speaking, all these five schools of thought cannot be right; only one of them should be the correct one.

Let me outline the five views and then we will examine each of them. For convenience sake we will name these as first, second, third, fourth, and fifth views.

The First View: The great multitude are the resurrected saints of all ages, in contrast to the 144,000, the living saints at the end of time.

The Second View: The great multitude are not all the saints who have died in the Lord, but only those people who have endured tribulations for their faith, because it says of the great multitude, “These are they which came out of great tribulation” (Revelation 7:14).

The Third View: The great multitude are the fruits of the labor of the 144,000 during the Latter Rain time. But this group of the great multitude will die for their faith before or during the great tribulation and only the 144,000 will be preserved alive till Jesus comes.

The Fourth View: The great multitude are the fruits of the labor of the 144,000 during the Latter Rain

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

time. They, along with the 144,000, will go through the great tribulation unscathed and will be translated to heaven alive when Jesus comes. The 144,000 are the called “first fruits” in connection to the great multitude.

The Fifth View: The great multitude and the 144,000 are one and the same group of people with two different names. They are the living saints who pass through the great tribulation unscathed and will be translated to heaven alive when Jesus comes.

The Timespan of the Sixth Seal:

Before we look at which one of the above five views is correct, we need to remember that the great multitude and the 144,000, which are recorded in Revelation chapter 7, are part of the sixth seal which covers Revelation 6:12-17 and the entire chapter of Revelation 7. There are six distinct events outlined in the first three verses of the sixth seal. Let’s read those verses.

Revelation 6:12-14 “And I beheld when he had opened the **sixth seal**, and, lo, there was a **great earthquake**; and the **sun became black** as sackcloth of hair, and the **moon became as blood**; And the **stars of heaven fell** unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the **heaven departed as a scroll** when it is rolled together; and **every mountain and island were moved out of their places.**”

Let us list the six events of the sixth seal:

1. Great earthquake.
2. Sun became black.
3. Moon became as blood.
4. Stars of heaven fell.
5. Heaven departed as a scroll.
6. Every mountain and island moved out of their places.

The opening of the sixth seal is marked by a “great earthquake” and the closing of the sixth seal is

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

the second coming of Jesus, when the heavens depart as a scroll, and the mountains and islands disappear.

The great earthquake, all of us agree, is the *Great Lisbon earthquake*, as it is called, of **Novemeber 1, 1755 AD**. It had a magnitude of close to 9 on the Richter scale. It is one of the deadliest earthquakes in the history of the world.

The sun became black on **May 19, 1780** where the entire Northern Hemisphere saw this grand supernatural phenomenon of nature. It was around 10 o'clock in the morning, the sun disappeared from the sky and reappeared only the next day.

That same night, of **May 19, 1780**, the moon, which was full the previous night, turned red as blood, which caused fear and confusion among the viewers of the Northern Hemisphere.

On the night of **November 13, 1833** the greatest meteoric display was seen in the Northern skies. Close to two hundred thousand stars fell per hour, for nearly six hours.

The next event in the list of the sixth seal will happen when Jesus returns the second time where the heavens and the earth will be shaken, as Jesus comes to judge the world, and put an end to it.

So all the **events of the sixth seal** take place during the **timeframe of AD 1755 to the Second Coming of Jesus**, not before that, nor after.

Revelation chapter 7, which is part of the sixth seal, presents the 144,000 and the great multitude. So, the people of the great multitude should be in the timespan of AD 1755 to the second coming of Jesus, because that is the timeframe of the sixth seal.

Keeping this timeframe of the sixth seal in mind we will investigate the five different views of the great multitude.

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

The Five Views Examined:

The First View: The great multitude are the resurrected saints of all ages, in contrast to the 144,000, the living saints at the end of time.

Regarding the great multitude it says, **“These are they which came out of great tribulation”** Revelation 7:14. The proponents of the first view say that every believer in the Lord Jesus has to go through tribulation to make it to heaven. For example, the apostle Paul wrote, in Acts 14:22, **“We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”** Jesus also said, **“In the world ye shall have tribulation:** but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” John 16:33. True, every child of God has tribulations, tests and trials that come, because of their faith.

But the great tribulation that the great multitude go through, as given in Revelation 7:14, is not the general tribulation, tests, and trials that every believer goes through, but a specific end-time episode. Mrs. White makes it clear that it is the “time of Jacob’s trouble”, which is an end-time tribulation.

She wrote, **“These are they which came out of great tribulation;”** [Revelation 14:1-5; 15:3; Revelation 7:14-17.] they have **passed through the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation;** they have endured the anguish of **the time of Jacob's trouble;** they have stood without the Intercessor through the **final outpouring of God's judgments.** But they have been delivered, for **they have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb {GC 648.3}.**

No doubt, when Jesus comes the second time, there will be two groups of God’s people who will be caught up in the air. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 **“For the Lord himself shall descend from**

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and **the dead in Christ shall rise first**: Then **we which are alive** and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

When the Bible presents the resurrected people, there is a mention in the text itself, that they are the resurrected people. For example, look at the following verses:

John 5:28, 29 "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which **all that are in the graves** shall hear his voice, And **shall come forth**; they that have done good, unto the **resurrection** of life; and they that have done evil, unto the **resurrection** of damnation."

Revelation 20:12 "And I saw the **dead**, small and great, **stand before God**".

Daniel 12:2 "And **many** of them that **sleep in the dust** of the earth shall **awake**, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

But, when you read Revelation 7:9, which describes the great multitude, there is no mention in that verse or in any of the following verses that describe them, that they are the resurrected ones. Revelation 7:9 says, "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".

John wrote that they are "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" (Revelation 7:9). If they are saints of all ages past, resurrected from Adam's time to the second coming, John should have added that identification as well, that they are from all ages/time. But he only wrote about their location, ethnicity and language!

Also, Revelation chapter 7 is a part of the sixth

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

seal. And as we have seen earlier in this chapter the timeframe of the sixth seal doesn't allow the great multitude to be the resurrected saints of all ages from the beginning of the world to the end of time. Also Mrs. White confirms that the great multitude of Revelation 7:9 endure the time of Jacob's trouble. So you can't put them anywhere else in history.

The Second View: The great multitude are not all the saints who have died in the Lord, but only those people who have endured great tribulations for their faith, because it says of the great multitude, "These are they which came out of great tribulation" (Revelation 7:14).

Those who hold this viewpoint point out from the Bible that there is more than one great tribulation mentioned in scripture. The persecution of the dark ages of the middle centuries (AD 38 to AD 1798) is also called a "great tribulation." Jesus said of this time, "For then shall be **great tribulation**, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" Matthew 24:21.

The verse of Revelation 7:14— "These are they which came out of **great tribulation**"—refers to a particular tribulation and not any or all the tribulations. Notice the word *tribulation* is in singular and not plural, which means, you cannot include other tribulations in it.

Also the tribulation of the dark ages cannot fit here because, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, this great multitude of Revelation 7:9 are part of the sixth seal, and the sixth seal period embraces the timespan from AD 1755 to the Second Coming of Jesus. The dark ages tribulation ended before this period.

Though the dark ages period was till 1798, the persecution stopped earlier to this period as Jesus said, For then shall be **great tribulation**, such as was

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And **except those days should be shortened**, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake **those days shall be shortened**" Matthew 24:21, 22.

Also, as we have seen in the first view, the Spirit of Prophecy confirms that this great tribulation is the "time of Jacob's trouble" {GC 648.3}, so you cannot put it anywhere else, except at the end of time.

The Third View: The great multitude are the fruits of the labor of the 144,000 during the Latter Rain time. But this group of the great multitude will die for their faith before or during the great tribulation and only the 144,000 will be preserved alive till Jesus comes.

It is true that during the Latter Rain time there will be a great harvest of souls won for the kingdom of God. Those who believe the third view draw a comparison between the Former Rain, during the time of Pentecost, and that of the Latter Rain.

The believers of this view say, during the Former Rain, when the Holy Spirit came down with great power upon God's chosen people in the upper room, there were about one hundred twenty souls. The scripture records, "The number of names together were about an hundred and twenty" Acts 1:15.

This group of chosen ones, by the power of the Early Rain, brought a great multitude to the faith. On the Day of Pentecost itself three thousand were baptised, and then the number grew to five thousand very soon (See Acts 2:41, Acts 4:4). And then the Bible says, "**A great number** believed, and turned unto the Lord" Acts 11:21. So this "great number" is a reflection of the "great multitude" that will also turn to the Lord during the time of the Latter Rain, by the efforts of the 144,000.

This view seems much stronger than the first two views as it fits the timeframe of the sixth seal; also

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

they find a parallel in the Former Rain experience to sustain their view.

But, there are some major challenges to this view:

1. Nowhere in the Scriptures or in the Spirit of Prophecy do we have a reference that the 144,000 receive the Latter Rain and bring in the great multitude.
2. Nowhere in the Scriptures or in the Spirit of Prophecy do we have a reference that the great multitude whom the 144,000 bring in are all going to be put to death. (Yes, the pen of inspiration says, during the final crisis, “**Many** will be imprisoned, **many** will flee for their lives from cities and towns, and **many will be martyrs for Christ's sake** in standing in defense of the truth” 3SM 397 (1889). In the above reference, Mrs. White divides God's end-time people into three groups. The ones who are a) imprisoned, b) fleeing from cities and towns to the mountains, and c) martyrs. One group dies, whereas the other two groups are preserved alive till the second coming. She refers to all three groups as “many”. If the great multitude who die are “many”, then there are two other “many” groups as well that will be alive. So the ones who are alive should be more in number as they are two groups of “many” compared to the one “many” group that dies. This doesn't fit their interpretation that the 144,000, which is a smaller group, is alive, whereas a “great multitude, which no man could number”, dies).
3. The Bible says about the great multitude, “These are they which **came out** of great tribulation” Revelation 7:14. To come out of the tribulation would naturally mean that they first enter the tribulation. They have come out victorious through it. No saint of God dies once probation closes and the time of trouble starts. The pen of inspiration says, “The heavenly sentinels, faithful to their trust, continue their watch. Though a **general decree** has fixed the time when

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

commandment-keepers may be put to death, their enemies will in some cases anticipate the decree, and, before the time specified, will endeavor to take their lives. **But none can pass the mighty guardians stationed about every faithful soul.** Some are assailed in their flight from the cities and villages; but the **swords raised against them break and fall as powerless as a straw.** Others are defended by angels in the form of men of war {GC88 631.1}. (To know whether the 144,000 or the great multitude go through the tribulation kindly read the chapter: “*Revelation 7, How Many Segments—Two or Three?*”)

4. It would seem so unfair that such a “great multitude, which no man could number” should be brought in to finally die as martyrs!

When we study the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, we clearly see that the 144,000 are not sealed at the beginning of the Latter Rain, when the Loud Cry of the third angel goes to the whole world during the Sunday law, but they are sealed at the point of time when probation nearly closes and the seven last plagues are about to be poured out during the time of trouble.

As probation is about to close, and the winds of strife are about to be let loose, it is at this time that Satan is permitted to take complete control of the wicked who have made their decision to be on his side. And it is at this time that God’s judgments are about to be poured out, in the form of the plagues. It is at this time, and not before, that the 144,000 are sealed.

John the apostle wrote, Revelation 7:2, 3 “And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the **seal of the living God**: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, **Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.**”

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

The Spirit of Prophecy makes it abundantly clear that as soon as the sealing of the 144,000 is done Jesus closes His work in the heavenly sanctuary.

"I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven. **An angel with a writer's inkhorn by his side returned from the earth and reported to Jesus that his work was done, and the saints were numbered and sealed.** Then I saw Jesus, who had been ministering before the ark containing the ten commandments, **throw down the censer.** He raised His hands, and with a loud voice said, **"It is done."**--EW 279 (1858).

"An angel returning from the earth announces that his work is done; the final test has been brought upon the world, and **all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received "the seal of the living God."** Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts His hands, and with a loud voice says, **"It is done"** GC 613 (1911).

We see clearly, from the above passages of inspired writings, that as soon as God's people are sealed, Jesus throws down His censer, and probation closes.

Let us seriously consider this: How can the 144,000 do any work of bringing in a great multitude once they are sealed, when probation has already closed!

So, we must reject this view as well, that the great multitude is the fruit of the labor of the 144,000 during the Latter Rain period, and that the great multitude will die, while the 144,000 will be alive to witness the second coming of Jesus.

The Fourth View: The great multitude are the fruits of the labor of the 144,000 during the Latter Rain time. They, along with the 144,000, will go through the great tribulation, unscathed, and will be translated to

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

heaven alive, when Jesus comes. The 144,000 are the called “first fruits” in connection to the great multitude.

