

THE HEAVENLY CALLING

consider . . . Jesus

Heb. 3:1

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The Time of the End

Part XXV

The One Hundred Forty-Four Thousand

And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

And I heard a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts [four living creatures], and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits [a first fruit] unto God and to the Lamb.

And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters (Rev. 14:1-7).

The individuals who will proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to the ends of the earth during the Tribulation, spoken of by Christ in Matt. 24:14 and Mark 13:10, are revealed in the Book of Revelation to be 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 7:1-8; 14:1-5). And, in order to provide additional information, these Jewish evangels are presented after another fashion in chapters eleven and twelve of this book — as “a man child” at the time Israel brings the 144,000 forth (gives birth [12:2, 4, 5]), and as “the remnant of her [Israel's] seed” following the nation bringing the 144,000 forth (11:13; 12:17).

(Ref. Part XX in this series for more information on *the man-child* and *the remnant* in chs. 11, 12, along with how these are descriptive references to the 144,000 in chs. 7, 14.)

Thus, information in each of these four chapters (chs. 7, 11, 12, 14) presents different things about the 144,000.

Chapter seven presents the sealing of the 144,000 (vv. 1-8), along with the results of their ministry — “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations...” (vv. 9-17).

Chapter eleven drops back behind chapter seven in time and presents the apparent means by which the 144,000 will hear the message and be saved — through the ministry of the two witnesses (vv. 3, 13).

Chapter twelve continues from chapter eleven, providing additional information about the 144,000. This chapter presents their being brought forth as the man-child after all 144,000 have

been saved, the timing surrounding their being saved (progressively during the first half of the Tribulation, with the complete number [all 144,000] brought forth, saved, by the middle of the Tribulation), and that which will occur once the 144,000 have been brought forth (vv. 1-17).

(Note that the 144,000 couldn't be saved near the end of the dispensation in which God deals with the Church, prior to the Tribulation. If saved during the present dispensation, they would be part of *the one new man* “in Christ” and would be removed at the time of the rapture, preceding the Tribulation. Thus, they will have to be saved following the removal of Christians from the earth.)

Chapter fourteen then presents additional commentary concerning the 144,000 for that previously revealed in chapters seven, eleven, and twelve (vv. 1-7).

When information in all four of these chapters is studied together, allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture, a developing word picture can be seen concerning the place which these Jewish evangels will occupy in events throughout the entire seven years of the Tribulation.

As previously seen, the 144,000, referred to in chapter twelve as “a man child” and “the remnant” (vv. 5, 17), are presented in this chapter as being brought forth in a progressive manner throughout the first three and one-half years of the Tribulation. The matter is presented as the development and subsequent birth of a child, with “Israel” seen as *the mother* and “the 144,000” seen as *the child* (vv. 2, 4, 5).

The gestation period for child-birth in the human realm is nine months, but for the man-child it will be three and one-

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half years. Development of the child in the mother's womb (Israel's womb), as it were, will progressively occur over a three and one-half-year period as individuals are saved and added to the number throughout this time. Then, near the middle of the Tribulation when the number is complete, Israel will give birth to *the man-child, the 144,000* (Rev. 12:2, 4, 5; cf. Matt. 24:8; Mark 13:8).

The 144,000 are referred in Rev. 11:13 as "the remnant" in connection with events occurring immediately following the death, resurrection, and ascension of the two witnesses (vv. 7-13). And this "remnant" is seen again in the next chapter (12:17), identifying *the man-child* seen earlier in the chapter (v. 5).

(The word "remnant" in both Rev. 11:13 and 12:17 is a translation of the Greek word *loipos*, which means "remaining ones." The word *loipos* could not refer to the Jewish people in the land as a whole. The nation will exist in *unbelief* at this time, and those remaining, the remnant, though afraid like the rest of the Jewish people, will give "glory to the God of heaven." Doing this would be completely out of place for all of the unbelieving Jewish people still in the land.

The only Jewish people in the land at this time that this could possibly be referring to would be those seen in Rev. 12:17—"the remnant of her seed [Israel's seed], which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." And this "remnant" in Rev. 12:17, referred to as *Israel's seed*, is the identification which the chapter provides for *Israel's seed* back in v. 5, the "man child" [easily identified as the 144,000 in chs. 7, 14, for they will be the ones having *the testimony of Jesus Christ* and will be the only ones on earth at this time who could fit the description of *the man-child, the remnant*, in ch. 12].)

