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WHO WILL SING THE SONG?

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By DOUG BATCHELOR

CONTENTS

GOD'S SPECIAL FORCES	3
WHERE TO BEGIN?	4
THE SAMARITANS & TEN LOST TRIBES	6
WHO IS A TRUE ISRAELITE?	8
HOW MANY TRIBES?	9
WHAT'S IN A NAME?	12
EXACTLY HOW MANY?	15
THE NUMBER 12	17
PRECIOUS STONES	20
ONLY 144,000 SAVED?	22
THE SEAL OF GOD & THE FATHER'S NAME	24
IT'S ABOUT TIME	25
SO WHO ARE THEY?	27
CONCLUSION	31

AN AMAZING FACT: *During the Gulf War, a small team of U.S. Navy SEALs created a diversion so convincing that it completely fooled the Iraqi army. About a dozen SEALs stormed the beaches of Kuwait and created such havoc that Iraqi generals believed the U.S.-led attack was coming from the sea. Iraq sent the majority of their army to repel this fake attack—only to find they had been duped as the main U.S. force came through the Saudi Arabian desert! Within hours the war was over, and it all started with less than 20 soldiers!*

Each branch of the U.S. armed services has one or more elite teams of commandos that fight using covert guerrilla warfare tactics during special combat situations. To serve in one of these select units, a soldier must be highly disciplined and pass through incredibly difficult physical and mental training. Only those who demonstrate unflinching self-control and perfect obedience qualify. These Special Forces commandos are given dangerous and complex missions; they rapidly attack enemy troops and raid behind enemy lines

to clear the way for the main attacking force. Even a small team of these commandos, because of their intense training, can achieve great victories—defeating entire columns in short time.

GOD'S SPECIAL FORCES

The 12 Apostles were a type of Special Forces during the time of Jesus' first coming. After three-and-a-half years of intensive personal training with Jesus, the Lord was able to use them to achieve great victories. They penetrated Satan's dominion to spearhead a great revival and expansion of the Christian faith.

But the book of Revelation tells us of another Special Forces unit, a vast "army" of 144,000. They have a special relationship with the Lamb, and they are sealed with a special name. They also sing a special song. Why are the 144,000 so important? It's because they are commissioned with the greatest missions in the last days: to prepare the world for Jesus' return.

Yet many are bewildered by obvious questions; who exactly is this holy army and who will fill its ranks before the end?

Though it may not be critical to one's salvation to understand all the specific details of this prophetic subject, the study of God's Word is always accompanied with great blessings. I should add that when we study these themes, we venture onto holy ground. Though I share this topic with great confidence, I also realize and respect that others may have a different understanding. So I would encourage you to pause now and pray for understanding as we begin this adventure in mining for truth.

WHERE TO BEGIN?

To really understand the identity of the 144,000, we must first consider them from the two primary pillars of truth in Scripture that describe this grand assembly. The first passage is found in Revelation 7:1-4: *"After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then 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 granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, 'Do not harm the*

earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.' And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed" (NKJV).

The Scripture then explains that this distinctive sealed body is comprised of exactly 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel, which are: Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin. It should be carefully noted here that this listing of tribes is unique, because it is the only time in Scripture that the catalog of tribes appears in this particular order (but more on that later).

The second main passage comes in Revelation 14:1-5: *"Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders;*

and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God."

THE SAMARITANS & TEN LOST TRIBES

Perhaps our first concern should be to determine whether or not this 144,000 are actually 12,000 literal Israelites from their 12 respective tribes. Even though this belief is common in many Christian circles, after a closer look it becomes obvious that this is simply impossible. Even a casual look at the Old Testament reveals this important clue. Because the 10 northern tribes gave themselves completely over to idolatry, God allowed the Assyrians to carry them away in 722 B.C. *"In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes"* (2 Kings 17:6).

When the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were later carried off to Babylon, after spending 70 years in captivity, thousands returned. But with the 10 tribes, history never records any mass exodus from Assyria back to Israel. Instead, the King of Assyria transplanted an assortment of people from pagan nations in the land of Israel in the region of Samaria.