This fourth view, seems stronger than the third view in that it says, the great multitude do not die, but go through the tribulation. This part of the interpretation perfectly fits the text of Revelation 7:14 which says, “These are they which came out of great tribulation”.

But, there are major problems in this view as well.

The problem comes when we ask the believers of this fourth view a very simple yet important question. And the question is: **Are the great multitude sealed or not?**

Whatever answer is given will not suffice!

If they say: The great multitude are sealed, that doesn't agree to the plain scripture passage which gives us the number of the ones who were sealed. It says, “And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and **there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand**” Revelation 7:4. So, no one can add to this number.

And those who uphold this fourth view believe the 144,000 is a literal number. So there is no way you can add to a literal number, which the Scriptures declare as the sealed ones.

If they say: The great multitude are not sealed, then how can they go through the “great tribulation” being unsealed? If the great multitude can go through the “great tribulation” without being sealed, then why were the 144,000 sealed in the first place, before the winds of strife were let loose? If one group could go through this great ordeal without being sealed, the other could have gone through it as well.

Also the problem gets compounded further. We know when Jesus comes the second time there are only two groups of people—the **sealed ones for life** and the **marked ones for death**. Those who have not

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

received the **seal of God** will receive the **mark of the beast**. And the plagues will fall on those who are not sealed. There is no middle ground.

The pen of inspiration confirms this: "There can be **only two classes**. Each party is distinctly stamped, either with the **seal of the living God**, or with the **mark of the beast** or his image" RH Jan. 30, 1900.

If the great multitude are another group apart from the 144,000, who go through the great tribulation, then it means they too are living during this period of the time of Jacob's trouble without a Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary. Then, it should certainly be that this great multitude are greater in character than the 144,000 because they pass through the tribulation unsealed, whereas the 144,000 had special protection and sealing! Then why are special privileges given only to the 144,000 and not to the great multitude?

Mrs. White wrote about some places where only the 144,000 have a right to go. Here are a couple of passages:

"And as we were about to enter the holy temple, Jesus raised His lovely voice and said, **"Only the 144,000 enter this place,"** and we shouted, "Alleluia" {EW 18.2}.

"The 144,000, shall have the privilege of visiting all the worlds and viewing the handiwork of God" {EW 39.3}.

Firstfruits:

Those who believe that the 144,000 bring in the great multitude, and both these groups will be alive when Jesus returns, quote a passage in Revelation as a proof to it. Revelation 14:4 says, "These were redeemed from among men, being the **firstfruits** unto God and to the Lamb."

It is argued, by our brethren, that they can't be called firstfruits at the end of time if they are the only group that belong to God at the end of time. Therefore,

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

they believe the 144,000 are the first fruits of a bigger harvest (the great multitude) who will also be alive when Jesus comes.

They say that Jesus and the many saints who were raised on the morning of Jesus' resurrection are referred to as the firstfruits from among the dead saints. Quoting Leviticus 23, where the firstfruit feast is recorded, Paul wrote, "**But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept**" 1 Corinthians 15:20.

Yes, Christ, and the wave sheaf, are the first fruits from among the dead, a guarantee of a bigger harvest that will rise from the grave, when He comes the second time. Mrs. White also wrote of it: "**Christ arose from the dead as the first fruits of those that slept.** He was the antitype of the wave sheaf, and His resurrection took place on the very day when the wave sheaf was to be presented before the Lord. ... **So Christ the first fruits represented** the great spiritual harvest to be gathered for the kingdom of God. His resurrection is the type and pledge of the **resurrection of all the righteous dead.**" {FLB 180.2}

It is argued by those who believe this view: if Christ's resurrection from the dead was firstfruits of a group of people who will also rise from the dead at the end of time, when He comes the second time, then the 144,000, who are also called *firstfruits*, has to be firstfruits among the living. Which means, there will be a great multitude of living people, apart from the the 144,000 number, who will be translated to heaven.

But the problem, with this interpretation regarding the 144,000 as "firstfruits" is that the firstfruits (144,000) and the harvest (the great multitude) happen at the same time! But, Jesus and the wave sheaf, who were the first fruits from the dead, rose much earlier from the rest of the harvest. The firstfruit and the harvest never occur at the same time. If it does, then

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

the firstfruit ceases to be first!

We don't need to go too far away to understand the meaning of the 144,000 being the firstfruits. Right in that same chapter of Revelation 14, where the firstfruits are mentioned, the harvest is mentioned as well.

Revelation 14:14-16 “And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. 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**.”

The 144,000 are the firstfruits of this harvest. As the harvest was reaped from “the earth”, the firstfruits are also “redeemed from the earth”. It says, “The hundred and forty and four thousand, which were **redeemed from the earth**” Revelation 14:3.

Firstfruits in the Scriptures also means something special and unique from the rest.

God told the nation of Israel that the whole earth was His, but they would be a peculiar treasure above all the earth. He said, “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be **a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine**” Exodus 19:5.

Israel, the peculiar treasure, was also called firstfruits. Jeremiah wrote, “**Israel** was holiness unto the LORD, and the **firstfruits** of his increase” (Jeremiah 2:3).

Also, firstfruits means, the best of all. Through Moses, God said, “**All the best** of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, **the firstfruits of them** which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee” Numbers 18:12.

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

The 144,000 are indeed firstfruits compared to the whole harvest because they are peculiar to the rest, and the best as well, among the harvest of the saved.

Why are they the best? a) The 144,000 go through a testing time without the Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary, b) When Satan and his host are given full liberty to exercise their powers, these display absolute faith in God and purity of character during the “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time” (Daniel 12:1).

These, among all the saved, have special privileges as well, as we see clearly from the pen of inspiration. For example, it is this group of the firstfruits, the 144,000, who alone are permitted to enter God’s temple. Mrs. White wrote, “And as we were about to enter the holy temple, Jesus raised His lovely voice and said, **“Only the 144,000 enter this place,”** and we shouted, “Alleluia” {CET 63.2}.

So, the 144,000 are called the **firstfruits** of the harvest because they are a privileged group, and a special reward is given them for passing the greatest test in history.

The Fifth View: The great multitude and the 144,000 are one and the same group of people with two different names. They are the living saints who pass the great tribulation, unscathed, and will be translated to heaven alive when Jesus comes.

If this view is the correct one, then why are they presented to us in Revelation 7 with two different names? To know the answer to this, read the chapter entitled: “*Hearing and Seeing Pattern*”.

At the end of the sixth chapter of Revelation, the wicked people of the earth, who have received the mark of the beast, and who are exposed to the seven last plagues, are asking a question as they face the second coming of Jesus. “And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

that sitteth on the **throne**, and from the wrath of the **Lamb**: For the great day of his wrath is come; and **who shall be able to stand?**" Revelation 6:16, 17.

The obvious answer is, none of the wicked, none who have received the mark of the beast, will be able to stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, who is Jesus Christ. Only God's people will be able to stand in His presence.

Immediately after the question was asked "who shall be able to stand?" (Revelation 6:17), Revelation chapter 7 begins, which presents a special people of God who will go through the seven last plagues and the great tribulation of the last days unscathed, as the wicked attempt to harm, persecute, and destroy them.

Before the final time of trouble commences, which is pictured as the four winds being released—the winds of strife, wars, commotions and destruction of every kind—God seals His children so that they are protected from the plagues and strengthened to go through earth's final test.

Before the four angels are symbolically portrayed to release these destructive winds, the sealing of God's people takes place. John wrote, Revelation 7:2, 3 "And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the **seal of the living God**: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, **Hurt not** the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, **till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.**"

John then heard the number of the sealed people. He wrote, "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." Revelation 7:4 (To know the meanings of these tribes, refer to the chapter: "*Literal or Symbolic Tribes?*").

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

Though the 144,000 are showcased as God's sealed people of the last days, the direct answer to the question that was asked, comes a little later in that sealing chapter. Let us read again the question and note the highlighted words: "And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the **throne**, and from the wrath of the **Lamb**: For the great day of his wrath is come; and **who shall be able to stand**?" Revelation 6:16, 17.

Who shall be able to **stand**, before God's **throne** and the wrath of the **Lamb**? The verse of Revelation 7:9, which describes the great multitude, answers that question directly. "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.

So it is the **great multitude** that **stood/stand** before the **throne** and the **Lamb**! (The Greek word for "stand" {Rev. 6:17} and "stood" {Rev. 7:9} is the same—*histemi*).

Many Parallels:

There are many parallels between the 144,000 and the great multitude which again confirm that they must be one and the same group of people.

1. *Both are before God's throne:*

Regarding the 144,000, it is written in Revelation 14:3, "And they sung as it were a new song **before the throne**."

And also regarding the great multitude, it is written in Revelation 7:15, "Therefore are they **before the throne of God**".

2. *Both serve God:*

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

Regarding the 144,000 it is written, “the **servants of our God**” Revelation 7:3.

Regarding the great multitude it is written, “they ... **serve him**” Revelation 7:15 (If they serve God they are servants of God).

3. *Both with the Lamb:*

In regard to the 144,000 it is written in Revelation 14:1, “A **Lamb** stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand”.

And about the great multitude it is written in Revelation 7:9, “A great multitude, ... before the **Lamb**”.

4. *Both follow the Lamb:*

Of the 144,000 it is written in Revelation 14:4, “These are they which **follow the Lamb** whithersoever he goeth.”

And of the great multitude it is written in Revelation 7:17, “For the **Lamb** which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall **lead them** unto living fountains of waters.” (If the *Lamb leads them* it means they are following the Lamb).

5. *Both are before the beasts and the elders:*

About the 144,000, it is written in Revelation 14:3, “Before the **four beasts**, and the **elders**... the hundred and forty and four thousand”.

Of the great multitude it is written in Revelation 7:9,11, “A great multitude... about the **elders** and the **four beasts**”.

6. *Both are clean and white:*

About the 144,000, it is written in Revelation 14:5, “And in their mouth was found **no guile**: for they are **without fault**.”

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

And also about the great multitude, we find in Revelation 7:14, “And have **washed their robes**, and made them **white**.”

7. *Both face hardship:*

Regarding the 144,000 it is written, “Saying, **Hurt not** the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads,” Revelation 7:3.

Regarding the great multitude, it is written “These are they which **came out of great tribulation**” Rev 7:14. (The 144,000 are not not hurt as the world gets hit, and the great multitude come out unscathed through the great tribulation).

8. *Both redeemed from the earth:*

About the 144,000, it is written in Revelation 14:3 “The hundred and forty and four thousand, which were **redeemed from the earth**.”

And, about the great multitude, it is written in Revelation 7:9 “A great multitude, which no man could number, of **all nations**”.

9. *Both praise God with a loud voice:*

Regarding the 144,000 it is written in Revelation 14:2 “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”.

And regarding the great multitude we find written in Revelation 7:10 “And **cried with a loud voice**, saying,”.

Two Groups of People in the Sixth Seal:

We saw earlier in this chapter, six events happening during the sixth seal: 1) Great earthquake;

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

2) Sun became black; 3) Moon became as blood; 4) Stars of heaven fell; 5) Heaven departed as a scroll; and 6) Every mountain and island moved out of their places.

The sixth seal also presents two groups—the wicked living and the righteous living during the second coming of Jesus. The living wicked have received the mark of the beast and the living righteous have received the seal of God. There is no third group.

The pen of inspiration also confirms it. Mrs. White wrote, "There can be **only two classes**. Each party is distinctly stamped, either with the **seal of the living God**, or with the **mark of the beast** or his image" RH Jan. 30, 1900.

Carefully note, in the passage below, as Mrs. White spells out who the two groups are that are presented in the sixth seal. "And I beheld when he had opened the **sixth seal**, ... And the **kings of the earth**, and the **great men**, and the **rich men**, and the **chief captains**, and the **mighty men**, and **every bondman**, and **every free man**, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Revelation 6:12-17. "**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; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb....These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. **In these scriptures two parties are brought to view**" {9T 267, 268}.

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

Who are the “two parties” that are “brought to view” in the “sixth seal” according to Ellen White in the above passage? 1) The wicked who are running away from the glory of the second coming of Jesus, and 2) The “great multitude”!

(To know more about the connection between the 144,000 and the great multitude read the chapter, *“Revelation 7, How Many Segments—Two or Three?”*).

