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The Hundred and Forty Four Thousand and the Seal of the Living God

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THE HUNDRED AND FORTY FOUR THOUSAND

The information given in the book of Revelation itself, both as to the 144,000 and the seal of God, is very clear and definite. There are two things said of the 144,000 that at once settle both their indentity and the time of their manifestation. They are declared to be taken out of "all the tribes of the children of Israel." They are further said to be "the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb." Ch. 7:4; 14:4.

The first of these scriptures settles their identity, and the second the time of their manifestation.

FROM AMONG ISRAEL

The statement that the 144,000 were taken out of Israel is intended to be taken literally. The same chapter describes a further ingathering from among the Gentile nations. See v. 9. The designed contrast is evident. The 144,000 were taken from "all the tribes of the children of Israel." The "great multitude" are gathered from "all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues."

Of the 144,000 the prophet tells us: "I heard the number of them." Of the Gentile group he declares that "no man could number" them. Ch. 7:4, 9.

THE FIRST-FRUIT

The 144,000 are plainly said to be "the first-fruits" among the redeemed. How could they also at the same time be "the remnant" (of Ch. 12:17) as some have taught? They cannot be both "first-fruits" and "remnant" of the same dispensation.

The 144,000 are not the same as those that get "the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark." The former stand on "the mount Zion." The latter stand "by the glassy sea." Ch. 14:1; 15:2 R.V. The former company is definitely numbered while the latter is not.

THE HISTORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH AGREES WITH THIS

The fact stands out upon the very face of the New Testament that the first-fruits of the Christian church came from among God's ancient people.

Christ's first instructions to the disciples were, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles . . . but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matt. 10:5, 6.

After the resurrection, He said to them, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8. Notice that the Lord gives Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria precedence (not preference) over the work for the Gentile nations.

Christ told the disciples "that repent-

ance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, **beginning at Jerusalem.**" Luke 24:27.

The apostles followed these instructions. Not many years later, James, the leader of the church at Jerusalem, could say: "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands [Greek—Myriads, or tens of thousands. See R.V. margin] of Jews there are which believe." Acts 21:20.

THE JEW FIRST

This has always been God's method of procedure. The gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: **to the Jew first**, and also to the Greek," or Gentile. Rom. 1:16.

Whether it be for rewards or punishments, the Jew comes first in either case.

"Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, **of the Jew first**, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good, **to the Jew first**, and also to the Gentile." Ch. 2:9, 10.

The apostle Paul recognised this principle in his preaching to the Jews at Perga in Pamphilia, when he said, "It was necessary that the word of God **should first have been spoken to you**; but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, **we turn to the Gentiles.**" Acts 13:46. At Rome, also he "called together those that were of **the Jews first.**" (R.V. margin), and after presenting the gospel to them, announced, "The salvation of God is sent **unto the Gentiles.**" Ch. 28:17, 28.

The apostle Peter recognised the same principle when he said to the multitude

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in the temple at Jerusalem, "**Unto you first** God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning every one of you from his iniquities." Ch. 3:26.

Christ recognised it, when He said to the Syrophenician woman, "let **the children first** be filled." Mark 7:27.

A REPRESENTATIVE NUMBER

The prophecy speaks of the 144,000 as being "sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel," R.V., and twelve thousand are said to be taken out of each tribe. The number is doubtless representative in each case, and not intended to be regarded as literal.

Israel in the wilderness was organized into groups of tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands. Ex. 18:21. The latter (the thousands,) were great regimental or family groups, and it is probable were not restricted to an exact number.

Bethlehem, for instance, is spoken of as little "among the thousands [margin—families] of Judah." Micah 5:2, R.V. This particular "thousand" would comprise the family of David. Gideon is recorded to have said: "Behold my family [margin—Heb. thousand] is the poorest in Manasseh." Judges 6:15, R.V. The princes of the congregation were said to be, "every one of them head of their fathers' houses among the thousands [margin—families] of Israel." Joshua 22:14, R.V. See also 1 Sam. 23:23, R.V. m.

In the Revelation, the 144,000 are made up of twelve twelves of these family groups, or "thousands."