"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 King of Assyria did send one Hebrew priest back from Assyria to teach these transplanted pagans about the God of Israel, but not from the exiled 10 tribes (2 Kings 17:27). They eventually became known as the infamous Samaritans. As is evident even in the New Testament, the Jews detested this group. Why? They were no longer pure Israelites in blood or religion. History also records that long before the time of Jesus, the 10 exiled tribes intermarried with the Assyrians, therefore losing their

distinct identity. Today, a genealogist would be hard pressed to find even one vaguely pure descendant from the tribe of Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, or Simeon—much less 12,000! In fact, because these tribes were so thoroughly scattered around the world and assimilated by their host nations, it is very possible even you have traces of Abraham in your bloodline!

“And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries” (Ezekiel 12:15).

WHO IS A TRUE ISRAELITE?

On the surface, it still might be easy enough for one to believe that the 144,000 are from the 12 tribes listed in Revelation 7. But a closer reading quickly reveals that from the time of Jesus, most of the prophecies speaking of Israel are focused on the children of faith—or spiritual Israel regardless of whether they were Jew or Gentile by blood. Here is a small sample of the many texts that establish this truth. *“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly;*

and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit” (Romans 2:28, 29). *“And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”* (Galatians 3:29). The Lord told the ancient Israelites, *“And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”* (Exodus 19:6). Notice in the New Testament, Peter applies that title to spiritual Israel or the church: *“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people”* (1 Peter 2:9). James gives one of the most convincing Scriptures that proves that the Apostles viewed the tribes in a spiritual sense. *“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad, greetings”* (James 1:1). The content of James’ letter is clearly addressed to Christians, and yet he plainly refers to them as spiritual Jews from 12 spiritual tribes.

HOW MANY TRIBES?

I do not want to be tedious—but to really understand this subject, a short lesson on the Old Testament tribes might be necessary for clarity. In reality, did you know there were actually 13 tribes—that’s right! You see, the 12 original tribes all came from the 12 sons of Jacob, whom the Lord had

later renamed Israel. When Joseph’s older brothers sold him into slavery, it was the beginning of a long and painful separation from his family. After reuniting with his father, Jacob promised to compensate for Joseph’s years of separation by adopting two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, as his own to be numbered with his sons in place of Joseph. *“And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine”* (Genesis 48:5).

Let’s do the math. When Joseph’s two sons were counted as tribes in the place of their father, you now have 13 tribes, technically. One reason that you still continue to hear of only 12 tribes through the Bible is because after the Levites were chosen to be the priests for all Israel, they were excluded from receiving any specific territory as inheritance. Instead, they were to defuse among all the tribes as teachers and priests. *“Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, nor take a census of them among the children of Israel”* (Numbers 1:49).

As a connected point of interest, we can also ask how many were seated at

the Last Supper. The answer is 13—the 12 Apostles, and Jesus sat among them as their high priest. During the Passover, 13 tribes presented themselves: the “regular” 12 tribes and then the Levites serving as the priests.

Also, if it were important to the Lord to only use the 12 different literal tribes in equal numbers to comprise the 144,000, wouldn’t we expect Jesus to choose His Apostles in a similar fashion? But it does not appear to have mattered to Jesus that his Apostles were from the 12 different tribes of Israel, for most of His Apostles were from the tribe of Judah. The exceptions are Matthew-Levi, who was probably from the tribe Levi, and Paul, who was from the tribe of Benjamin (Romans 11:1).

Additionally, the 12 tribes in the Old Testament were very unequal in population size. Judah was very large, while Benjamin was very small. Indeed, God divided the Promised Land amongst the tribe according to the proportion of their population needs. Yet with the 144,000, it’s exactly 12,000 per tribe across the board. This is another strong clue that it is not speaking of the literal tribes of Israel.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

So why did God go to the trouble of specifically naming the 12 tribes when listing the 144,000? This is one of the first and most compelling clues that there must be some hidden spiritual meaning to the tribes listed in Revelation 7. Remember, this is the only time the sons of Jacob are arranged in this order—and even more specifically, the way in which they are ordered says something too. First, Joseph and Levi are included, while Ephraim and Dan are left out. Why? Well perhaps it is because the names are symbolic in meaning, and prophecies state: “*Dan shall be a serpent by the way, A viper by the path*” (Genesis 49:17). It may also be because the name Dan means “judge,” and the 144,000 are a special group who are sealed and vindicated at this point. As far as Ephraim, the Bible declares, “*Ephraim is joined to idols, Let him alone*” (Hosea 4:17). And curiously, Reuben, the firstborn, is listed as second, while Judah, the fourth offspring, is listed as the first!