Following the order of events occurring in the middle of the Tribulation, the Beast (who will, at this time, be the world ruler, the crowned seventh head) will slay the two witnesses (11:7). The two witnesses' bodies will then lie unburied in the streets of Jerusalem for three and one-half days, while the world rejoices. And this rejoicing will apparently include the unbelieving

Jewish people in the land, *those guilty of the blood of the prophets, along with others sent unto them, including God's Son* (Matt. 21:33-39; 23:37; Luke 13:33, 34).

Then, after three and one-half days, a day for each year of their ministry, the two witnesses will be raised from the dead and ascend to heaven. And it will apparently be at this point that the Beast breaks his covenant with the Jewish people and enters into the Temple, declaring himself to be God (Dan. 11:31; Matt. 24:15; II Thess. 2:3, 4). At this time he will show his true colors, turn against the Jewish people, and seek to destroy them from off the face of the earth.

The first part of Rev. 11:13 (describing events occurring immediately following the ascension of the two witnesses), in the light of related Scripture, apparently has to do with the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jewish people (events which occur at this time). Then attention is called to "the remnant" — individuals who are afraid but still place first things first and give "glory to the God of heaven."

Things will happen so fast at this time that the Jewish people in Jerusalem and Judaea are told to run for their lives, without even taking time to enter into their homes to take necessities with them. A segment of the Jewish people will escape to a specially prepared place in the wilderness or in the mountainous terrain, apparently in Moab (Isa. 16:4). And the remainder will either be slain, sold as slaves to the Gentiles, or driven out among the nations of the earth (Joel 3:6, 7; Matt. 24:16-21; Luke 21:20-24; Rev. 12:6, 14).

Jerusalem and the Temple will be destroyed at this time, with the nation of Israel in the Middle East, as the world knows it today, ceasing to exist (cf. Dan. 9:26; Luke 21:22-24; Rev. 11:2). And the Jewish people will not again have a national identity in this respect until Christ returns, removes the Jewish people from the nations, and reestablishes them back in the land Himself (Ezek. 37:21-28; 39:25-29; Matt. 24:30, 31).

The present nation of Israel in the Middle East — destined to be uprooted, with the Jews comprising this nation being driven back out among the Gentile nations — *includes only a part of world*

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Jewry, was brought into existence through man's efforts in a Zionist movement, and is a restoration of the Jewish people in unbelief.

But when Christ returns, the restoration of the Jewish people back to the land will occur *through Divine activity. Christ will send His angels out to regather all of the Jews from the nations of the earth (Matt. 24:31), and He will then restore them to the land in belief.*

The latter, not the former, is that prophesied in Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets concerning Israel's national restoration.

(For a more complete discussion of things in Revelation chapters eleven and twelve, refer to Parts XIX and XX of this series. Also refer to Appendix I, "The Death of the High Priest," in the editor's book, ESTHER.)

The 144,000, Removed from and Returned to the Earth

Revelation chapter fourteen provides the necessary information to explain things surrounding the removal of the man-child from the earth in Rev. 12:5. The man-child, the 144,000, is seen in Rev. 14:1 in Christ's presence on Mt. Zion in heaven. And further down in the chapter the 144,000 are said to have been "redeemed from the earth" (v. 3), and "redeemed from among men" (v. 4). Then they are referred to as "the firstfruits [*lit.*, 'a first fruit'] unto God and to the Lamb" (v. 4b).

The 144,000 will comprise *a first fruit of the nation*. During the last half of the Tribulation they, as a first fruit of the nation, will fulfill one of God's purposes for calling the nation into existence. They will be God's witness to the ends of the earth during this time (I Kings

8:54-61; Isa. 43:8, 9).

Then, following the Tribulation, God will deal with *the main harvest — the nation as a whole, the nation which brought forth the 144,000*. Following the Tribulation, the entire nation will be brought forth (saved through the personal appearance of their Messiah to them). The entire nation will be brought forth “in one day” (Isa. 66:8). And, as a first fruit of the nation will have carried God’s message worldwide to the Gentile nations during the last half of the Tribulation, the entire Jewish nation will carry God’s message worldwide to the Gentile nations during the millennium.

(Israel will bring forth a first fruit of the nation, the 144,000. But how will the entire nation be brought forth?)

In Isa. 66:7, 8 Israel is seen in *travail* relative to her own bringing forth. And Israel being brought forth is in connection with “the land [the land of Israel]” also being brought forth [v. 8, NASB]. Then, this concept of “the land” being brought forth at this time is seen in a larger sense in Rom. 8:19-22 as *the entire material creation groaning and travailing together in pain, awaiting deliverance*.