CHRIST HIMSELF THE LEADER

Jesus Christ Himself is at the head of these first-fruits of his redeemed, for, "Lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand." Rev. 14:1.

How fitting this is! "Our Lord sprang out of Juda." Heb. 7:14. It was from among Israel as concerning the flesh that Christ came. Rom. 9:5. Juda, the tribe nearest of kin to our Lord, is here (in Rev. 7:5) placed first in the list.

The Saviour has, moreover, promised to his twelve apostles positions of special access to Himself in the future world. "judging the twelve tribes of Israel." See Matt. 19:28.

TWELVE TIMES TWELVE "THOUSANDS" OF REDEEMED ISRAELITES

Paul speaks of Israel of his own time as "our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night." Acts 26:7. James, in his epistle, addressed some of them as, "the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion." To these fellow-Hebrews James wrote: "Of his own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a **kind of first-fruits** of his creatures." James 1:1, 18, R.V.

Seeing then that Paul describes the Israel of his day as "our twelve tribes," and James addresses a portion of them as "the twelve tribes of the Dispersion," it is perfectly consistent that the first-fruits of the Christian church from among that people should be presented to John as sealed out of "all the tribes of the children of Israel."

SPIRITUAL ISRAEL?

Some reader may wish to ask: Are

not the 144,000 to be regarded as spiritual Israel? It is true that the terms "Israel," and "Jew," and "the circumcision" are frequently used in the N.T. in such a way as to include believing Gentiles. E.g. Rom. 2:28, 29; 9:6-8; Gal. 3:29; 4:26, 28. It is equally true, however, that these same terms are also used to designate the fleshly descendants of Abraham as distinct from the Gentiles. This is clearly proven from scriptures already quoted. See again Rom. 1:16; 2:9, 10; Acts 13:45, 46, and other passages. These could have no meaning unless the expressions "Jew" and "Gentile" are to be understood in their primary and literal significance. The same is true in the prophetic scripture now before us. When the Lord tells us in Rev. 7:4 that the 144,000 are taken out of "all the tribes of the children of Israel," and in verse nine of the same chapter, that the innumerable company are taken "out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues" (R. V.), it would rob the divine interpretation of all force to make the fourth verse mean practically the same as the ninth.

THE HOLDING OF THE FOUR WINDS

The prophecy speaks of four angels "holding the four winds of the earth." Another angel commands that these winds be held "till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." Rev. 7:1-3. Speaking of this feature of the prophecy, Uriah Smith says: "Winds in the Bible symbolize political commotion, strife, and war. Dan. 7:2; Jer. 25:32." **Dan. & Rev. p. 459.**

Is the holding in check of the forces that symbolize "political commotion, strife and war" a characteristic of this last century? Are not these rather the days of "distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring"? Yet some would have us believe that it is in these tempestuous days that the 144,000 are being sealed!

The early days of the Christian era provide a better example of comparative tranquility. During the reign of Augustus Caesar the temple of Janus (always open during war, closed only in time of peace) was closed, signifying that Rome was then at peace in all her dominions. This temple "was shut only three times in the long space of seven hundred years" ("Encyc Americana"). It was during the reign of Augustus that Christ was born. Luke 2:1. At that time the supreme dominion of the Caesars had already brought about a worldwide peace.

"Within these [Roman] borders there prevailed that greatest blessing of the Roman rule, the *pax Romana*, or 'Roman peace' It cannot be questioned that for at least two centuries the whole of this vast region enjoyed a general reign of peace and security such as it had never known before and has never known since On the high seas within the empire you might voyage with no fear whatever of pirates On the high road you might travel from Jerusalem to Rome, or from Rome to Cadiz, with no fear of an enemy " etc.

"Life in the Roman World of Nero and St. Paul."

pp. 9, 10, by T. G. Tucker.

The Roman war with the Jews, culminating in the siege and downfall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, was an exception

to the general peacefulness of those times. The first-fruits of the Christian church had already been sealed, however, before the calamities of that great war fell upon the once-favoured people. It is said that not a single Christian perished in the siege. This was in strict accordance with the specification of the prophecy that the winds of strife were not to be loosed **until first the servants of God were sealed.**

"ASCENDING FROM THE EAST"

The location of Palestine, the scene of the development of the Jewish Christian church, certainly answers well to this specification of the prophecy. It was in the land of Palestine, eastward from Patmos, the scene of John's visions, that the gospel work arose, gathered its first-fruits from among the chosen people, and afterward spread to every nation under heaven.