So the order of these names makes no sense unless we allow the names to speak for themselves; then, perhaps, we will see God is trying to communicate a special message to us through these names.

When Jews named their babies, the names nearly always had some definite meaning that depicted some characteristic of the child or event connected with their birth. Notice how the wives of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah proclaimed a statement defining the meaning of the son's names as they were born. In Genesis 29:32–35, we read, “*So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, ‘The LORD has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me.’ Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said, ‘Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also.’ And she called his name Simeon. She conceived again and bore a son, and said, ‘Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.’ Therefore his name was called Levi. And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, ‘Now I will praise the LORD.’ Therefore she called his name Judah.*” As you continue reading the narrative of each of the births of Jacob's sons, Rachel and Leah made similar prophetic statements for all 12 of the sons regarding the meanings of their names.

Here are the names of the tribes listed for the 144,000, in the order in which Revelation 7 lists them, and their corresponding Hebrew meanings as found in Scripture:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Judah means | “I will praise the Lord” |
| 2. Reuben means | “He has looked on me” |
| 3. Gad means | “Given good fortune” |
| 4. Asher means | “Happy am I” |
| 5. Naphtali means | “My wrestling” |
| 6. Manasseh means | “Making me to forget” |
| 7. Simeon means | “God hears me” |
| 8. Levi means | “Joined to me” |
| 9. Issachar means | “Purchased me” |
| 10. Zebulun means | “Dwelling” |
| 11. Joseph means | “Will add to me” |
| 12. Benjamin means | “Son of His right hand” |

Now here is the amazing part. Notice what happens when you line up these meanings of the names according to the way they appear as listed in Revelation. It forms a very remarkable statement declaring how God saves the church as His bride!

“I will praise the Lord *for* he has looked on me *and* granted good fortune. I am happy

because of my wrestling, God is making me to forget. God hears me and is joined to me. He has purchased me a dwelling and will add to me, the Son of His right hand.” (As in Scripture, the words in italics are supplied for flow of thought.)

These names presented in this order describe a brief story summarizing the church's struggle, redemption, victory, and ultimate marriage to the Lamb. It seems evident that this is a special message of encouragement for those who are in the Church, believers in Christ, and not necessarily just Jews.

EXACTLY HOW MANY?

Now we can address the next big question: Is the figure 144,000 a literal number? Perhaps I should answer that question with another question: Are the other numbers in Revelation literal or just spiritual?

For instance, will there be 12 gates and 12 foundations? Are there really 12 different kinds of fruit on the tree of life? Yes, of course! There are many prophetic time periods given in Revelation, but the numbers are not just nebulous numerical symbols—they are precise measures of time.

The numbers would be useless for reckoning if they were merely symbolic. All of our understandings about the dimensions of the New Jerusalem are based on the assumption that these numbers have real literal value.

However, please keep in mind that though the number of the 144,000 might be exact, most people in the world might never know who they are or take a census. When Jesus walked the earth in Israel, it was no problem to count 12 literal Apostles following the Messiah in the Holy Land. But the 144,000 in the last days are spiritual Jews—scattered across the circle of the earth leading in a magnificent revival. But they will not each be wearing a marathon running number.

Now you might be thinking, “How can you say that the names are symbolic and the number is literal?” Simple, Jesus did. It doesn’t seem to matter to the Lord what tribes the 12 Apostles sprang from, but it did matter that there were 12 of them. Also remember that while most of the numbers in Revelation depict a real value, all the proper names in Revelation are symbols (e.g., the Lamb, the Dragon, the Lion, Balaam, Jezebel, etc.).

