

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.**
(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)*

#03-09144

The 144,000 First Fruits to God #1

August 6, 2009

And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand [144,000] sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel.... (Revelation 7:4 NASB)

Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb [Lambkin] was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand [144,000], having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. (Revelation 14:1 NASB [CV])

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, chapters 7 and 14, refers to 144,000 bond-servants and first fruits to God and to the Lambkin who have His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

I believe that we are living in a period of transition between two eons (ages) and are approaching the arrival of the Kingdom Age or Tabernacles Age, and, because of this, it behooves us to understand the spiritual meaning of the 144,000, who these people are, and what they will be doing. At the outset, let me state that they are Christ's or the Lambkin's conquerors or overcomers, the ones who will reign with Him during the coming eon. They are the ones who will take the eonian good news (Revelation 14:6-7) to the nations and teach righteousness to the inhabitants of the earth (Isaiah 26:9). Their message and activity will bring about the final demise of mystery Babylon (Revelation 14:8) as the saints begin to possess the kingdom for all the eons (ages) to come (Daniel 7:18, 22).

In other words, the number 144,000 signifies the full complement of those who will reign with Christ during the millennial kingdom. These are the ones from all the generations that are counted worthy to reign with Christ. They are the blessed and holy, for they will have a part in the first resurrection and will be priests of God and of Christ as they reign with Him upon the earth for 1,000 years (Revelation 5:10; 20:4-6). They are the ones purchased from among men as the first fruits to God and the Lambkin (1 Corinthians 15:23; Revelation 14:4).

Some years ago, I believed in the commonly accepted view held by many Christians that the 144,000 represent converted natural Jews hidden in the world that will miraculously appear and begin to witness to the world during the great tribulation. This view also holds that gentile believers (the "church") will be raptured out of the earth, and then these natural Jews will evangelize the world while the "church" is walking on the golden streets of heaven. I no longer hold this view because a true Jew in the sight of God is one who has a circumcised heart and has accepted Jesus as the Messiah and God's King; it is not based on genealogy (bloodline). A true Jew (Judahite) is a good fig (Jeremiah 24) because he follows Jesus, the King who has the scepter of Judah. All others who claim to be true Jews and yet reject Christ are bad figs and liars (Revelation 2:9; 3:9). For further commentary on this subject, please see issues #02-08149, December 19, 2008, *The True Jew Is*; #02-08150, December 23, 2008, *The True Israel of God*; #02-08156, December 17, 2008, *Who Is the Lair? #2*. For a discussion of the "rapture," please see article #17, January 2009, *Snatched Away*.

Now, let us add to this background.

#1: The number 144,000 is the result of 12 times 12,000, and the number **12** signifies **the perfection of government or governmental perfection**. In this case, the number 12 is intensified 12,000 times, which means that it speaks of a full complement of people in relation to the government or rule of the Lambkin over the earth.

#2: Some believe that 144,000 is a literal number, which would mean that a rather small company of believers will be counted worthy of being first fruits to God and to the Lambkin in the next eon. However, given the meaning (what it signifies) of the number 12, it is more likely that 144,000 signifies

or is representative of a full complement, which, most likely, is much larger in number. An indication that this is the case is given in the description of this company sounding like “many waters.”

And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. (Revelation 14:2 NASB)

The sound of many waters is an expression that is often used to refer to vast numbers, even multitudes. We discover that, with the fall of mystery Babylon and the advent of the marriage of the Lambkin, the voice of a great multitude will go forth like the sound of many waters.

Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.” (Revelation 19:6 NASB)

144,000 is a large number, but it hardly passes as a great multitude. A further proof is the fact that the great harlot sits on many waters (Revelation 17:1), which refers to the bulk of mankind or nations.

#3: The 144,000 are described as ones from the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.

It is vital that we understand that *Israel* was not Jacob’s natural name, and, as such, it was not identified with his genealogy. He was given the name *Israel*, which means “God rules,” after wrestling with the Lord all night. He was not born with the name *Israel*, meaning that it has nothing to do with a name given through natural birth. It is given for a different reason or, we could say, as a result of an entirely different type of birth. In *The Companion Bible*, the footnote for Genesis 32:28 states: “Jacob = contender. Used of the natural Jacob and his natural seed. Israel used for spiritual Jacob and his spiritual seed. Israel = “God commands, orders or rules.” Man attempts it but always, in the end, fails. Out of some forty Hebrew names compounded with “El” or “Jah,” God is always the doer of what the verb means (cp. *Dani-el*, God judges).”

Given this understanding, it is reasonable to state that the 144,000 sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel is not a reference to the natural seed of Jacob but to the spiritual seed of Israel. In other words, these sealed bond-servants are “born from above” believers that have the seed of Christ within them. They could be natural descendants of Jacob, but they do not have to be. The fact of the matter is that they are not sons of Israel based on their genealogy or bloodline but based on the spiritual seed within them. God’s seed abides in all who are born of God (see 1 John 3:9). The true Israel of God is spiritual Israel, and those of this Israel, according to Paul, are ones who boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world, for neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, that is of the flesh, but a new creation (see Galatians 6:14-15). Spiritual Israel is the new creation in Christ. By the way, those in the Middle East that claim to be Israelites and reject Jesus as the Messiah are enemies of the cross (Philippians 3:18) and have no claim to being a true son of Israel. They cannot claim the right of sonship based on their genealogy or their circumcision. They must accept Jesus as Messiah and God’s King from the tribe of Judah.

The point that I want to underline is that to be a member of a certain tribe and be called a son of Israel is a spiritual matter and not one of the flesh. Even in the days of Moses, people from other nations were allowed to follow Israel’s God and join one of the tribes. When Israel left Egypt after being under bondage, a mixed multitude left with them (Exodus 12:38). A mixed multitude implies a very large number of people not descended from Jacob. This mixed multitude, which also means they came from many other nations, simply joined up with a tribe of Israel, came under the law of God, entered the land of Canaan, and received an inheritance in the land along with the natural descendants.

Today, only the Lord knows who the natural descendants of the tribes are. But this is not the issue. The issue is whether or not one has the spiritual seed of God within them, for only ones who are born from above, regardless of their natural lineage, are spiritual Israel and could be counted worthy to be among what is represented by the 144,000 sons of Israel.

Let us be clear that the company of the 144,000 does not represent the entire “church” but only those that will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God as the Lord’s conquerors or overcomers.