In Isaiah, the deliverance of Israel and her land is seen in connection with *the nation bringing herself forth*:

“As soon as Zion travailed [contextually, a reference to the nation], she also brought forth her sons” [Isa. 66:8b, NASB].

And the reference to “sons” being brought forth is also seen in the *travailing and deliverance in Romans chapter eight*. The time when the creation will be delivered from the present groaning and travailing together in pain is the time of “the manifestation of the sons of God” [v. 19]. This chapter in Romans deals more specifically with the adoption of Christians as firstborn sons and their being manifested as such. Israel though has already been adopted and is presently God’s firstborn son [cf. Ex. 4:22, 23], though an unbelieving son. And Israel must be brought forth as well [actually first and foremost].

The creation will be delivered from its present groaning and travailing in pain only when the complete contingent of the Sons of God [Christ, Israel, and the Church following the adoption] have been manifested for all to see.)

The timing of the removal of the 144,000 from the earth is seen in both chapters eleven and twelve. In chapter eleven, they

are still seen on earth *at the time* Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed (or, are in the process of being destroyed), with the Jewish people fleeing for their lives *at this time* (v. 13; cf. Matt. 24:15ff; Luke 21:20ff). In chapter twelve, they are seen being removed from the earth *following* the casting of Satan and his angels out of heaven and *at the time* that the Jewish people in Jerusalem and Judaea flee for their lives (vv. 4-6). Thus, Satan and his angels will be cast out of the heavens *before the middle of the Tribulation, apparently immediately before*. And the 144,000, the man-child, will be removed from the earth *after the middle of the Tribulation, apparently immediately after*.

(Satan and his angels will be cast out of the heavens after all seven heads of the Beast have been crowned. Note, in Rev. 12:3, all seven heads are seen wearing *diadems* at this time [a “diadem” is a monarch’s crown, a crown worn by one holding the sceptre (ref. Parts VII and XII of this series)]. And the seventh head [the final world ruler, the final king of Babylon, Antichrist] will not rise to the position he will aspire [worldwide power and dominion], wearing a *diadem*, until near the middle of the Tribulation.

Thus, Satan and his angels being cast out of the heavens onto the earth will have to occur very close to the middle of the Tribulation. And the 144,000 will have to be removed from the earth at the same time that the remainder of the Jewish people in the land flee for their lives, for they are placed together in Rev. 12:5, 6 [with the escape of the 144,000 from the wrath of Satan and Antichrist being *into the heavens*, and the escape of other Jews in the land being out *into different parts of the earth*.])

1) The 144,000 Removed from the Earth

As previously seen, the man-child — the 144,000 — will be removed from the earth, following birth, to escape Satan’s wrath. And the removal of the man-child would parallel another removal of Israel’s Seed over 2,000 years before — Christ’s removal from the land following His birth, to escape Herod’s wrath.

Israel brought Christ forth through a Jewish woman. Shortly after His birth, He was taken into Egypt to escape Herod’s death decree on all the children in and around Bethlehem, two years old

and under. He was taken to a location which was outside Herod’s jurisdiction. Then, at a later time, Christ was taken back into the land to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to Israel for about three and one-half years (Matt. 2:13-21).

Israel will bring forth the man-child through a means other than natural childbirth. Nonetheless, the matter is likened in Scripture to natural childbirth (Rev. 12:2, 4, 5). Shortly after the 144,000 have been brought forth, they will be removed from Satan’s and Antichrist’s jurisdiction, into the heavens (Satan, immediately prior to this, will have been cast out of heaven and will no longer have jurisdiction in the heavens [Rev. 12:4, 7-12]). Then, at a later time, the 144,000 will be sent back to the earth to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to the Gentiles worldwide for about three and one-half years (Matt. 24:14).

And there will likely be another reason for their being removed into the heavens at this time. Unlike Christ during His earthly ministry, they will need training for the ministry which they are to carry out.

Christ, in this respect, personally appeared to and taught Paul following his conversion (Gal. 1:11, 12; Eph. 3:1-3). Paul had previously sat “at the feet of Gamaliel” and had been “taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers” (Acts 22:3). But Christ still had to take Paul, who was quite knowledgeable in the Scriptures, and teach him the message which he was to proclaim throughout the Gentile world.

And the 144,000, though many of them will have possibly been taught by the two witnesses, will likely experience the same thing Paul experienced following his conversion, though in heaven instead of on earth. During the time spent in heaven, the 144,000 will likely be taught the message which they are to proclaim throughout the Gentile world by Christ Himself.