THE NUMBER 12

In fact, the secret key to unlocking the mystery behind the 144,000 might be in the number itself. You mathematicians are going to love this section! Twelve is a perfect number for building, because it is one of the most versatile numbers. It can be evenly divided by 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and of course 12.

AN AMAZING FACT: The reason there are 12 inches in the standard foot measurement is because the foot used to be based on the length of the English king’s physical foot, and that measurement constantly changed through various kings. This is also why a 12-inch measuring stick was called a “ruler.”

The number 12 in the Bible almost always represents leadership of the church. There were 12 patriarchs from Shem to Jacob. In addition, 12 spies led the way to the Promised Land, and there are 12 judges from Joshua to Samuel. In Scripture, the number 12 is also often associated with God’s church, which is typically symbolized by a woman.

There is also an interesting story in the Gospels concerning the number 12. In just one hour, Jesus healed two females

with miracles associated with the number 12. First, He healed a woman who had been bleeding 12 years. From that event, He went directly to resurrect a 12-year-old girl. The first woman represented the Old Testament church with a continual flow of sacrificial blood. The young girl symbolized the New Testament church that came to life after a resurrection. They both touched Jesus that day and were made whole (Mark 5:25–42).

In Revelation 12:1, we read, “*Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.*” God’s church pictured here has 12 stars above the head; these stars are a symbol of the inspired leadership of the church (1 Corinthians 11:10).

Another interesting clue related to the 144,000 is found in 1 Chronicles 27:1–15. Here we read that David’s army was comprised of 12 sets of 24,000, totaling 288,000. That’s two teams of 144,000.

First Chronicles 25 tells of a literal group of “24 times 12” Levites that were to lead in praise music of the temple—that’s two times 144, which equals 288. And

of course, you have two times 12, or 24 elders on thrones around the throne of God in Revelation 4:4. This represents the 12 patriarchs in the Old Testament and 12 Apostles in the New Testament!

In Matthew 19:28, Jesus says to the Apostles, “*You who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*” He then makes a promise to those who will come out of the last age of the church known as Laodicea, which means “*judging the people.*” “*To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne*” (Revelation 3:21). This is because the 144,000 live during the last age of the church and share the experiences of the Apostles.

In heaven, it seems that at times there will be an expanding square formation around God’s throne. First, the Lord Himself sits on His throne. Outside His throne sit the four creatures, then the 24 elders in a square around them (six to each side), and then finally the 144,000 in a perfect square (36,000 to each side). The great multitudes of saved are the last group that surrounds the 144,000. The perfect and symmetrical math

of this assembly is far beyond the fisherman who wrote Revelation.

As a final point of interest for our math majors, did you also know that in addition to the 144,000 being calculated as 12 times 12,000, it can also be achieved this way: $12 \times 12 \times 10^3$ (or 10 cubed). In this way, you have God's kingdom number (12), God's number of completeness or wholeness (10, as in commandments), and God's number (3 as in Godhead). I think this might be another fascinating example of God's perfect design.

PRECIOUS STONES

Another reason for the number 12 is found in the breastplate worn by the high priest. It bears 12 different precious stones. This reminds us that God's church is made up of many different personalities all near to the heart of our High Priest. The Bible reveals the diverse temperaments that make up the 12 patriarchs and Apostles. God chooses leaders of every type, that He might use them to reach all kinds.

Exodus 39:14 says, *"There were twelve stones according to the names of the sons of Israel: according to their names, engraved*

like a signet, each one with its own name according to the twelve tribes." These stones also appear identical to the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem, as described in Revelation 21:12, 14: *"Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."*

For these reasons and others, I believe the number 144,000 is a precise figure. Just as there were 12 literal tribes in the Old Testament and exactly 12 Apostles in the New Testament, and as the walls are truly 144 cubits thick, and as there will be exactly 144 different kinds of fruit on the tree of life each year (12 different fruits each month), there will be 12 times 12,000 apostles in the last days.

So let's assemble the clues we have uncovered. In Scripture, the numbers 12 and 144,000 are associated with Judges, David's army, praising priests, and precious stones. In the same way, the 144,000 are an army of judges and priests that Jesus values as precious stones.

ONLY 144,000 SAVED?