Conclusion: The first four views do not pass the scrutiny of the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy regarding who the great multitude are. The fifth view alone, which states, the great multitude and the 144,000 are one and the same group of people with two different names, fits. The 144,000/great multitude is the only group who will be alive when Jesus comes. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

“144,000 in Number”

One of the main reasons our brethren believe the 144,000 to be a literal number is because of a statement written by Sister White. She wrote:

“Soon we heard the voice of God like many waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus' coming. The living saints, **144,000 in number**, knew and understood the voice, while the wicked thought it was thunder and an earthquake. When God spoke the time, He poured upon us the Holy Ghost, and our faces began to light up and shine with the glory of God, as Moses' did when he came down from Mount Sinai” {EW 14.1}.

Though this phrase—“144,000 in number”—is seen a little more than ten times in Mrs. White's writings, it appears in almost the exact setting, every time. Here are a couple of other examples:

“Soon we heard the voice of God like many waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus' coming. The living saints, **144,000 in number**, knew and understood the voice, while the wicked thought it was thunder and an earthquake. When God spake the time, He poured upon us the Holy Spirit, and our faces began to light up and shine with the glory of God, as Moses' did when he came down from Mount Sinai {1T 59.1}.

“Soon we heard the voice of God like many

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus' coming. The living saints, **144,000 in number**, knew and understood the voice, while the wicked thought it was thunder and an earthquake. When God spake the time, he poured on us the Holy Ghost, and our faces began to light up and shine with the glory of God as Moses' did when he came down from Mount Sinai" {RH, July 21, 1851 par. 2}.

So, it will not be wrong to say that this phrase — "144,000 in number"— basically appears once, and it was reproduced in different books and articles. But it really does not matter whether it appears once or ten times. Let us see what it really means.

Spirit of Prophecy—"144,000 In Number":

When the phrase "in number" is used it certainly is a reference to the exact number that is specified. That is what it would naturally mean.

If this is the only description we have, regarding the 144,000, then we must conclude it is a specific number, not one more, nor one less. But Mrs. White also used this phrase "in number" in different contexts.

She wrote about the second coming of Jesus and the number of angels, as given in the Bible, that would accompany the Lord. "And holy angels, as ministers and witnesses, **in number** "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," attend this great tribunal". {GC 88, 479.2} [Bible quote, Rev. 5:11].

And in another place Sister White wrote that ALL the holy angels will come (she quotes Mat 25:31) and then she quotes Jude 14 where the number of angels is given as "ten thousands". "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and **all the holy angels** with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations." Enoch,

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

the seventh from Adam, prophesied of this event: "Behold, the Lord cometh **with ten thousands of his saints**, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." {RH, November 22, 1898 par. 1}. The "ten thousands of saints" is a reference to the angels.

In the quote of GC 88, mentioned earlier in this chapter, she wrote, "**in number** ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands". In RH, November 22, 1898 she wrote "ten thousands". So, if "in number" should be the precise number then how do you reconcile that with just "ten thousands"? The Greek word for "ten thousands" (Jude 14) and "ten thousand" (Rev. 5:11) is the same, and it is "murias". In the original Greek, in one place (Jude 14), it is given as just *murias*, and in another place (Rev. 5:11) it is given as *murias murias kai chilias murias*.

In the book of Hebrews, the apostle just says, "an innumerable company of angels" (Heb 12:22). So, the phrase "in number", does not mean that that is the exact count.

In another context, Sister White wrote about the number of people who will be lost. Mrs. White again used that phrase "in number". She wrote, "They are **in number** like the **sand** upon the **sea shore**. At the first resurrection all come forth in immortal bloom, but at the second, the marks of the curse are visible upon all. All come up as they went down into their graves" {3SG 83.2}.

If "in number" should always mean the *precise number*, then are we saying that the number of the wicked will be precisely the number of the sand grains upon the seashore? Absolutely not!

It is just a metaphoric comparison, and not an

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

exact count, of the number of people that will be lost. The same way, when Mrs. White wrote, "The living saints, **144,000 in number**", we need to let her interpret what it is. Did she believe 144,000 was a **literal** or **symbolic** number?

In her writings she compares the "144,000 in number" with the Great Multitude "which no man could number", in Revelation 7. Here are a couple of quotes where she uses the same language and description for the 144,000 and the Great Multitude.

"None but the **hundred and forty-four thousand** can learn that song; for it is the song of their experience, an experience such as no other company have ever had. "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." These, having been translated from the earth, from among the living, are counted as "the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb." **"These are they which came out of great tribulation;"** [Revelation 14:1-5; 15:3; **Revelation 7:14-17.**] they have passed through the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation; they have endured the anguish of the time of Jacob's trouble; they have stood without the Intercessor through the final outpouring of God's judgments. But they have been delivered, for **they have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."** "In their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault" before God. **"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."** [Revelation 14:1-5; 15:3; **Revelation 7:14-17.**] They have seen the earth wasted with famine and pestilence, the sun having power to scorch men with great heat, and they themselves have endured suffering, hunger, and thirst. But **"they shall hunger no more; neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is**

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

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 14:1-5; 15:3; **7:14-17.**], {GC 648.3}.

"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 cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Revelation 7:9, 10. **"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 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 7:14-17 {AA 602, par. 2, 3}.

(For more details on the 144,000 and great multitude read the chapter *"Revelation 7, How Many Segments—Two or Three?"*).

So, Ellen White did not interpret the "144,000 in number" to be a literal number.

Bible—144,000:

The Bible mentions the 144,000 thrice in the book of Revelation. Once in Revelation 7 and twice in Revelation 14. Here are the verses:

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."

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

Revelation 14:1 “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.”

Revelation 14:3 “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.”

In Revelation 7:4 John says, “I heard **the number....an hundred and forty and four thousand**.” So, when Mrs. White wrote “**144,000 in number**” {EW 14.1}, she was essentially quoting Revelation 7:4.

To know whether it is a literal number or a symbolic number it is better to allow John the revelator to speak for himself. Immediately after presenting the number 144,000, he tells how that number was computed. He wrote:

Revelation 7:5-8, “Of the tribe of Juda were sealed **twelve thousand**. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed **twelve thousand**. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed **twelve thousand**. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed **twelve thousand**. Of the tribe of Nephtalim were sealed **twelve thousand**. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed **twelve thousand**. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed **twelve thousand**. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed **twelve thousand**. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed **twelve thousand**. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed **twelve thousand**. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed **twelve thousand**. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed **twelve thousand**.”

If the 144,000 is a literal number, then 12,000 also, which is the subdivisions of the 144,000, must be a literal number as well!

Foreknowledge or Predestination?

Those who believe that the 144,000 is a literal

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

number say that God, through His foreknowledge, declared this number in advance, as He saw how many living saints would be there when Jesus comes the second time.

Yes, God who can see the future, can by His foreknowledge declare anything, well in advance. There is no questioning about that. If Revelation 7 had only the number 144,000, then we might well say, it is possible that God, through His foreknowledge, predicted this number. But the problem for those who hold on to the literal interpretation of the number 144,000 is there are more numbers in that same chapter.

It is not just that there are other numbers mentioned in the same chapter, but the other numbers mentioned are related to the number 144,000. So, it is impossible to separate these two sets of numbers, because one is the total of the other and the other is the breakdown of the one.

The number 12,000 appears 12 times in this chapter. It says from the 12 tribes exactly 12,000 are sealed. The Adventist symbolic interpreters believe both the tribes and the number are symbolic, whereas the Adventist literal interpreters believe only the tribes mentioned here are symbolic, but the numbers are literal.

When talking about the 144,000, one could debate that it was God's foreknowledge which declared this number. But It becomes utterly impossible to bring in God's foreknowledge when we look at the number 12,000!

To even get two groups with the exact same number is a rare possibility, without God's intervention. To get three groups with the same number is almost impossible, without God's intervention. And to get twelve groups with the same number, not one more, not one less, is utterly, completely, wholly, entirely, and

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

totally impossible, without God's direct involvement!

When you look at the number of people in each tribe in the Old Testament, we do not have even two tribes that have had the exact same number of people (See Numbers chapter 1). Then how is it possible, in the New Testament, that the 12 spiritual tribes have exactly 12,000 literal numbers from each tribe?

If predestination is involved in the plan of salvation, then we can agree that it is possible to have, not just 12 groups having the exact same number of people, but even a hundred or a thousand groups to be so numbered. But Adventists do not believe in the concept of predestination because we believe that freedom of choice is given to us as far as salvation is concerned. And God does not stop or limit anyone from being saved if they meet the criteria.

The apostle Peter clearly underlines how God desires to save as many people as possible. In the context of the second coming of Jesus, he wrote, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" 2 Peter 3:9. This verse, and even John 3:16, goes contrary to those who believe in the predestination doctrine.

When God destroyed the world during Noah's time only eight souls were saved. What if thousands of people believed Noah's message and entered the ark? Would God say, "I'm sorry, I've fixed the number, so I can't accommodate anymore! Also, I can't ask Noah to make more space to accommodate all of you!"

God did not determine that only eight people were to be saved. The pen of inspiration tells us what God would have done if more people repented. Sister White wrote, "Had the antediluvians believed the warning, and repented of their evil deeds, the Lord would have turned aside His wrath, as He afterward did

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

from Nineveh" {PP 97.2}.

If the number 144,000 is determined by God as the living saints, and if more people believed and accepted the truth and met the criteria of having a holy character, would God say, "I'm sorry, I'm not going to let more people develop this character! Or even if more than this number form this holy character, I will put the surplus number of people to sleep because I declared only 144,000 would be the living saints!" No! The God of the Bible does not work that way!

The problem is humongous to those who believe the 144,000 is a literal number, because the twelve groups of 12,000 each, which is a child to this mother number, pose a massive challenge to this interpretation.

It is not possible to say that 144,000 are literal but the 12,000 are symbolic—that would be inconsistency in biblical exegesis because the 12,000 times 12 appears in the same chapter and is intrinsically connected to the 144,000.

The only accepted and logical answer would be to interpret both the 144,000 number and the 12,000 times 12 number as literal or accept both these numbers as symbolic. And if the 12,000 is interpreted as literal then the doctrine of predestination must be accepted as true! I am sure our Adventist friends, who believe in the literal interpretation of the 144,000, would not believe that.

The numbers 12 and 12000:

The number twelve is clearly associated with God's people both in the Old and New Testaments. Here are some of them:

- 1) 12 tribes.
- 2) 12 apostles.
- 3) 12 judges that ruled Israel.
- 4) 12 priests Ezra sets apart for the work.

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

- 5) 12 spies sent to Canaan by Moses.
- 6) 12 stones removed from Jordan river.
- 7) 12 cakes of shewbread in the sanctuary.
- 8) 12 precious stones on the breastplate of the high priest.
- 9) 12 manner of fruits on the tree of life.
- 10) 12 gates of pearls in heavenly Jerusalem.
- 11) 12 foundation stones to the holy city.
- 12) 12 angels at the gates of heaven.

So, the number 12 represents God's people and things connected with God's people. The size of the heavenly city is also given to us in the multiple of 12. "He measured the city with the reed, **twelve thousand furlongs**" (that is 12 times 1000).

The number twelve was another name for God's special group of people even though, at times, there were literally no twelve people that you could count.

Paul wrote, for example, about the resurrection of Jesus and the number of apostles to whom Jesus appeared that resurrection morning. He wrote, "And that he was buried, and that he **rose again the third day** according to the scriptures: And that he was **seen** of Cephas, then of the **twelve**" 1 Corinthians 15:4, 5.

We know from other parts of the Scriptures that Judas was already dead by this point of time (See Mat. 27:5), and his replacement took place only before the day of Pentecost which was 50 days after the resurrection (See Acts 1: 25, 26). Also, Thomas was not present when Jesus appeared to the rest of the apostles that Sunday evening (see John 20:24). So, the risen Lord appeared to only ten apostles and yet Paul wrote, Jesus was seen of the "twelve".

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

So, the number twelve, does not always mean the literal number, it was used *symbolically* to refer to *God's special people*.

James the apostle, writing to the Christians of the first century wrote, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the **twelve tribes** which are scattered abroad, greeting" James 1:1.

There were no twelve tribes even among the Jews in the first century. Most of the tribes disappeared right in the Old Testament, particularly the 10 tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel. And the Christian church was never divided into 12 groups or tribes in the New Testament.

So, the number "twelve" that James referred to were symbolic, and not literal. Not only, in this context, were the tribes symbolic but the number twelve as well!

Why 12,000 from each tribe in Revelation 7?

The Old Testament gives the answer. When the children of Israel went to make war against the Midianites, God, through Moses, told them how many should go from each tribe. Moses wrote, "Of **every tribe a thousand**, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war. So, there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, **twelve thousand armed for war**" Numbers 31:4, 5. So, "twelve thousand" represents God's people "armed for war"!