2) The 144,000 Returned to the Earth

As Christ was taken back into the land to later proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to Israel for about three and one-half years, the 144,000 will be

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sent back to the earth to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to the Gentiles worldwide for about the same length of time.

The 144,000 being sent back to the earth to proclaim this message — though not stated in so many words in Scripture — is inferred several different ways. The proclamation of this message is seen in Matt. 24:14 and Mark 13:10 as “the gospel of the kingdom” being proclaimed among all nations during what is evidently a time extending to the end of the Tribulation, and it is seen in Rev. 12:17 as individuals possessing “the testimony of Jesus Christ” during the last half of the Tribulation.

Then, the proclamation of this message is connected in a direct manner with the 144,000 in Revelation chapter fourteen. In this chapter, the connection of the 144,000 with the message to be proclaimed is seen after a fashion in keeping with how the Book of Revelation is structured.

Immediately after the 144,000 have been introduced (vv. 1-5), the text reads:

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (vv. 6, 7).

That proclaimed by the angel in verse seven is not the content of “the everlasting gospel” in verse six. Rather, this is simply *an announcement* to those dwelling on the earth by the angel appearing with this gospel.

Angelic activity is seen at every turn throughout the Book of Revelation. And, in the light of Israel’s calling, the

placement of this angel with a message to those on the earth — “to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” — immediately after the verses dealing with the 144,000 (who are about to carry a message to the same people on earth), can be understood only *one way*.

Israel is the nation which God called into existence to deliver His message to the Gentile nations throughout the earth, not angels. And, in view of Israel’s calling, the reference in these two verses, particularly contextually, *cannot possibly* have to do with an angel carrying the gospel message worldwide to all the nations on the earth. Rather, *it can only have to do with an angel appearing with the message which the 144,000, seen in the immediately preceding verses, are to proclaim.*

And the latter, along with Rev. 12:17 (viewed in the overall structure of the chapter) and the Olivet Discourse references (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10), *would necessitate the 144,000 being returned to the earth to proclaim this message.*

(Note that the message which the 144,000 will proclaim is referred to as the “gospel of the kingdom” in Matt. 24:14. In this respect, the word “everlasting” in Rev. 14:6 [Gk. *aionios*] could probably be better translated “age-lasting.” The Messianic kingdom is in view in Matt. 24:14, and this kingdom comprises *one age* — the seventh day [foreshadowed by the Sabbath in Gen. 2:2, 3, following six days of restorative work], the seventh one-thousand-year period in the septenary structure of time, the coming Sabbath of rest in Heb. 4:9 [cf. v. 4].

Aionios is used in the Greek text of the N.T. to refer to “a long period of time,” often “an age.” The “long period of time” can be understood as “eternal” only if the context so designates [for a more exhaustive discussion of *aionios*, refer to pp. 43, 44 in the editor’s book, THE MOST HIGH RULETH.]

The Ministry of the 144,000

The ministry of the 144,000 will reach

to the ends of the earth over the short space of about three and one-half years — to “all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” (Rev. 7:9). Many reached with the message will be *slain* for their faith, with many others, in the words of Matt. 24:13, *enduring “unto the end”* (the end of the Tribulation) and *being “saved”* (being physically delivered out of the Tribulation).

Those slain for their faith during this time are described in Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 20:4. Their state during the time between death and the end of the Tribulation is seen in the former two references (6:9-11; 7:9-17), and that which awaits them during the Messianic Era is seen in the latter reference (20:4).

Following death they are seen in Christ’s presence in heaven, and *during the Messianic Era* they are seen occupying regal positions with Christ in His kingdom.

Those enduring until the end and being delivered out of the Tribulation are seen in Matt. 25:31-46. And, as seen among those slain during the Tribulation in the larger scope of the passage in Revelation chapter twenty (vv. 4-6), both *faithful* and *unfaithful* appear among the saved who endure until the end and come out of the Tribulation alive in Matt. 25:31-46.

Judgment of these individuals who come out of the Tribulation alive, as with those slain in Rev. 20:4-6, occurs when Christ returns. And, exactly as in Rev. 20:4-6, the faithful will be allowed to enter into the kingdom, but the unfaithful will be turned away; and the same metaphorical picture of a burning in relation to the unfaithful, as seen in John 15:6 and Heb. 6:8, is seen in both judgments (in both Matt. 25:31-46 and Rev. 20:4-6).

(For more information on Matt. 25:31-46, refer to pp. 43-45 in the editor’s book, THE MOST HIGH RULETH.)

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