THE PURITY OF THE FIRST-FRUIT

It is said that the 144,000 are "virgins," "not defiled with women," that "in their mouth was found no lie"; and that they are "without blemish." Rev. 14:4, 5, R.V. The absolute purity of the early church is here brought to view. Cp. 2 Cor. 11:2. The Holy Spirit so purged and possessed the body of Christ in those days that it is written that "no man" (of the unsanctified) "durst join himself unto them." Acts 5:13. Through all the later centuries, Christians have looked back to the apostolic days with longing for a renewed manifestation of that early purity and power.

"REDEEMED FROM AMONG MEN" (Rev. 14:4)

An effort has been made to interpret this clause to mean, "**translated** from among men." Mrs. E. G. White speaks of the 144,000 as "having been translated from the earth, from among the living." "G.C." p. 649. In an earlier publication 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 . . . The 144,000 shouted 'Alleluia!' as they recognised their friends who had been torn from them by death." "E.W." pp. 15, 16.

Uriah Smith says that "redeemed from among men" is "an expression which can be applicable only to those who are translated from among the living . . . A redemption from among men, from among the living . . . can mean only one thing, and that is translation." "The 144,000 are the living saints, who will be translated at the second coming of Christ." **Notes on Rev. 14:1-4.**

It is amazing that such positive assertions could be made, without even the semblance of evidence to justify them. The Greek word **agorazo**, rendered "redeemed" in our English version, cannot be construed to mean "translated." It occurs thirty-one times in the Greek N.T., and in twenty-eight of these it is rendered "buy" or "bought" in the English version. In three places it is translated "redeemed."

In the R.V. the clause under consideration is rendered, "**purchased** from among men, **to be the first-fruits.**" That

is, these have been purchased for this especial purpose—"to be the first-fruits."

This agrees with the description of the 144,000 as "the bondservants of our God," ch. 7:3, cp. 1:1, R.V. margin. Bondservants of men were purchased with money. Christ's bondservants have been purchased with blood. 1 Peter 1:18, 19. "Ye were bought (agorazo) with a price; become not bondservants of men." 1 Cor. 7:23 R.V., cp. ch. 6:20.

A FURTHER CONCLUSIVE PROOF

It is twice stated in the prophecy, that while the sealing work was being done, the winds of strife should be restrained from hurting the earth, the sea, and the trees.

In the next chapter, in the prophecy of the seven trumpets, the very first events in that series bring about the hurting of the earth, the sea, and the trees. The connection is indisputable. See how clearly this appears in the following comparison:

"That the wind should not blow on **THE EARTH**, nor on **THE SEA**, nor on any **TREE**."

"Hurt not **THE EARTH**, neither **THE SEA**, nor **THE TREES**, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."

Rev. 7:1, 3.

"The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon **THE EARTH**, and the third part of **TREES** was burnt up... And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into **THE SEA**; and the third part of **THE SEA** became blood."

Ch. 8:7, 8.

It is evident from this comparison

that the sealing work preceded the sounding of the seven trumpets. Those who hold that the trumpets represent events transpiring throughout the Christian dispensation (which the present writer also believes) are bound to admit that the sealing of the first-fruits must have taken place at the commencement of our era. They were sealed **before the trumpets began to sound**.

It is altogether inconsistent with these prophecies to teach that the sealing work takes place in the latter days, in close connection with the events of the seventh trumpet. The prophecy plainly locates that work **prior to the sounding of the first and second trumpets**.

PART II

THE SEAL OF THE LIVING GOD

Whatever the word "seal" may mean in other connections, our endeavour must be to ascertain what it is used to signify in the prophecy under consideration.

There are those who teach that the Sabbath is the seal of God. The present writer dissents from that view, although himself a Sabbath-keeper.

If theirs is the true interpretation, our Sabbath-keeping brethren should be able to point to at least some of their number already sealed with the seal of the living God. Can they do this? We have never heard one of them claim that they can.