Again, we have in another battle where the number twelve thousand is seen as the valiant men of war. Judges 21:10 reads, "And the congregation sent thither **twelve thousand men of the valiantest**, and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead with the edge of the sword."

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

In the final showdown between good and evil, “war” will break out once again. John wrote, “And 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” Revelation 12:17.

And again, “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**” (Revelation 17:14).

God’s special group of people are on the victorious side of Jesus and they are victorious as well in this final war. That is the reason God pictures them in the number of 12,000 because, this number, as we have seen in the Old Testament, is showcased as “**twelve thousand armed for war.**” It means, all of God’s people, from the 12 tribes, or from every corner of the world, have put on the whole armour of God, for the final battle, and they will triumph!

Why did God choose 1,000 from each of the 12 tribes?

The number 1,000, in the Bible is a symbol of something that was complete. For example, God said, “For **every** beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon **a thousand** hills” Psalm 50:10. We do not take the number thousand to just mean that exact number. When it says God owns the cattle of a thousand hills, does it not mean to say that He owns the cattle of every hill!

The wise man wrote, “One man among **a thousand** have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found” Ecclesiastes 7:28. It is not that Solomon went around and counted exactly a thousand number of men and women—no! “A thousand” was a symbolic number to mean a vast multitude.

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

So, the 144,000 is made up of 12,000 times 12 in Revelation chapter 7. We have seen in the Old Testament *twelve thousand* is a symbol of God's people ready for war. And *twelve* represents God's people from *all over the world*.

In the book of Numbers, we have the breakdown of the number 12,000 as 1,000 times 12. One thousand symbolizes an exceptionally large and a complete number, and the number twelve again, symbolizes God's special people from all over the world.

The 200 Million Army:

In Revelation chapter 7 we have the army of God's people—the 144,000—presented to us in the sixth seal. Two chapters later, in the sixth trumpet, we have an earthly military army presented. John wrote, “And **the number of the army** of the horsemen were **two hundred thousand thousand**: and I heard the number of them” (Revelation 9:16).

This army of 200 million is connected with a time prophecy given in the previous verse— “an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year” (Revelation 9:15). Historically, this prophecy relates to the fall of the Ottoman empire, in the 1800s, which was fulfilled exactly to the very date given. Kindly note the number of the army mentioned—200 million!

The world population, then, was around 1,000 million or 1 billion, and the army mentioned in prophecy is 200 million from a single kingdom!

Even today, in AD 2020, when we have the greatest population the world has ever had (7.8 billion), the total army personnel, of all the countries of the world combined, is around 28 million! Never at any point in history was there an army of 200 million! All Bible commentaries say that the number, “two hundred thousand thousand”, or 200 million, is only a symbolic

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

number of people because history does not support this number.

The presentation of both these numbers—144,000 and 200 million—which are recorded in the 6th seal and the 6th trumpet, is so similar. John wrote of the 6th seal number, **“And I heard the number of them** which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand”; and of the 6th trumpet number, he wrote, “two hundred thousand thousand: **and I heard the number of them**” (Revelation 7:4 and 9:16).

Regarding both these numbers he wrote the same phrase— **“and I heard the number of them.”**

The sixth trumpet, which is history, proves it is a symbolic number. So, it is natural and convincing, beyond doubt, to believe that the other prophetic number, where a human number is involved, is symbolic as well.

Because the 144,000 is still a future event there is always the scope to speculate on it. But no one can speculate on something that is history. We always deal with prophecies that are similar, with an eye on history, so that we are on track. History clearly proves that prophetic numbers related to people cannot be taken literally.

Other Numbers in Prophecy:

The argument of some of our brethren believing in the literal interpretation of the number 144,000 is based on the logic that other numbers associated with prophecy are always literal. They say symbolic interpretation applies only to the rest of that prophecy but not to the number specified. For example, they say:

1. In the 2300 days prophecy of Daniel 8:14 the *day* symbolizes a *year*, but the number 2300 remains literal. So that becomes 2300 years.

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

2. In the 1260 days of Revelation 12:6 the *day* changes to a *year*, but the number 1260 stays as it is. So, it is 1260 years instead.
3. In Revelation 1:20 we have the seven stars and seven golden candlesticks mentioned. The number 7 stands as it is, whereas the *stars* are interpreted as *angels* and the *candlesticks* as *churches*. So, seven stars are seven angels, and seven candlesticks are seven churches. The numbers remain literal.

But there are also numbers involved in prophecy where you cannot take it to be literal. For example:

1. Revelation 11:13, "And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were **slain of men seven thousand**: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven." This is a prophecy of the French Revolution. There is no historical proof to show precisely seven thousand men were slain. Also, all the Bible commentaries believe this a not a literal number but a symbolic one to denote a large number of people. The number seven represents perfection, and the number thousand (as we have seen earlier in this chapter) denotes all and completeness. So, seven thousand slain would mean a perfect and complete overthrow of God's enemies.
2. Revelation 9:16 says, "And the **number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand**: and I heard the number of them." These 200 million army men must be symbolic as shown earlier.
3. Revelation 5:11 says, "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of **many angels** round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and **the number** of them was **ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands**." As shown earlier in this chapter this

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

number also must be symbolic because elsewhere in Jude 14 it says just “ten thousands,” and Paul says in Hebrews 12:22 that it is “an innumerable company of angels.”

A pattern becomes obvious when we look at these numbers given in prophecy. When the numbers are associated with people/angels who have the power of choice, these numbers are just symbolic representations in prophecy. But, when numbers are associated with things inanimate, like days, stars, candlesticks, gates, foundations, measurements, etc. which do not have a power of choice, then these numbers are taken to be literal.

The Two Previous Judgments:

Jesus compared the last days to two previous generations where God brought down His divine judgments—Noah’s and Lot’s generations.

We need to ask ourselves two questions on this.

First, did God know how many people would be saved in the worldwide flood and in Sodom’s destruction? The obvious answer is, yes!

Second, did God reveal beforehand how many would be saved from these coming destructions? The obvious answer is, no!

During Noah’s time, though God revealed beforehand as to when the flood would come, He never revealed how many righteous would be alive during the end of that period.

The Scripture records, regarding the timing of the coming flood: “And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be **an hundred and twenty years**” Genesis 6:3.

The Spirit of Prophecy also confirms that God revealed beforehand the probationary period. Mrs.

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

White wrote, “The servant of God gave to the transgressors of the law of Jehovah, **a warning which announced that in one hundred and twenty years the world would be destroyed by a flood.** His warning was scoffed at, ridiculed, and rejected” {RH, September 25, 1888, par. 1}.

Yes, God, who knows the future, revealed beforehand the exact number of years before the coming flood, but did not reveal the exact number of people who would be saved when that flood came. Why? He did not reveal that part to Noah because he would probably be discouraged, and would not want to reach beyond his family, who were already eight in number!

During the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, we see Abraham was trying to get a figure from the mouth of the Lord regarding the number righteous people at Sodom. From fifty people that Abraham believed were to be there, he came down to ten. And then Abraham stopped asking. The Lord certainly knew only three would be saved from those cities, but never revealed it beforehand!

If God did not reveal ahead of time as to how many would be saved when these two judgments came in the past, which are examples of the final judgment, why would God want to reveal the exact number of people who will be saved when the final judgment is poured out?

If the 144,000 were a literal number of the living saints when Jesus comes, the Adventist church would be lethargic and even discouraged to evangelize the world (much of the world that is still unreached), knowing that the number of its membership is way past, close to 150 times of the number 144,000!

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

Male Counts Only:

There is another view with the belief the 144,000 is a literal number, but it is the count of the heads of the family, the males, and not all the individuals involved.

They take this view based on the Hebrew counting. When the children of Israel came out of Egypt the Bible says, "And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about **six hundred thousand** on foot that were **men, beside children**" Exodus 12:37.

Only men of war, above twenty years were counted (See Exodus 38:26).

Also, when Jesus fed the multitude with five loaves and two fish, only the men were calculated. Matthew records, "And they that had eaten were **about five thousand men, beside women and children**" Matthew 14:21.

If the 144,000 numbering is based on this principle of counting only the heads of the family, then the ones who believe in the literal view of the 144,000 must agree that it is not an exact number of the living saints who will be translated alive when Jesus comes, but it is a *representative number*. Then their interpretation will be in line with the symbolic view of the 144,000 rather than the literal view!

There is a twofold problem in taking this view, of the 144,000 as the count of the heads of the family: 1) In the examples given from the Old and New Testaments of the 600,000 and 5,000 respectively, the scripture passage tells us that women and children are not included in those counts. But there is no indication, whatsoever, regarding the 144,000 that women and children are excluded, and 2) If only the 144,000 are men that are sealed, then what about the women and children they represent, are they sealed or not? If they are sealed, then the actual sealing count should be

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

more than 144,000.

When you read the Scriptures, you see that this practice of only counting men was not always the case. For example, right in the New Testament we see passages where women are also included in the number.

In the upper room there were about one-hundred-and-twenty people which included women. Acts 1:14, 15 records, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, **with the women**, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names **together were about an hundred and twenty**)".

On the day of Pentecost, about three thousand were baptized. Luke writes, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them **about three thousand souls**" Acts 2:41. Were these three thousand only men? It does not say that. In fact, the Bible says later, on another occasion, "they **were baptized**, both **men and women**" (Acts 8:12).

We are told a great number of people joined the apostolic church during the Former Rain, and they included women as well. Acts 5:14 states, "And believers were the more **added to the Lord, multitudes** both of **men and women**."

So, to conclude that during the Latter Rain the 144,000 are only men, would be stretching the truth too far, especially when that passage does not say so!

Great Multitude in the Narrow Gate?

Those who believe in the literal interpretation of the 144,000 point out to what Jesus said about the narrow way and how only few find it. Jesus said, "Because **strait is the gate**, and **narrow is the way**, which leadeth unto life, and **few there be that find it**"

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

Matthew 7:14.

That is true. Compared to the number of people who enter the broad way it is only few who go through the narrow way. But that does not mean only few people will be saved.

Our Father's house will be filled with the redeemed host. Jesus said in a parable, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that **my house may be filled**" Luke 14:23. Yes, God's house will be filled. And God's house has not few but "many" mansions, as Jesus said in John 14:2, "In my Father's house are **many mansions**."

Compared to the wicked, who walk the broad way and will be finally lost, "the **number** of whom is as the **sand of the sea**" (Revelation 20:8), the ones who will be saved are comparatively small.

Today, the world population is more than 7.8 billion. 144,000 is an extremely small number in comparison, if you take that number to be literal. John heard that symbolic number, 144,000, but when he saw, it was indeed a great number that will be saved alive when Jesus comes. Revelation 7:9 says, "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."

Why does he use that phrase, "which no man could number" in describing the great multitude? In contrast to the number 144,000 that he just *heard*, this group which he immediately *beheld*, indeed looked so much greater in number to what he heard, indicating that the number that he heard was figurative of what he saw.

If the 7.8 billion world population can be numbered, then for sure this great multitude of the saved is numerable as well.

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

“Not One In twenty”:

Some of our brethren who believe in the literal view of the 144,000 try to justify their position by pointing to a statement that Ellen White made. She wrote: "It is a solemn statement that I make to the church, that **not one in twenty** whose names are **registered upon the church books** are prepared to close their earthly history, and would be as verily without God and without hope in the world as the common sinner. They are professedly serving God, but they are more earnestly serving mammon" {GCB, July 1, 1900 par. 7}.

"Not one in twenty" is *not five in a hundred*. So, it is less than five percent of the church membership that are not ready for heaven. Some of our brethren feel that interpreting the 144,000 as a literal number fits the "not one in twenty" ratio. Even if you do the math, you will see that 144,000 number is way too small.

Currently there are over 20 million baptized members in the Adventist church. Even if you take four percent of it, it is 800,000 people, a number far more than 144,000!

Yes, most of the members are not fully converted and will leave the faith during the crisis of the mark of the beast. But do not forget that even as many leave the faith from God's remnant church, the sheep from other folds come in to join the army of the Lord. Mrs. White wrote, "In vision I saw **two armies in terrible conflict**. One army was led by banners bearing the world's insignia; the other was led by the bloodstained banner of Prince Immanuel. Standard after standard was left to trail in the dust **as company after company from the Lord's army joined the foe and tribe after tribe from the ranks of the enemy united with the commandment-keeping people of God**" {CCh 340.5}.

The ones who leave God's true church are

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

“company after company” and the ones who take their place are “tribe after tribe.” The ones who join in the ranks of God’s people during the final crisis are multitudes. Mrs. White wrote of this event, “**Multitudes** will receive the faith and **join the armies of the Lord**” EV 700 (1895).