But then the natural thought is, "If this number is not just a symbol, will the 144,000 be the only ones saved in the last days—and if only 144,000 will be saved, what are my chances?" Let's do some simple figuring. If there are 6 billion people in the world when Jesus comes (roughly today's global population), that would mean that 1 in 41,666 would be saved. It is still much better than the odds offered by most state lotteries, but it still offers a pretty slim hope of salvation!

But praise God! Though the 144,000 might be an exact number, the Bible does not teach they are to be the only ones saved in the last days. If we read on in Revelation 7:9, immediately after the listing of the tribes and the 144,000, the prophet sees *"a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands."*

Then in verse 13, one of the 24 elders asks John, *"Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"* In verse 14, he answers his own question: *"These are they*

which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Now the Bible speaks of two great tribulations in prophecy. One was during the Papal persecution of the Dark Ages when millions of Christians were slain. But the primary "great tribulation" must refer to the time just before Christ's second coming as referred to in Daniel 12:1, 2. *"And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt."*

Evidently, this great multitude who come out of great tribulation are converted under the preaching and influence of the 144,000. Shortly after Pentecost, the 12 Apostles reached a great multitude, then there followed a great persecution (Acts 8:1). Shortly after the Holy Spirit is poured out on the 144,000, a great multitude will be converted and then comes the great tribulation.

THE SEAL OF GOD & THE FATHER'S NAME

One of the most important and prominent characteristics of the 144,000 is the special seal and name they bear in their foreheads (Revelation 7:1–4; 14:1). Shortly after this special seal is secured, the great tribulation and seven last plagues blast onto an unrepentant world. Typically in Revelation, when we think of someone being marked or sealed, it conveys a very negative connotation. In reality, all the saved and lost in Revelation bear some form of mark or seal in their foreheads or hands.

Ezekiel 9 records a vision where only the saved are marked. The criteria that allow them to receive this saving mark is that they are grieved by sin and long for purity. *“And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof”* (Ezekiel 9:4). Then, only those who have this mysterious mark are spared the awful plague of slaughter that follows.

So what is this seal found on the foreheads of the 144,000? Principally, it must be the Holy Spirit *“in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit*

of promise” (Ephesians 1:13). *“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”* (Ephesians 4:30). Obviously, whoever has the “good” mark has the Spirit of God. But beyond the Holy Spirit, there is something more distinctive about this unique seal. We also see that the seal of God involves the law of God. As Isaiah 8:16 records, *“Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.”* This also should not surprise us, because three times in Revelation the saved are identified as a people who keep the commandments of God (Revelation 12:17; 14:12; 22:14).

That’s also why Moses urged God’s people to have God’s law in their hands and their foreheads three different times. *“And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes (forehead), that the Lord’s law may be in thy mouth”* (Exodus 13:9; Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:18).

But this seal or sign with the Father’s name goes even deeper.

IT’S ABOUT TIME

All government seals contain three common elements: the name, title, and territory of the ruler. For example,

Daniel 1:1 reads, *“Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.”* You have the name, the official title, and his area of dominion. Within the 10 Commandments, only one has all the characteristics of a seal—the fourth. There we read, *“For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them”* (Exodus 20:11). Here in the Sabbath commandment, we have God’s name (the Lord or Jehovah), His title or office (the Creator), and His territory (the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them). The Sabbath Commandment is the only one that is repeatedly referred to as a seal or sign of God’s creative, redeeming power.

For instance, Exodus 31:16,17 says, *“Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”*

Furthermore, *“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). *“And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between*

me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God” (Ezekiel 20:20).

Keep in mind, the Bible never calls it the Sabbath of the Jews. He calls the Sabbath *“My Holy Day”* (Isaiah 58:13) and *“the sabbath of the LORD thy God”* (Exodus 20:10). We all know that every real love relationship needs a regular investment of quality time. Throughout history, the devil has tried to erode the relationship of God’s people with their Creator by leading them to neglect or ignore His holy Sabbath. Every Sabbath, the 144,000 demonstrate that God has His seal and name in their minds, because they recognize all their time belongs to God. Jesus said, *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28). Keeping the Sabbath demonstrates that they are resting from their own works and are trusting in Jesus.