The sealing work is said to have been in progress since 1844 A.D. About a century has elapsed since that time;

but it is not claimed that any have yet been sealed! Neither are any said to have as yet received "the mark of the beast"!

"PREPARING FOR THE MARK"— "PREPARING FOR THE SEAL"

"Those who are uniting with the world, are receiving the worldly mold, and **preparing** for the mark of the beast. Those who are distrustful of self, who are humbling themselves before God, and purifying their souls by obeying the truth—these are receiving the heavenly mold, and **preparing** for the seal of God in their foreheads. **When the decree goes forth, and the stamp is impressed**, their character will remain pure and spotless for eternity." **"Testimonies,"** Vol. 5, p. 216. Emphasis mine.

This passage plainly defers the reception of the seal of God to a future time.

THE MARK OF THE BEAST, WHEN RECEIVED

"When Sunday observance shall be enforced by law . . . then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome, will thereby honour popery above God . . . And it is 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 man, that those who continue in transgression will receive 'the mark of the beast.'" **"G.C."** p. 449.

THE SEAL OF GOD, WHEN RECEIVED

"All who receive the seal must be without spot before God—candidates for heaven." **"Testimonies,"** Vol. 5, p. 216.

"When Jesus leaves the sanctuary, then they who are holy and righteous, will be holy and righteous still; for all their sins will then be blotted out, and they will be sealed with the seal of the living God." **"E.W.,"** p. 48.

Thus the advocates of the Sabbath seal, after a century of the so-called sealing work, are not able to point to any whom they themselves maintain to

have been actually sealed. The actual sealing is still deferred to the dim uncertainty of the future.

But if we accept the description of the seal as divinely given in the book of Revelation itself, we shall at once recognise a multitude of the sealed ones, manifested at the very time referred to by the prophecy.

IS THE HOLY SPIRIT THE SEAL?

It has been thought by some that the Holy Spirit is the seal referred to in John's visions. It is held that this view is supported by certain passages in the epistle to the Ephesians.

"Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Ch. 1:13; 4:30.

It is clear from these scriptures that the Holy Spirit seals the believer, and may also Himself be spoken of as the seal; but this does not necessarily mean that the Holy Spirit is the seal referred to in the symbolism of the book of Revelation.

In this prophecy the seal is said to be brought by an angel. "I saw another angel . . . having the seal of the living God." Now the angels do not bring the Holy Spirit, nor in any way control the Spirit. On the contrary, the angels are themselves under the control of the Spirit of God.

WHAT, THEN, IS THE SEAL OF THE LIVING GOD?

The answer to this question is plainly given in the book of Revelation itself. Place together the two passages that

speaking of the sealing, and the meaning becomes self-evident:

"I saw another angel . . . having the seal of the living God: and he cried . . . saying, Hurt not the earth . . . till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads . . . And there were sealed a hundred and forty four thousand."

Rev. 7:2-4.

"And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads."

Ch. 14:1, R.V.

Here scripture answers to scripture with unmistakable clearness. "The seal of the living God . . . on their foreheads" is "his [the Lamb's] name, and the name of his Father written on their foreheads."

In the one passage the angel is represented as doing the sealing work, while in the other we are told what was imprinted on the foreheads of the saints after the seal had been applied.

Dr. Albert Barnes says that "among the Romans, slaves were stigmatised with the master's name or mark on their foreheads." Notes on Rev. 13:16.

A startled onlooker, watching for the first time the branding of a slave, asked a friend, "What mark is being put upon that poor man?" The friend replied, "I cannot tell. Wait until the branding iron is removed, and then we shall both see." When the iron was removed, there appeared in the seared flesh of the slave, the initials of his owner.

In the 7th chapter of Revelation we see the angel applying the seal to the foreheads of the saints. In the 14th

chapter we see what is written on their foreheads when the seal is removed. And what does the scripture tell us is written there? Answer: **The name of the Lamb and of his Father.**

What then, must be the seal of the living God? Answer: **The name of the Lamb and of his Father.**

The sealing of the 144,000 therefore, is nothing else than the placing of the mark of Christ's ownership, even his own name upon them.