If we take “not one in twenty” (that is, not five percent, but four percent) to still be the ratio of the faithful in the church, it means the remaining close to 96 percent would leave. So, the ones who remain are still more than 800,000 (as of AD 2020). And to replace this multitude who leave the faith, “multitudes” come in. So, the number is for sure, way beyond 144,000!

The 144,000 must be a figurative number, which will include the faithful that remain in the church and the faithful **multitudes** that will come from other folds to join God’s army and be sealed.

Ellen Whites says the truth will belt the world in the Latter Rain: “The **message** of the renewing power of God’s grace will be carried to **every country and clime, until the truth shall belt the world**. Of the **number** of them that shall be **sealed** will be those who have come **from every nation and kindred and tongue and people**” {CT 532.1}.

Kindly note that as the truth belts the world, at the end of time, God’s people are sealed. Mrs. White wrote, they “come **from every nation and kindred and tongue and people**”. That is the *description of the great multitude* that come from “**all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues**” Revelation 7:9.

So, the “not one in twenty” ratio itself is far beyond the 144,000, and that ratio will increase many folds as the invisible church joins the visible church!

“In” the 144,000 and “With” the 144,000:

Before we conclude this chapter, we need to clarify a point that many misunderstand. We have seen

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

clearly from the Scripture that the 144,000 is comprised of the living saints when Jesus comes. Ellen White also clearly spelled it out, as we have seen earlier. She wrote of this special group: “None but the **hundred and forty-four thousand** can learn that song,...These, having been **translated from the earth, from among the living**, are counted as “the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb” GC 648 (1911).

Based on at least a couple of statements from the inspired pen, some have wrongly concluded that those who died believing in the three angels’ messages will also be a part of the 144,000.

Ellen White wrote of Mrs. Hastings, who died during her time: “I saw that **she was sealed** and would come up at the voice of God and stand upon the earth, and **would be with the 144,000**. I saw we need not mourn for her; she would rest in the time of trouble” 2SM 263 (1850).

Was Mrs. Hastings sealed with the end time seal, that the living saints receive? No! Because that sealing of Revelation 7 is done after the gospel is preached to the whole world, just while probation’s door shuts. In the chapter, “*144,000, Perfect in Christ*” you can read about the general seal that all of God’s people receive, and the end time sealing that the living saints receive. Mrs. Hastings was surely sealed with the general seal of redemption.

Would Mrs. Hastings be a part of the 144,000? Note carefully what Sister White wrote. She wrote that Mrs. Hastings would be “**with the 144,000**” and not “**in the 144,000**” or “**among the 144,000**.”

Ellen White has clearly specified that the 144,000 are living saints as we saw in her book the Great Controversy pg. 648. So, Mrs. Hastings can only be “with” the 144,000 and not be “in” or “among” that number.

Even Ellen White was told she would be “**with**

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

the 144,000". She wrote of the experience of one of her visions: "I begged of my attending angel to let me remain in that place. I could not bear the thought of coming back to this dark world again. Then the angel said, 'You must go back, and if you are faithful, **you, with the 144,000**, shall have the **privilege of visiting all the worlds** and viewing the handiwork of God.'" EW 40.

Just like Mrs. Hastings, Ellen White too, would be "with" the 144,000.

The Bible reveals that after the announcement of "the **hour of his judgment is come**" (Revelation 14:7) which happened in AD 1844 (the calculation is based on the Daniel 8:14 prophecy) there is a special blessing pronounced on those who die after this period. John heard that blessing, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, **Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth**: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" Revelation 14:13.

What is the blessing that is reserved for them who died after the sounding of the three angels' messages? Mrs. White wrote that these would have a special resurrection as mentioned in Daniel 12:1, 2, which happens at the end of the time of trouble, just before Jesus comes. These are raised when Jesus leaves heaven. They have the privilege of viewing the entire second coming scene which will take many days.

Sister White wrote, "And I saw a flaming cloud come where Jesus stood. Then Jesus . . . took His place on the cloud which carried Him to the East, where it first appeared to the saints on earth--a small black cloud which was the sign of the Son of man. While the cloud was **passing from the Holiest to the East**, which took a **number of days**, the synagogue of Satan worshipped at the saints' feet" {Mar 287.7}.

While Jesus leaves heaven this special

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

resurrection takes place for those who died believing in the three angels' messages. Mrs. White wrote, **"All who have died in the faith of the third angel's message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God's covenant of peace** with those who have kept his law" {GC88 637.1} .

So, Mrs. Hastings, all our pioneers, Ellen White and all our loved ones who died believing in the three Angel's messages will rise to behold the glorious second coming of Jesus, before the general resurrection of the righteous takes place. These blessed sleeping saints from 1844 will have the privilege, along with the 144,000 who never die, to witness the greatest event ever, in all its splendor, which lasts for numerous days!

Also, these who died believing in the three angels' messages have other privileges as well, one of which is visiting all other worlds. The angel told Ellen White, who was going to be a part of the special resurrection, **"You, with the 144,000, shall have the privilege of visiting all the worlds** and viewing the handiwork of God" EW 40.

Conclusion:

When Mrs. White uses the phrase "144,000 in number" she does **not** mean it is a **literal** 144,000 in number, as already shown. It **must be a symbolic 144,000 in number**, because that number is taken from the Bible, and the Bible clearly presents it to be symbolic.

As seen, the number 144,000 is the total of 12,000 times 12. If 144,000 is literal, then the 12 groups of 12,000 must be literal as well, which we have seen is utterly impossible.

Numbers in prophecy which are associated with the created beings, with the power of choice, is certainly symbolic, whereas if the number is associated

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

with things, then it stands as literal.

Also, being “with” the 144,000 is different from being “in” or “among” the 144,000.

And the “not one in twenty” ratio certainly supports the 144,000 being a symbolic number rather than it being a literal one.

CHAPTER 6

Dualistic Applications

Our dear brethren who believe in the literal interpretation of the 144,000 say that Ellen White used the verse of Revelation 7:9, which talks about the great multitude, as the resurrected saints of all ages, and therefore the great multitude of Revelation 7:9 cannot be another name for the 144,000, who are the living saints, who will be translated to heaven without seeing death.

Yes, there will be a “great multitude” of saints risen from their dusty beds when the trumpet of God sounds. The Bible presents 2 groups of people who will go to heaven when the Lord returns. The apostle Paul wrote, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17.

Mrs. White also wrote about a great multitude of saints who will be risen from their graves at the second coming of our Lord. Writing about Jesus’ ascension to heaven, after His victory on the cross, where the Lord presents the first fruits of the resurrected saints to the Father as a guarantee of the great harvest, the inspired author wrote, “He points to

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

the tokens of His triumph; He presents to God the wave sheaf, those raised with Him as representatives of that **great multitude** who shall come forth **from the grave** at His second coming” {DA 834.2}.

In the above passage, Sister White uses the phrase “great multitude” in a general sense. She is not quoting the text of Revelation 7:9 and applying it here.

Many other Bible writers also use the phrase the “great multitude” which has no reference to the “great multitude” of Revelation 7. For example, Matthew wrote of a “great multitude” (Matthew 14:14) whom Jesus healed. John also writing about the ministry of the Lord tells of a “great multitude [that] followed him” (John 6:2). So, that passage from Desire of Ages cannot be a confirmation that the great multitude of Revelation 7 are the resurrected saints.

Another passage, that is also quoted to prove that the great multitude of Revelation 7 are the resurrected saints, is the following: “As **we** [the 144,000] were traveling along, **we met a company** who also were gazing at the glories of the place. **I noticed red as a border on their garments**; their crowns were brilliant; **their robes were pure white**. As we greeted them, I asked Jesus who they were. He said they were **martyrs** that had been **slain for Him**. With them was an innumerable company of little ones; they also had a hem of red on their garments. Mount Zion was just before us, and on the mount was a glorious temple, and about it were seven other mountains, on which grew roses and lilies. And I saw the little ones climb, or, if they chose, use their little wings and fly, to the top of the mountains and pluck the never-fading flowers. There were all kinds of trees around the temple to beautify the place: the box, the pine, the fir, the oil, the myrtle, the pomegranate, and the fig tree bowed down with the weight of its timely figs—these made the place all over glorious. And as we

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

were about to enter the holy temple, Jesus raised His lovely voice and said, "**Only the 144,000 enter this place**," and we shouted, "Alleluia" {CCh 35.4}.

In the above passage, there are two groups in view—the 144,000, who enter the temple, and a company dressed in robes of pure white, who were martyrs of the faith.

We know from other passages of the pen of inspiration that the 144,000 are the living saints. Mrs. White wrote, "The hundred and forty-four thousand ... having been translated from the earth, from among the living" {GC 648.3}. In the above passage from Counsels for the Church, pg. 35, Mrs. White does not say that these martyrs who were slain for Him are the great multitude of Revelation chapter 7, but she only presents them as people dressed in white robes. The assumption is made that these must be the great multitude of Revelation 7 because she writes "their robes were pure white." Since the great multitude of Revelation 7 are dressed in white, it is presumed that this must be the group she was writing about.

According to scripture, all who are saved—the resurrected saints and the living saints—will be clothed in robes of pure white. Jesus declares in Revelation 3:5 "He that **overcometh**, the same shall be **clothed in white raiment**."

So, to conclude that the passage of Counsels for the Church pg. 35.4 is the great multitude of Revelation chapter 7 is indeed unfounded.

Dualistic Application:

The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy use various passages of the Scriptures in more than one context, many times.

For example, Malachi's prophecy of the coming of Elijah, which is to prepare a people for the LORD's coming, is used for both events, the first and

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

second coming of Jesus. Malachi wrote, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" Malachi 4:5.

Jesus said John the Baptist was the fulfilment of that prophecy (see Matthew 17:10-13). But Malachi's prophecy has another fulfilment in the last days "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (Malachi 4:5).

Mrs. White confirms this when she wrote, "The closing words of Malachi are a prophecy regarding the work that should be done preparatory to the first and the second advent of Christ. Those who are to prepare the way for the second coming of Christ are represented by faithful Elijah, as John came in the spirit of Elijah to prepare the way for Christ's first advent" {FLB 290.2, 3}.

The text of Hosea chapter 11 has historic and prophetic fulfilment. Hosea wrote, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" Hosea 11:1. Historically it refers to the time when the nation Israel was delivered out of Egypt by the mighty hand of God as given in the book of Exodus. But, that verse of Hosea, meets another fulfilment in the New Testament in the life of Jesus, the true Israel.

Matthew wrote of this prophetic fulfilment. "And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son" Matthew 2:15.

There are many such passages of holy scripture which have a dualistic application.

Primary and Secondary Usage:

In the New Testament as well we see several passages of scripture that are used to represent more than one event. For example, Matthew 25:31 says, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." This verse is a part of parable of the sheep and the goats. It is primarily, in the context, a reference to the THIRD coming of Jesus, after the Millennium, where the wicked are punished, to perish with the devil and his angels, in the fires of hell. But the above verse of Matthew 25:31, is used, in the Spirit of Prophecy, both, in the context of the SECOND and THIRD coming of Jesus.

Mrs. White wrote, "He will come with clouds; and every eye shall see Him." **"The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven** with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise." **"The Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory."** Revelation 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Matthew 25:31. Thus will be fulfilled the Lord's own promise to His disciples: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:3. Well might the disciples rejoice in the hope of their Lord's return" {DA 832.2}. This scene is clearly the second coming of Jesus.

Elsewhere Sister White wrote, "But the trumpet is waxing louder and louder, and the **wicked dead come forth to confront Christ.... The division of the whole multitude will be made. "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him**, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations" {MS. 77, 1906}. This scene is the THIRD coming of Jesus, after the millennium.

So, that verse in Matthew 25:31 is not used in only one context. There is a primary and a secondary application to it.

Also, the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy refer to two things as the bride of Jesus—the church

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

(believers) and the New Jerusalem City (the capital of His kingdom). See Isaiah 62:5 and Revelation 21:9, 10, and the following Spirit of Prophecy quotes.

“The **bride is the church** who is waiting for the second appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” {RH, October 31, 1899 par. 7}.

“Clearly, then, the **bride represents the Holy City**, and the virgins that go out to meet the bridegroom are a symbol of the church. In the book of Revelation, the people of God are said to be the guests at the marriage supper” {GC 426.2}.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins, where the proclamation is made, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh...” (Matthew 25:6), is also used in different contexts in the inspired writings. Mrs. White used it as a fulfilment when Christ went into the most holy place of the heavenly temple in AD 1844. She wrote, “In the **summer and autumn of 1844** the proclamation, “**Behold, the Bridegroom cometh,**” was given” {GC 426}.