SO WHO ARE THEY?

At the time of Jesus’ first coming, He chose 12 men to reach Israel. *“These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: ‘Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep*

of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:5,6). With the outpouring of the former rain, the 12 Apostles reached thousands during the Pentecost revival. At first they were all Jews. “*And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven*” (Acts 2:5).

And at the time of Jesus’ second coming, from the outpouring of the latter rain (the Holy Spirit), 12 times 12,000 will reach a great multitude around the world. The great multitude is converted under the influence and preaching of the 144,000!

In Joel 2:28, 29, we read, “*And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.*”

Please keep in mind that the 144,000 are not the only ones that Jesus is using to preach in the last days—just as the 12 Apostles were only part of the 120 in the upper room that led out in the Pentecost revival (Acts 1:15). Not only did Jesus send out the 12 to preach in Israel, but another time He sent out a team

of 70 to preach (Luke 10:1). The 144,000 are the spiritual leaders in this revival and not the only ones preaching.

For further clarification, let’s look at some of the many parallels between the 12 Apostles and the 144,000:

12 APOSTLES

- Literal Jews
- Time of first coming
- Number is complete and they are sealed with the Spirit (*Acts 1, 2*)
- Work with former rain of Holy Spirit (*Acts 2:17*)
- Firstfruits of Jesus’ first coming (*James 1:18*)
- Thousands of Jews converted (*Acts 2:5*)
- Have Jesus’ Name (*Acts 3:16*)
- No Guile (*John 1:47*)
- Follow Jesus (*John 1:37*)
- Lead thousands in loudly proclaiming Jesus King with palms (*Matt. 21:1–9*)
- Work before a great persecution in Jerusalem (*Acts 8:1*)
- The 12 sing a song with Jesus (*Matt. 26:30*)
- Rested on the Sabbath (*Luke 23:56; Acts 17:2*)

- Not defiled with leaven of Pharisees (*Mark 7:1–15*)
- Will sit on twelve thrones, judging (*Matt. 19:28*)

144,000 APOSTLES

- Spiritual Israel (*Gal. 3:29*)
- Time of second coming (*Rev. 7*)
- Number is complete, then sealed (*Rev. 7; Eph. 4:30*)
- Work with latter rain of Holy Spirit (*Joel 2:28*)
- Firstfruits of second coming (*Rev. 14:4*)
- Great multitude converted (*Rev. 7:9*)
- Have Father’s name (*Rev. 14:1*)
- No guile (*Rev. 14:5*)
- Follow the Lamb (*Rev. 14:4*)
- Lead great multitude in loudly proclaiming Jesus King with palms (*Rev. 7:9, 10*)
- Work before a great persecution in the world (*Dan. 12:1*)
- The 144,000 sing a song with the Lamb (*Rev. 14:3*)
- Have the Sabbath seal of God and Father’s name (*Rev. 7:1; 14:1*)
- Not defiled with doctrines of Babylon (*Rev. 14:4*)
- Will sit with Jesus on 144,000 thrones, judging (*Rev. 20:4*)

The most important factor is the Bible’s emphasis on the holy condition of this group. It is a reminder to all that Jesus is calling each one of us to be holy. “*These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes*” (Revelation 14:4).

If we would follow the Lamb wherever He goes to heaven, we must first follow Him all the way here now. And then we can sing together the song of Moses and the Lamb.

CONCLUSION

Just before the Lord poured out the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, something interesting happens in Acts 1. The assembled disciples watch Jesus ascend and listen as the angels promise Jesus’ return (verse 11). Then they pray and put aside their differences in the upper room (verse 13). One of the 12 Apostles, Judas, was dead and he needed to be replaced to restore the number 12 (verse 26). Then as soon as the number is complete, the Holy Spirit is poured out.

Jesus blessed, trained, and filled with the Spirit 12 people to lead His disciples in reaching the house of Israel for His first coming. He will bless and choose 12 times

12,000 to lead His church in reaching the world for His second coming. Then there will be a great multitude converted as a result of their preaching.

—DOUG BATCHELOR



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