It is in harmony with the well-understood practice of all nations, that a seal, or brand, or mark, should in some way indicate the name of the owner to whom the property belongs. The symbol is thus used in this prophecy in its simplest and most ordinary significance. This alone adds great weight to the view of the seal here advocated. God is not seeking to mystify, but to enlighten us.

THE NAME OF THE LAMB AND OF HIS FATHER

The seal imprints the name of the Lamb as well as that of the Father. You will not then find the seal of God in some legal enactment. The name of Christ is the seal. And notice that it is the name of Christ in his saving capacity; for the Lamb is Christ's title in his office as Saviour.

Now there is one name above all others that represents Christ in his capacity as Saviour, and that is the blessed name of Jesus. The very name itself means Saviour.

"Thou shalt call his name JESUS (margin: Saviour), for He shall save his people from their sins." Matt. 1:21.

With the accepting of Jesus Christ there is accomplished the reception of the name of the Father as well as that of the Son.

"I am come in my Father's name," said Jesus, "and ye receive Me not." John 5:43.

"Whosoever receiveth Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me." Mark 9:37.

"Believe Me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son." John 14:11, 13.

This shows that whatever is done in the name of Jesus, glorifies the Father. So that the Father's glory is wrapped up in the name of the Son.

"Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father THROUGH HIM." Col. 3:17, R.V.

THE SEAL IS A NAME

The seal of God is thus plainly shown in the prophecy itself to be a **Name**. It is described as the name of the Lamb and of his Father. Rev. 14:1 R.V.

We repeat that the Father has given a name in which his own name is honoured and glorified, and that is the **name of Jesus**. Angels brought that name. And it is the Holy Spirit that impresses it upon men, revealing all that it means, and thus sealing them for Christ. "He [the Holy Spirit] shall take of mine," said Jesus, "and shall show it unto you." He shall testify of Me." John 16:14; 15:26.

"Dearest name in earth or heaven,

Sweetest name my heart hath known;

By the Father, it was given

To his well-beloved Son.

Brought by angels of light

In the stillness of night,

Was the dear, dear name of **JESUS**."

Jesus (i.e., Saviour), is God's anointed. In other words, He is God's Christ. So the name of Jesus Christ really means, **God's Anointed Saviour**. This embraces therefore the name of God and the Lamb.

Is this too simple for the reader? Is it too simple a proposition to believe that the seal of the living God is found in the name of Jesus Christ?

We have already seen that the 144,000, the first-fruits of the Christian church, were taken out from among the Hebrew people at the commencement of the new era. Let us now turn to the book of Acts, and see if there are evidences that those early believers were sealed by the Holy Spirit with name of Jesus.

THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST

There was a marked change in the preaching of the apostles from the day of Pentecost onward.

Prior to the crucifixion, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ Himself, and the twelve apostles had all preached "the kingdom of God."

"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached."

"I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent."

"He called his twelve disciples . . . and He sent them to preach the kingdom of God." Luke 16:16; 4:43; 9:1, 2.

But after the crucifixion and resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit, we read of "Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ." Acts 8:12 (See also Ch. 28:23, 31). Mark the distinction! Why this change?

Why did Philip preach "the kingdom of God" before the cross, and then extend the preaching to "the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" after Pentecost? There was a reason. The saving work had meanwhile been completed, and the work of sealing the first-fruits of the church with the name of Jesus Christ had begun.

Notice further, that before the cross the disciples were expressly commanded **not** to proclaim Jesus as the Christ:

"Then charged He his disciples that they should **tell no man** that He was Jesus the Christ." Matt. 16:20.

This was all changed after Pentecost.

THE NAME WAS THE KEYNOTE OF THE APOSTOLIC PREACHING

The name of **Jesus** was the very keynote of the preaching in the early church. Peter epitomised his historic sermon by declaring, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same **Jesus**, whom ye crucified, **both Lord and Christ**. Acts 2:36, 38.

When Peter and John spoke to the lame man at the gate called Beautiful, Peter said, "**In the name of Jesus Christ** . . . rise up and walk."

To the wondering multitude they said, "**His name**; through **faith in his name** hath made this man strong." Ch. 3:6, 16.