She also uses that parable in the context of the second coming of Jesus. She wrote, “The **coming of the bridegroom was at midnight**--the darkest hour. So the **coming of Christ will take place in the darkest period of this earth's history**. The days of Noah and Lot pictured the condition of the world just before the **coming of the Son of man**” {COL 414.3}.

There are many other Bible verses that the Bible writers and Ellen White use in different contexts, because they have primary and secondary uses.

The Great Multitude:

The same is true of the Bible verse of Revelation 7:9 which says, “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

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

white robes, and palms in their hands.”

In the primary context, Ellen White used this verse in the true setting of the sealing chapter, and uses the passage of Revelation 7:9-17 to describe the 144,000, the living saints, who will go through the end-time Jacob’s time of trouble, who will live without a mediator when the seven last plagues are poured out.

She wrote, “John says: “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 cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. **These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes**, and made them **white** in the blood of the Lamb. 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” {4T 125.2}.

When Jesus comes the second time, there are going to be just two groups of people—those who receive the Mark of the Beast and those who receive the SEAL of God. These two groups of people are presented in the SIXTH seal. The wicked are punished with the SEVEN last plagues which is the wrath of God, but the righteous, who are sealed, are safe when these final judgments are poured out.

Listen to the inspired writer who presents the SIXTH seal and she clearly tells us who these two groups are:

“And I beheld when he had opened the **sixth**

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

seal, ... And the **kings of the earth**, and the **great men**, and the **rich men**, and the **chief captains**, and the **mighty men**, and **every bondman**, and **every free man**, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Revelation 6:12-17. "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; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. . . . These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." In these scriptures two parties are brought to view" {9T 267, 268}.

Kindly note, Mrs. White says, "In these scriptures **two parties** are brought to view". Which are the two parties? The **wicked who face the plagues** (kings of the earth, great men, chief captains, mighty men, every bondman and every free man) and **a great multitude** of saints. The wicked say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Whereas the great multitude say, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." The wicked get destroyed during the plagues and the second coming of Jesus, but the great multitude pass through this trying time and "**came out of great tribulation**" unscathed.

So, the "great multitude" of Revelation chapter 7, the sealing chapter, must be, beyond a doubt, the

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

144,000 who are symbolically portrayed as being sealed on their foreheads.

Therefore, the primary interpretation of the great multitude is they are the living saints who will be translated to heaven, without seeing death—they are the 144,000.

In another passage Ellen White again identifies the great multitude of Revelation 7 as people of God's last day church who have received the knowledge of His word like no one else.

She wrote, "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 cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." **Those** whom the Lamb shall lead by the fountains of living waters, and from whose eyes he shall wipe away all tears, **will be those now receiving the knowledge and understanding revealed in the Bible**, the Word of God. **To us** has been given the privilege of receiving the wisdom that cometh from God, of seeing the beauty and the glories of that Word which lies at the foundation of all true knowledge. **The Bible teaches us** what a Christian ought to be, and what he ought to do" {RH, March 9, 1905 par. 2}.

In Revelation 17, we have the 10 horns that give power to the beast and unite to persecute God's last day saints. This is the time of trouble for God's people, the great tribulation. John the revelator wrote about saints of God who face this end-time war: "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**" Rev. 17:14.

Ellen White uses that verse of Revelation

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

17:14 and connects it with the great multitude of Revelation 7:9. She wrote, "**The seer of Patmos, looking down through the ages** to the time of this restoration of Israel in the earth made new, testified: **"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 cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." "And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts ["living creatures," R.V.], and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever." "And I heard as it were the voice of **a great multitude**, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him." "He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and **they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful"** **Revelation 7:9-12; 19:6, 7; Revelation 17:14** {PK 720, 721}.

It is obvious from the above passage that Sister White understood the great multitude of Revelation 7:9 to be that group who are "called, and chosen, and faithful" of Revelation 17:14. That is the group that is going to be alive when Jesus comes, and they come through the terrible persecutions of the last days.

In another article the pen of inspiration linked the great multitude to the 144,000, thus believing they are one and the same group. /

Mrs. White wrote, "After this **I beheld**, and, lo, **a great multitude**, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb”.....**Let us strive** with all the power that God has given us to be **among the hundred and forty-four thousand**. And let us do all that we can to help others to gain heaven” {RH, March 9, 1905}.

Conclusion:

The New Testament writers have used Old Testament passages in different settings. But there is the primary context and a secondary application to it. So also, sister White has used many Bible verses in different contexts.

In the same way, the verse in Revelation 7:9 is primarily used in the context of the sealing chapter of Revelation 7, as God’s last day living saints, who go through the great tribulation or the Jacob’s time of trouble. And in the secondary application, she used that verse in a general sense as a reference to God’s people who have lived in different time periods. God has always had His people, in every generation, in every nation, in every tongue, who will be clothed in white robes in the kingdom of God. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

144,000, Perfect in Christ

The book of Revelation describes the character of the 144,000, the special group of people, God's last days saints, who will stand without Jesus' mediation in the heavenly sanctuary as the seven last plagues are poured out upon the world. As the devil and his agents do their absolute best to deceive or destroy them (Rev. 12:9, 17), God protects His people through the greatest trying time in human history.

This special group of God's people finally stand vindicated before the throne of God singing an exclusive song of victory, a song of their unique experience that no one else can sing, because of their patient endurance in the faith of Jesus and obedience to the covenant, the ten commandments of God (Rev.14:12; Deut. 4:13; Exo. 34:28; Heb.10:16).

John saw them victorious in heaven at the end of their test. He wrote, "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and **them that had gotten the victory** over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints" Revelation 15:2, 3.

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

We are right at the brink of the final test. May we be among that exclusive group that will pass the test of ages.

We are told by the servant of the Lord that we need to do our exceeding best to qualify and be in this special number.

In the plan of salvation faith and works go together. Divine strength and human effort go hand in hand. Mrs. White wrote, “**Let us strive** with all the power that God has given us **to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand**. And let us do all that we can to help others to gain heaven. We are to have an intense interest in Christ Jesus; for he is our Saviour. **He came to this world to be tempted in all points as we are, to prove to the universe that in this world of sin human beings can live lives that God will approve**” {RH, March 9, 1905 par. 4}.

May we live a life, by His grace alone—a life that God will approve.

Distinctive Features of the 144,000:

The Bible gives us some information about the 144,000 and their characteristics. And the Spirit of Prophecy sheds more light on them. They are:

1. *Doctrinally pure*
2. *Morally and Spiritually pure*
3. *Exhibit true Patience*
4. *Job, a Reflection of the 144,000*
5. *Perfect Obedience and Faithfulness*
6. *The Significance of Sealing*
7. *The Holy Spirit, the Sealer of the Law*
8. *End-time Seal, the Sabbath*
9. *Perfect in Christ*

Doctrinally Pure:

John wrote of the 144,000, “These are they which were **not defiled with women**; for they are

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

virgins" Revelation 14:4.

Some have taken this phrase literally and have concluded that the 144,000 comprise only of men, because it says "they were not defiled with women"; and they say they are unmarried men, because the Scripture says "they are virgins".

If that is true, then our dear sisters in the faith have no hope to be alive when Jesus comes! Also, the married men then have lost that exclusive privilege!

In the Bible, a woman and a virgin are symbols of a church and its purity. The 144,000 are called virgins because they have maintained a pure faith and have been faithful to Christ, their spiritual Husband. The apostle Paul wrote, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a **chaste virgin to Christ**" 2 Corinthians 11:2. So *virginity* is a reference to *spiritual faithfulness to Christ*, our spiritual Husband.

The pen of inspiration tells us the true meaning of this phrase: "They are called **virgins** because they profess **a pure faith**" COL, p. 406.

While the phrase "chaste virgin" means purity of faith, a "whore" or an "harlot", on the other hand, means the opposite—an *impure faith*.

What does this mean: "These are they which were **not defiled with women**"? (Revelation 14:4).

The book of Revelation presents other women as well, other churches in Christendom, that are not virgins, that have not been faithful to Christ, but have corrupted their faith by mixing it with the traditions of men. They have been unfaithful to Christ, their spiritual husband, the ruler of the universe, by committing spiritual fornication with the rulers of the land, by following their rules, flouting Christ's explicit command.

The Christian world is guilty of diluting the true faith, by exchanging truth for error, by substituting God's pure word with the traditions of men.

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

The Bible tells us how faith is developed: “So then **faith** cometh by hearing, and **hearing by the word of God**” Romans 10:17.

When the Lord Jesus returns there will be a lack of true faith, the faith that God approves. Jesus said, “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find **faith on the earth?**” Luke 18:8.

The apostle Paul told us that a time is coming, and has surely come, when faith is replaced by feelings, and God’s doctrines are substituted for doctrines of devils. He wrote, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall **depart from the faith**, giving heed to seducing spirits, and **doctrines of devils**” 1 Timothy 4:1.

The book of Revelation presents false Christianity in symbolic language of a woman and her daughters who are described as a “whore” and “harlots”. Why are they called so? Because they have departed from the faith of the word of God and have been unfaithful to Christ, their true husband.

The mother church, and her daughters, ‘born’ of her, are called unfaithful for not following Christ and His Word fully. John wrote, “And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the **great whore** that sitteth upon many waters: With whom **the kings of the earth have committed fornication**, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of **her fornication**....And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE **MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH**” Revelation 17:1, 2, 5.

While the majority of Christians compromise with the world, the 144,000 have not defiled themselves with these women (churches) stigmatized as “whore” and “harlot.” They have maintained a pure faith that is

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

derived only from the Word of God.

Isaiah wrote of the condition of the churches of Christianity in these last days in figurative language. He wrote, "And in that day **seven women** shall take hold of **one man**, saying, **We will eat our own bread**, and **wear our own apparel**: only let us be **called by thy name**, to take away our reproach" Isaiah 4:1.

Seven represents *all*, and the term women represents *churches*. The one man represents *Jesus Christ*, the true husband of the church. The bread symbolizes the *word of God* and the white apparel symbolizes the *righteousness of Christ*. (See Revelation 5:6, Matthew 25:1, Matthew 4:4, Revelation 19:7, 8). These churches want to be connected to Christ but do not want His Word or His righteousness to clothe them.

But the 144,000 are unlike these unfaithful Christian churches and their members. They have maintained their true faith and have been faithful to Christ and His Word amidst the prevailing compromise of truth in Christianity.

Morally and Spiritually Pure:

John wrote of the 144,000, "And in their mouth was found **no guile**: for they are **without fault** before the throne of God" Revelation 14:5.

Just like their Master these saints of God, in the last days, are truthful in word and deed. Of Jesus it is written, "Who **did no sin**, **neither was guile** found in **his mouth**" 1 Peter 2:22.

Jesus came, not to save us **in** our sins, but **from** our sins. And His holy life is our example. As Jesus "did no sin" God desires His true followers to overcome sin as well, by the grace of Christ. Jesus has come to offer freedom from the slavery of sin. He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin....** If the **Son** therefore shall

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

make you **free**, ye shall be **free indeed**" John 8:34, 36.

The servant of the Lord wrote: "God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. **Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin.** He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, **to keep him from sinning**" DA 311.

The 144,000 will allow Christ to do a thorough work in their lives and they finally are found faultless before God's throne. Not clothed with their own righteousness, but with the righteousness of Christ!

"And in their **mouth** was found **no guile**" Revelation 14:5. What does that mean? It means that just as God's word is pure, their words are pure and truthful as well, because they have hidden God's Word in their hearts.

Words that come out of a man's mouth reflect the condition of his heart. Jesus said, "For out of the **abundance** of the **heart** the **mouth speaketh**" Matthew 12:34.

Lucifer, on the other hand, is called the father of lies. Jesus said of the adversary, "For he is **a liar**, and the **father of it**" John 8:44. As Lucifer, the first liar, was cast out of heaven, no one who has a deceitful tongue will have an entry to that holy place that is filled with truth.

Revelation 21:27 says, "And there shall in **no wise enter** into it any thing that **defileth**, neither whatsoever worketh **abomination**, or **maketh a lie**". The 144,000 stand in God's presence, because they have been truthful in their lives.

The psalmist wrote, "LORD, who shall **abide in**

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and **speaketh the truth in his heart**. He that **backbiteth not with his tongue**” Psalm 15:1-3. Yes, the 144,000 qualify, because they fulfil this important condition of having a guileless tongue.

When Jesus met Nathaniel, He said, “Behold an **Israelite indeed**, in whom is **no guile!**” John 1:47. A true Israelite is someone who has no guile or deception that proceed from their mouth.

The name Israel was given to Jacob. Jacob initially, was very deceptive. Remember, how he deceived his old and blind father pretending to be Esau! He lied to his father to receive the covenant blessing. He was a man of guile. But later, when he repented, God changed his name to Israel, someone who has prevailed, an overcomer. From then on, Israel was guileless.

The 144,000 were like Jacob. That is why they must go through “the time of Jacob's trouble” Jeremiah 30:7. But, as Jacob overcame his evil traits before entering the promised land, these last day saints also completely overcome before entering the heavenly Canaan. As God changed the name of Jacob to Israel, signifying a change of character, God has changed the lives of His saints by His very blood. The Bible says of this group, “And have **washed their robes**, and **made them white** in the **blood of the Lamb**” Revelation 7:14. Their mouths preach the truth of the word, and truth is reflected in their daily discourses of life as well.

It is also said of these special people: “For they are **without fault** before the throne of God” Revelation 14:5. This is an amazing achievement. It is easy to be without fault before men, but to be without fault before God and His throne is indeed something!

We are told the difference between how man and God view matters. God told Samuel, “For the

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

LORD seeth not as man seeth; for **man looketh on the outward appearance**, but the **LORD looketh on the heart**" 1 Samuel 16:7.

When God looks at the hearts of his beloved saints, he sees they are indeed pure and spotless. Their thoughts, intensions and motives are all weighed by the all-searching and all-knowing One, and He declares them—pure in heart!

When Jesus comes the second time, the question is asked, "Who shall be able to stand?" Revelation 6:17. The 144,000 shall be able to stand before God and His throne because their hearts are tested and tried and declared to be pure. Jesus said, "Blessed are the **pure in heart**: for they shall **see God**" Matthew 5:8. They are without fault before God, only because God is truly dwelling in their hearts.

When we turn to God in true repentance the Lord has promised to wash away our sins and give us a clean start. Through the Old Testament prophet, God said, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" Isaiah 1:18.

How does God look at the pardoned sinner? Here is a classical quote from Mrs. White on this: "Through the righteousness of Christ we shall **stand pardoned before God**, and **as though we had never sinned**" 1MR 1892.

Of the 144,000 it will be declared, when they are sealed, "He that is **righteous**, let him be righteous still: and he that is **holy**, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" Revelation 22:11.

Yes, indeed, by the grace of Jesus, and by the thorough working of the Holy Spirit in their lives, they are declared a righteous and a holy people!

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

Exhibit True Patience:

Describing the 144,000, John wrote, “Here is the **patience** of the saints” Revelation 14:12. How is patience developed? The apostle Paul wrote, “Knowing that **tribulation worketh patience**” Romans 5:3.

It is true that every true Christian goes through trials and tests in their lives which help them to develop this heavenly trait of divine patience amidst suffering. But the 144,000, as a group, are put to the severest test in history and they develop ultimate patience.

Daniel wrote of that time, “There shall be a **time of trouble**, such as **never was since there was a nation** even to that same time” Daniel 12:1. John wrote of this same time that these saints go through: “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.

Ellen White wrote, “While **Satan seeks to destroy this class**, God will send his angels to comfort and protect them in the time of peril. The assaults of Satan are fierce and determined, his delusions are terrible; but the Lord's eye is upon his people, and his ear listens to their cries. **Their affliction is great, the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them**; but the Refiner will **bring them forth as gold tried in the fire**. God's love for his children during the period of their severest trial is as strong and tender as in the days of their sunniest prosperity; but it is **needful** for them to be placed in the furnace fire; **their earthliness must be consumed** that the **image of Christ may be perfectly reflected**” {GC88 621.1}.

Yes, the image of Christ will be perfectly reflected in the 144,000! God permits this final trouble for the good of His people.

Job, a Reflection of the 144,000:

There is one person, in the Old Testament,

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

who reflects the 144,000 in many aspects, and it is Job. Job was a type of the 144,000. Much of what he went through, God's saints will experience as well.

As God declares of the 144,000, a people without guile in their mouth and without fault before Him, so did God declare of Job: "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, **a perfect and an upright man**, one that **feareth God**, and **escheweth evil**?" Job 1:8.

Did Job also have that unique character of having a mouth without guile? Absolutely! It is written, "**Neither** have I **suffered my mouth to sin**" Job 31:30.

As Job lost all his wealth, the 144,000 will lose all their earthly possessions, as well, during the time of the mark of the beast. The decree that is soon to be issued states, "And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" Revelation 13:17.

The 144,000 decide to be true to God and not compromise with the world. As the daily provisions of life are denied them, they go through hunger, thirst, and want of many daily necessities which will severely test them. But, when Jesus comes the second time, they have this promise, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat" Revelation 7:16. Yes, they lose everything of this world, but they have laid up all their treasures in heaven.

The same way the Lord permitted Satan to try Job, He will permit the devil to try His last day saints. They are plunged into a time of trouble that has been unmatched. "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 tests and trials do not destroy them or their faith, rather it makes them look better spiritually; they

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

come closer to their Lord at this time and are looking clean and white, washed in His precious blood. *The night does not dim the light, it only makes the light look brighter in darkness!*

These final trials are like the fires that work for their good in purifying them further, by removing the dross and every bit of earthliness left, so that they can trust God fully. Peter wrote, “That the **trial of your faith**, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be **tried with fire**, might be **found unto praise** and **honour** and **glory** at the appearing of Jesus Christ” 1 Peter 1:7.

As Job went through physical pain and mental anguish, the saints of God go through these same difficult times. As Job’s friends tortured him with the words of reproof, God’s people will be blamed for the calamities all around.

The New Testament summarizes the tribulations of Job in one word—*patience*! James wrote, “Ye have heard of the **patience of Job**” James 5:11.

Just as Job went through trials and tribulations, being a righteous man, God’s last day saints will develop ultimate patience amidst extreme physical, mental, and spiritual anguish. “Here is the **patience of the saints**” (Revelation 14:12) is just a summary of what they will go through.

Perfect Obedience and Faithfulness:

Amidst tests and trials the last day saints exhibit resolute faith in God and obey Him even under the most trying circumstances. The Scriptures declare, “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that **keep the commandments of God**, and the **faith of Jesus**” Revelation 14:12.

Keeping God’s commandments and maintaining faith in times of relative peace is good. But doing the same when times are challenging is what

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

proves the worth of that soul.

When God declared Job to be a perfect and an upright man who feared God and hated evil, Satan responded by saying that Job was faithful to God because of the blessings he had received. Then he challenged God to withdraw those earthly blessings and see if Job still maintained his faith and integrity.

“Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, **Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him**, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and **touch all that he hath**, and he will curse thee to thy face” Job 1:9-11.

As the 144,000 are permitted to go through these terrible times, they still are obedient to God and display a resolute faith. Instead of the affliction being a negative factor in their obedience to God it turns out to be positive. They say, like the psalmist, “It is **good for me** that I have been **afflicted**; that I might **learn thy statutes**” Psalm 119:71.

The 144,000 prove that their obedience to God’s commandments was not legalism, neither was it to gain favor from God. They keep it because it is right, they have obeyed God because of their love for Him, and nothing else. As Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

They express their love through obedience even in the most difficult circumstances. As love made Jesus to die for our sin, it is love that constrains the saints to rather die than sin against God.

The devil claimed, in the beginning, that it is not possible to obey God’s law; that it is harsh and unfair. Jesus proved that to be false when He lived, in His humanity, a perfect life of sinless obedience to God’s requirements.

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

Also, there have been millions of saints down through the ages who, through faith in the Lord Jesus and His grace, have walked with God perfectly, in true obedience, like Enoch did. In every generation, many of God's children walked with God like Enoch did. Mrs. White wrote, "And there are Enochs in this our day" {COL 332.1}.

In the final generation, when iniquity has abounded, the 144,000 are again God's demonstration against the falsehood of that claim made by the adversary of God and man.

They are said to possess "the **faith of Jesus**" Revelation 14:12. It is **not just** the **faith in Jesus** they have, but they **replicate the faith that Jesus demonstrated** when He was on earth. The faith of Jesus is the highest demonstration of faith in every sense of the word.

It is that quality of faith that these saints have that helps them to overcome the final challenge thrown to them. John wrote about the virtue of faith which helps God's people to overcome: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" 1 John 5:4.

It is that **faith in Jesus** which **produces the faith of Jesus** that helps these people of God to render perfect obedience to God's law. As Paul said, faith strengthens us to true obedience: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" Romans 3:31.

The Significance of Sealing:

What is the significance of sealing the 144,000? It serves at least two purposes: one, it shows they are God's people and two, it indicates they are a protected people.

Where are they sealed? John wrote, "**Sealed** the servants of our God in their **foreheads**" Revelation

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

7:3. And in Revelation 14:1 the 144,000 are shown to be “Having his **Father's name** written in their **foreheads**.” It means they belong to the Father.

Most of us write our names on our Bibles or on the books we possess. Our names on the books indicate those books belong to us. So, having our Father's name on our foreheads implies we belong to God.

The forehead, or frontal lobe, is that part of the body where the decision-making is done. Having the Father's name on the forehead means we have decided for God.

Revelation 7 pictures a scene where trouble is going to burst upon the world, a trouble as never was. Before the winds of strife, war, and commotions are released, God's people are sealed. A special angel was seen flying with an urgent message: “Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.” Revelation 7:3. After the 144,000 are sealed, the earth and everything in it will be badly hurt with natural calamities and divine judgments.

The servant of the Lord wrote, “God's commandment-keeping people believe that He will fulfill His promise **to protect them**. By actual experience they know that the Lord sanctifies them and **grants to them the seal of His approval** as commandment keepers” {19MR 281.3}.

There are only two groups of people who will be alive at the end of time—those who receive the seal of God and those who receive the mark of the beast. John wrote about both these groups, whom he saw in symbolic visions, receiving the seal of God or the mark of the beast.

While God's people are sealed in their foreheads, the rest of the world are marked either in their foreheads or hands. Revelation 14:9 records,

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his **mark in his forehead**, or in his **hand**.”

The pen of inspiration also confirms of only two groups: “There can be **only two classes**. Each party is distinctly stamped, either with the **seal of the living God**, or with the **mark of the beast** or his image” RH Jan. 30, 1900.

What does forehead and hand represent? *The forehead* symbolizes what you *believe*, and the *hand* symbolizes what you *do*.

The ones who are saved receive the seal only on their foreheads, but the ones who are lost receive the mark in one of the two places—forehead or hand. Why is it so?

God’s children practice what they believe; their faith is shown in actions, as well. So, what they believe is reflected in what they do. But those who are lost might either do what they believe (represented being marked in the forehead), or they may render obedience to the beast power even though they do not believe it (represented being marked on the hand). Let me explain it.

The seal of God is contained in the Sabbath, as we shall see, and the mark of the beast is the counterfeit Sabbath—Sunday. Those who keep the true Sabbath fully believe it is right and therefore they observe it. But the rest of the world, who keep Sunday (or any other weekday convenient to them), when it is enforced by law, will fall in one of the two groups.

Most of the Christians will continue to keep Sunday because they are deceived into believing it is the New Testament Sabbath, in honour of Christ’s resurrection (these receive the mark of the beast in their foreheads, because they believe it to be true), but the non-Christians and the nominal Christians do not believe Sunday is the Bible Sabbath, but they still

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

accept the Sunday law when it is enforced for convenience sake (these receive the mark of the beast in their hands, because they go along with it, not for religious convictions, but for survival).

The final transgressors reflect the first two transgressors—Adam and Eve. The Bible says, “And **Adam was not deceived**, but the **woman being deceived** was in the transgression” 1 Timothy 2:14.

Eve represents those final transgressors who will be deceived, believing that Sunday is sacred, and therefore they keep it. Adam represents those who are not deceived about Sunday sacredness, but still go along with it. So, Eve represents that class of people who will receive the mark of the beast in their foreheads, and Adam symbolizes the rest who will receive the mark of the beast in their hands.

The seal of God and the mark of the beast are not something physical that can be seen. Mrs. White wrote, “Just as soon as the people of God 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” 4BC 1161 (1902).

The Holy Spirit, the Sealer of the Law:

The scripture reveals that we are sealed *with* the Holy Spirit and *by* the Holy Spirit, as well. He is the seal, and He is the Sealer. He fills us with Himself and He seals us with God's Law.

Paul wrote to the church members at Ephesus, “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, **ye were sealed** with that **holy Spirit of promise**” Ephesians 1:13.

And again, “And grieve not the **holy Spirit of**

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” Ephesians 4:30.