The Sanhedrin heard of it. Those anxious rulers noticed the prominence given to **the name**, and caught the significance of it. "By what power," they asked, "or by **what name** have ye done this?"

Why should the rulers ask such a question? Answer: The preaching of

the name of **Jesus Christ** had created a **new situation**. Old Testament miracles had not been wrought by the power of a name.

Notice Peter's bold reply to the council. He was "filled with the Holy Ghost," "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel," he declared, "**that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth . . . even in this name** [R.V. margin], doth this man stand before you whole . . . For there is **none other name** . . . whereby we must be saved."

After private consultation, the council decided to threaten the apostles, "that they speak henceforth to no man in **this name**. And they called them, and charged them not to speak at all nor teach **in the name of Jesus**."

The church heard the threat, and "lifted up their voice to God with one accord" asking Him to grant "that signs and wonders may be done **by the name of thy holy Child Jesus**." Ch. 4:7, 10, 12, 17, 18, 30.

Further miracles were wrought, and the apostles were again hailed before the rulers. "Did not we straightly command you that ye should not teach **in this name**?" they demanded. When faced with the determination of Peter and John to "obey God rather than man," the council was at first "minded to slay them." Eventually they called the apostles, beat them, and commanded that they "**should not speak in the name of Jesus**."

As for the apostles, "They departed from the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for **the Name**," Ch. 5:28, 40, 41, R.V.

THE APOSTLE PAUL AND THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST

The same prominence given to the **name** appears in connection with the conversion and ministry of the apostle Paul, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the **name of Jesus** of Nazareth," he declares. Ch. 26:9.

The Jews at Damascus, astonished at his change of course, said "Is not this he that destroyed them which called on **this name**." Ch. 9:21.

And Barnabas, to convince the other apostles of the genuineness of Paul's conversion, declared that "he had preached boldly . . . in the **name of Jesus**." The record goes on to say that Paul continued his preaching at Jerusalem, and "spake boldly in the **name of Jesus**." vv. 27, 29.

The name of Jesus Christ was thus indelibly impressed upon the early church. It was the very sign and seal of the faith.

PRAYER IN THE NAME OF JESUS

Prior to the crucifixion, prayer was not offered in the name of Jesus. "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in **my name**," said Christ, on the night of the betrayal. But from that moment his promise was, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in **my name**, He will give it you." John 16:23, 24, 26. See also ch. 14:13, 14, 15:16, and cp. Matt. 6:9-13.

WHAT ABOUT THE GENTILES?

The reader will perhaps be wanting to ask, What about the Gentiles? If the name of Jesus Christ is the seal of the living God, do not the Gentiles also be-

lieve in that name? Are not "all nations" baptized in that name? May they not, therefore, also be said to be sealed with that seal? Certainly they may! The 144,000 are represented in us in the prophecy as "the **first-fruits** unto God and the Lamb." The first-fruits of a harvest are not different in nature from the main crop. The term "firstfruits" does not imply distinction, but rather similarity. The firstfruits may be regarded as a promise or sample of what is to follow.

That the seal of God is received by true believers throughout the Christian dispensation is implied in the book of Revelation itself. In describing the judgments of God to be visited upon men under the fifth trumpet, the sentence is that they should hurt "only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads." Rev. 9:4. Those who hold that the sealing is a latter-day work of Sabbath reform, have great difficulty in accounting for this passage; but it presents no difficulty at all to those who believe the seal to be the name of Jesus Christ.

The work of gathering out and sealing the first-fruits of the church from among "the children of Israel" had not been completed before the Lord commenced the wider work, which was to gather "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." Rev. 7:9.

When the first general council was held at Jerusalem, James, in summing up the discussion with regard to the status of the Gentile Christians, said:

"Simeon hath declared how God at the first **did visit the Gentiles to take out of THEM a people for his name.**" Acts 15:14.

The fact that the Lord had "visited and redeemed his people," **Israel** (Luke 1:68), and had taken out of **THEM** "a people for his name," was already impressed upon the minds of all those early brethren. James and the apostles now called on them to believe that God had already commenced a **similar work for the Gentiles**. See also "**for his name**" in Rom. 1:5.