At conversion, a believer receives the Holy Spirit of God, as a seal or assurance that they belong to God. The Holy Spirit then seals them with God’s law, which is the expression of God’s character. The Bible says, “Bind up the testimony, **seal the law** among my disciples” Isaiah 8:16.

It is the Holy Spirit, we are told, who writes God’s law in us. The apostle Paul wrote, “Whereof the **Holy Ghost** also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, **I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them**” Hebrews 10:15, 16.

Again, in the book of Romans we read that it is the Holy Spirit who fulfills God’s law in us: “That the **righteousness of the law** might be **fulfilled in us**, who walk not after the flesh, but **after the Spirit**” Romans 8:4.

The law of God is an expression of His character. When His character becomes ours, we receive His seal. The servant of the Lord wrote, “The **seal** of the living God will be placed upon those **only** who **bear a likeness to Christ in character**” {Mar 241.2}.

End-time Seal, the Sabbath:

The end-time seal focuses on that part of the law which indeed contains the seal of God. It is that part of the law that the Christian world is guilty of transgressing. It is that part of the law that distinguishes the saved from the lost.

A seal is something that authenticates a legal document. If the seal or sign is missing on any legal paper, then the document becomes invalid. The legal document that God gave man, is His law written with

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

His divine finger. Has God placed His seal and sign in it to authenticate that official law?

We know that there are three parts to any valid seal: the *name* of the person, his *designation*, and the *territory* of his domain.

In God's law that contains His seal, it is the fourth commandment alone that has all three of these elements. The fourth commandment reads: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the **LORD made heaven and earth, the sea**, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" Exodus 20:8-11.

His name is— "**LORD**;" His designation is Maker--"**made**;" and, the territory of His domain— "**heaven and earth, and the sea**".

Mrs. White confirmed the same to us about the Sabbath. She wrote, "The **seal of God's law** is found in the **fourth commandment**. This only, of all the ten, brings to view both the **name** and the **title of the Lawgiver**. It declares Him to be the **Creator of the heavens and the earth**, and thus shows His claim to reverence and worship above all others. Aside from this precept, there is nothing in the Decalogue to show by whose authority the law is given" GC 452.

Not only are the elements of the seal contained in the Sabbath commandment, but God's sign, as well, is placed there. He said, "Moreover also I gave them **my sabbaths**, to be a **sign** between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them" Ezekiel 20:12.

Sign and seal authenticate a legal writing. And

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

these two are interchangeably used in the Scriptures. For example, the apostle Paul, talking about another topic, used these two words synonymously. He wrote, “And he received the **sign** of circumcision, a **seal** of the righteousness of the faith” Romans 4:11.

We read earlier that the seal is placed on the forehead: “Have **sealed** the servants of our God in their **foreheads**” (Revelation 7:3). Also, we saw that seal is the Father’s name: “Having his **Father’s name** written in their **foreheads**.” (Revelation 14:1). And we just saw the Sabbath contains the seal of God.

Does it contain the name of God as well? Isaiah connected the Sabbath to the name of the Lord. He wrote, “Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the **name of the LORD**, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the **sabbath** from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant” Isaiah 56:6.

When Jesus was on the earth, He often spoke to His Father in prayer. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed, “**Abba**, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.” Mark 14:36.

That is how Jesus called His Father—**Abba**! Does the Sabbath contain Abba, the name of the Father, in it? Yes, it does!

Sabbath!

Not only in English but also in Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, and Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament, is this pun of words reflected.

The last day saints of God, filled with the Spirit of God, and in full obedience to God’s holy law, are revealed in Revelation 14:12. It reads, “Here is the patience of the saints: here are **they that keep the commandments of God**, and the faith of Jesus”.

They are in line with all ten of the divine precepts. For, in God’s sight, failing even at one point

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

is not acceptable. He said, "For whosoever shall **keep the whole law**, and **yet offend in one point**, he is **guilty of all**" James 2:10.

Unfortunately, the rest of Christendom are not observing the seventh day Sabbath and therefore do not receive the seal of God.

Sunday becomes the mark of the beast only when it is *enforced by law*. Today, there are many sincere Christians in all churches who observe Sunday because they are ignorant of the true Sabbath. They have not received the mark of the beast yet.

Mrs. White wrote, "But Christians of past generations observed the first day, supposing that they were keeping the Bible Sabbath, and there are in the churches of today many who honestly believe that Sunday is the Sabbath of divine appointment. **None of these have received the mark of the beast**. There are **true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion**. The test upon this question does not come until Sunday observance is enforced by law, and the world is enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath. Not until the issue is thus plainly set before the people, and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, will **those who continue in transgression receive the mark of the beast**" {4SP 281.2}.

Will all Adventists, who profess to keep the Sabbath and the rest of the commandments, receive the seal of God? Mrs. White wrote, "**Not all who profess to keep the Sabbath will be sealed**. There are many even among those who teach the truth to others who will not receive the seal of God in their foreheads. They had the light of truth, they knew their Master's will, they understood every point of our faith, but they had **not corresponding works**. These who were so familiar with prophecy and the treasures of

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

divine wisdom, **should have acted their faith**. They should have commanded their households after them, that by a well-ordered family they might present to the world the influence of the truth upon the human heart” {CET 189.1}.

Let us, beloved brothers and sisters, along with the other nine commandments keep the Sabbath holy, in our thoughts, words and actions. Only then will we be sealed.

Perfect in Christ:

God is perfect, and He expects nothing less than perfection. It is only through Jesus, our perfect Savior, that we are presented perfect in Christ to our heavenly Father.

The apostle wrote, “That we may present **every man perfect in Christ Jesus**” Colossian 1:28. Every person who makes it to heaven is perfect as the apostle said, “**every man perfect** in Christ Jesus”.

How is every believer perfect? Christ *imputes* His own righteousness when we truly repent. So, it is not our righteousness that covers us, but His.

The pen of inspiration declares, “It is the **righteousness of Christ** that makes the penitent sinner acceptable to God and works his justification. However sinful has been his life, if he believes in Jesus as his personal Saviour, he stands before God in the spotless robes of **Christ's imputed righteousness**” {FW 106.1}.

But the work of Christ for the sinner is *not only just to justify* or pardon the penitent sinner, *but to sanctify*, or make him holy, as well. Christ offers His grace and His Holy Spirit to the believer so that he would be able to render perfect obedience to His divine precepts. He said, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” 2 Corinthians 12:9.

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

Not only does Christ give us his *imputed righteousness* freely when we believe in Him, but He also gives us His *imparted righteousness*. He comes to live in our hearts and gives us victory over all our weaknesses.

Mrs. White wrote, "It is by **overcoming the world**, the flesh, and the devil that any student comes into possession of that knowledge that gives him access to the tree of life. We must all learn that **we must overcome as Christ overcame** in our behalf. All pride is sin and must be expelled from the soul. Christ came to cut us loose from the originator of sin. **He came to give us a mastery over the power of the destroyer**, and to save us from the sting of the serpent. **Through his imparted righteousness** he would place all human beings where they will be on vantage ground. He came to this earth and lived the law of God **that man might stand in his God-given manhood, having complete mastery over his natural inclination to self-indulgence and to the selfish ideas and principles which tarnish the soul**. The Physician of soul and body, **he will give wisdom and complete victory over warring lusts**. He will provide every facility, that **man may perfect a completeness of character in every respect**" {7MR 320.1}.

The ones who are sealed are overcomers. The Scripture calls them "the children of Israel" (Revelation 7:4) or children of overcomers. Those who continue to sin receive the mark of the beast, but those who obey God fully and overcome sin, by the grace and power of Christ, receive the seal God, for God doesn't seal us in sin. The apostle wrote, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this **seal**, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ **depart from iniquity**" 2 Timothy 2:19.

Ellen White wrote, "I saw that none could share the "refreshing" unless they **obtain the victory over**

every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action. We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. Let all remember that **God is holy and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence**" {Mar 254.5}.

There are many who have a wrong understanding of Christ's grace. They think it is meant to cover their unrepentant sins, to shield them from rendering perfect obedience to God's divine requirements. No!

God's grace does a *twofold* work in the sinner: 1) it covers the sins of the truly penitent; and 2) it empowers the forgiven sinner to render obedience to God's law.

The apostle Paul wrote this to those who misconstrued God's grace and took it as a license to continue in sin: "What then? **shall we sin**, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of **obedience unto righteousness**?" Romans 6:15, 16.

The pen of inspiration tells us in very plain terms what God still expects of us: "Christ does not lessen the claims of the law. In unmistakable language He presents obedience to it as the condition of eternal life--the same condition that was required of Adam before his fall. The Lord expects no less of the soul now than He expected of man in Paradise, **perfect obedience, unblemished righteousness. The requirement under the covenant of grace is just as broad as the requirement made in Eden**--harmony with God's law, which is holy, just, and good" {COL 391.2}.

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

Just as we need Christ to forgive us our sins, so we need Christ to empower us to overcome sin. He said, “Without me ye can do nothing” John 15:5.

We cannot take our eyes off Him even for a moment. Like Peter, who started sinking in the sea when he took his eyes off Jesus, we too will go down. We stand not on our own righteousness but completely in His righteousness alone.

Even when we reach heaven, we continue to look to Christ for safety and security, because we still will have the power of choice. Not only is Jesus the Redeemer of believing mankind, but He is the shield to the holy angels as well.

Here below is a quote from the pen of inspiration that reveals to us how we, and the angels of heaven, need to constantly look to Jesus to be safe:

“The **angels** ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for **even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God**. It is through the **efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy**. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. **Angelic perfection failed in heaven. Human perfection failed in Eden**, the paradise of bliss. **All who wish for security in earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God**” {5BC 1132.8}.

Conclusion of the Whole Matter:

1. *From chapter 1:* The 144,000 are not from the literal tribes of Israel, but they are spiritual Jews, called Christians.
2. *From chapter 2:* The *Hearing and Seeing Pattern* in the book of Revelation is clearly demonstrated. The 144,000 and the great multitude are presented in this audio-visual way, indicating they are the one

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

and the same group of people, like the Lion and the Lamb represent that one Person, Jesus Christ.

3. *From chapter 3:* Revelation chapter 7 is the sealing chapter of the last day saints who will be alive when Jesus comes. This chapter is divided into only two segments (Verses 1-8 and 9-17). First these saints, called the 144,000, are pictured on earth, as God's people sealed, then these same saints, called the Great Multitude, are pictured in heaven as triumphant and glorious, standing in front of God's throne.
4. *From chapter 4:* There are five popular views among Adventists regarding the Great Multitude of Revelation 7. But only one view completely fits the scrutiny of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy; and that is—the Great Multitude is another name for the 144,000, the living saints at the second coming of Jesus.
5. *From chapter 5:* The phrase “144,000 **in number**” does not mean a literal number, but a symbolic one, just as the wicked are referred to, “**in number** like the sand upon the sea shore”. Both are symbolic representations of a multitude which cannot be numbered by finite man.
6. *From chapter 6:* The dualist applications of Bible verses are commonly used by Bible writers and Ellen White, as well. There is always a primary use of a text and a general application, too. Mrs. White primarily used the verse of Revelation 7:9 which refers to the great multitude to denote the 144,000.
7. *From chapter 7:* What is most important is developing the character of the 144,000, who are *perfect in Christ*. We need to strive with all the God-given powers to live a holy and a pure life in this sinful world, by His grace which is sufficient for us. The apostle said, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” Philippians 2:12. Being clothed

144,000: Literal or Symbolic?

in His righteousness alone, and filled with His Spirit, we need to obey God's Word from our hearts filled with love, conforming to His will. This happens, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" Zechariah 4:6.

"Let us hear the **conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments:** for this is the **whole duty of man.** For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14.

"Now unto him that is **able to keep you from falling,** and to **present you faultless before the presence of his glory** with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" Jude 1:24, 25.

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144,000

Literal or Symbolic?

From the Pen of the Editor:

Has the mysterious number 144,000 in the book of Revelation ever made you wonder what it stands for? Is it literal or symbolic? What do the scholars say about its real status? It is easy to get lost in the maze of more than one view of the different schools of thought on this important subject.

While the onus of making everyone know the truth about the 144,000 is not on the author, his insatiable desire is to let the Christian world know what exactly engulfs this group of the living saints on the day of the Lord.

Even the slightest doubt about every detail of this important subject is adequately addressed in the pages of this book. The seven chapters in this marvelous book are designed to help the reader to know everything about the 144,000, also known as the "Great Multitude."

~R G S Joel, Servant of God

Michael Pedrin is a pastor, author, and an evangelist who travels worldwide sharing God's Word. He loves to find answers to difficult and intriguing Bible questions. He has authored around ten books. He has a rich experience in the Master's vineyard for about 30 years.



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