Thus Paul writes to the Gentile Ephesians: "**In Him we Jews have been made heirs We who were the first to fix our hopes on Christ. And in Him you Gentiles also having believed in Him—were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.**" Eph. 1:11-13. Weymouth's translation.

THE SEAL OF HIS NAME IS THE MARK OF CHRIST'S OWNERSHIP

As a result of mistaken teaching the impression has gained currency that the seal of God is placed upon his servants as a mark of recognition of their perfection. Such is not the case. The seal is the mark of God's ownership, which is a very different thing. It is because the seal is thought of as God's witness to individual perfection, that none holding that view have assurance of having received it, or that others have received it. It is by them always something looked forward to in the future, to be received when perfection has been attained.

Our perfection is always "in Christ

Jesus." Paul laboured to "present every man **perfect in Christ Jesus.**" Col. 1:28. That apostle tells us that he himself was constantly on his guard against any idea of being left to stand in his own righteousness. His forward glance to the day of Christ impelled him to cry, "That I may win Christ, and be found in Him, **not having a righteousness of mine own.**" He desired only "the righteousness which is of God by faith," "that which is through faith in Christ." Phil. 3:9, R.V.

"When He shall come with trumpet sound,
O may I then in **Him** be found;
Glad in his righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne."

To the humble-minded Christian it is a great comfort to realise that the seal is not the mark of God's assent to individual perfection, but the mark of Christ's ownership.

A slave-owner was showing a friend over his estate. The visitor noticed one of the slaves who seemed to have very little strength or ability for the work he was trying to do. When he remarked upon it, the owner replied, "Yes indeed, he is a poor workman, I acknowledge. Nevertheless he is mine, and I value him, not so much for what he can do, as for the fact that he is very loyal to me, his owner. I paid a big price to rescue him from a very cruel taskmaster. The man has never forgotten it, and there is a strong bond of affection between us, despite our different stations in life."

Even so, I may apprehend Christ's will very imperfectly, and fulfil it even

less perfectly; but still, although a poor sort of bondservant, unprofitable, and knowing full well that there is nothing in myself in which I can glory, I do glory in this, that I acknowledge no other Lord and Master than Jesus Christ. I rejoice also that He, having paid a great price for my redemption, is gracious enough to put the brand of his name upon me, so that

"I am his, and He is mine,"
Forever and forever."

HOW ARE MEN SEALED WITH THE NAME OF JESUS?

When the name of Jesus Christ is preached as it should be, men come under conviction. That name is a rebuke to the pride and self-love of the carnal heart. The Holy Spirit, whose work it is to seal men (Eph. 1:13; 4:30), leads them to repent and **"believe on the name of the Son of God."** 1 John 5:13. This is the new birth, the birth "of the Spirit."

"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that **believe on his name.**" John 1:12.

"No [sealed] man can say [in the sense in which the apostle is speaking], **Jesus is Lord,** but in the **Holy Spirit.**" 1 Cor. 12:3, R.V.

This work of regeneration is all done **"in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."** 1 Cor. 6:11.

Those who are born again know the name of Christ. The Holy Spirit impresses it indelibly upon them. The heart melts with tenderness or leaps with joy at the sound of it. In every nation the songs of the church extol the name of Jesus.

"People and realms of every tongue,
Dwell on that name with sweetest song."

EVERY KNEE TO BOW "AT THE NAME WHICH IS ABOVE EVERY NAME"

The apostle Paul tells us of a wider glory yet to come to the name of Him who "humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea the death of the cross." "Wherefore," the apostle declares "also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him **the name which is above every name;** that in the name of **Jesus** every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, **and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**" Phil. 2:8-11, R.V.

The Revelator tells the same story. The same beloved apostle who saw the sealing of the first-fruits with "the name," was shown also the final harvest home of all the redeemed. Concluding his description of the holy city, he says, "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of **God and of the Lamb** shall be in it," and **his servants** shall serve Him; and they shall see his face; **and his name shall be in their foreheads.**" Rev. 22:3, 4.

"THE NAME OF JESUS"

"All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all."

"THE JEW FIRST"

"Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,
Ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail Him who saves you by his grace,
And crown Him Lord of all."

"AND ALSO THE GENTILE"

"Let every kindred, every tribe
On this terrestrial ball,
To Him all majesty ascribe,
And crown Him Lord of all."

"EVERY CREATURE IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH"

"O that with yonder sacred throng,
We at his feet may fall,
We'll join the everlasting song
And crown Him Lord of all."

PART III

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

While it is not the purpose of this tract to deal with the prophecy in which reference is made to the mark of the beast, it will perhaps be well to make here some brief remarks concerning that symbol and its significance.

The book of Revelation seems to picture the mark of the beast as the very antithesis of the seal of God. We have seen that the seal of God is found in the name of Jesus Christ. Is anything said in the prophecy that would indicate that the mark of the beast is something that stands in opposition to that name?

It is a startling and convincing fact that the mark of the beast is also **declared to be a name**. The prophecy unmistakably suggests the name of antichrist as being set in opposition to the name of Christ. Hear the prophetic declaration:

"He causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead; and that no man should be able to buy or sell, save that he hath the mark, **even the name of the beast**, or the number of his name." Rev. 13:16, 17, R.V.

The "mark" is here unmistakably identified with "the name of the beast." Moffatt renders the 17th verse thus:

"So that no one can buy or sell unless he bears

the mark, that is, the name of the beast, or the cipher of his name."

CONCLUSION

The identification of the mark as the **name** of the beast is confirmed in ch. 14:11, which speaks of those "who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth **the mark of his name**."

If we should seek to make a selection from among the numerous appellations assumed by the antichrist, what more representative name could be found than **Vicarius Filii Dei**? meaning, as it does, Vicar of the Son of God; or the substitute, or one who is in the place of the Son of God.

The conflict implied by the rival claims of the Seal and the Mark, then, amounts to this—Will you own allegiance to **the name of Jesus Christ alone**? or will you recognise **the pretensions of another**, who professes to stand in his place, and who claims your homage?

It might reasonably be asked, How could the claims of the seal and the mark conflict, if the sealing work pertained especially to the first century, and the prophecy of the beast and his mark pertain to a later period? To this inquiry there is a very conclusive reply ready at hand in the scriptures.

Paul, who also prophesied of that power that was to arise in the church, "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God," declared to the Christians of his day that "the mystery of iniquity **doth already work**." 2 Thess. 2:4, 7.

John speaks of it in his epistles:

"Little children, it is the last time:

and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."

"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also."

"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is in the world" 1 John 2:18, 22, 23; 4:2, 3.

What could be clearer than this? The witness of the Spirit of God was identified with the name of Jesus Christ. And the mark of the antichrist was the denial of the Son.

Commentators generally refer to the fact that in the second century, Irenaeus (said to have been a disciple of Polycarp, who in turn was a disciple of John the Revelator) interpreted the number of the beast as having reference to Rome. Irenaeus showed that the Greek word **LATEINOS**, the **Latin** (Man), contained the number 666. Advocating the view that this was the name referred to in Rev. 13:17, 18, he wrote:

"It seems to me very probable; for this is the name of the last of Daniel's four kingdoms; they being **Latins** that now reign."

Dr. Albert Barnes, commenting on

this, regards Irenaeus' interpretation as very feasible, and shows that it was a fitting anticipation of the rise of the Papal antichrist. See Barnes' Notes on Rev. 13:18.

The testimony of the apostles, then, and of such an early writer as Irenaeus, shows that the conflict between Christ and antichrist is not by any means confined to the middle ages and the latter days. It became a live issue soon after the preaching of the name of Jesus Christ first began.

The conflict is between the claims of Jesus Christ, and those of any power or influence, inward or outward, that would divert the soul from unswerving allegiance to God and the Lamb.

O for a great revival of the preaching of the kingdom of God and **the name of Jesus Christ**, rather than the kingdom of God and something else as the sign or seal of loyalty! Only thus can we truly preach a message warning men against "the mark of the beast, **even his name.**"

CONCLUSION

If the Sabbath were the seal of God, men would receive the seal when they receive the Sabbath. But after preaching the Sabbath as the seal for about a century, no one has yet been said to have been sealed as the result of Sabbath-keeping. Thousands upon thousands of earnest and consistent believers have, during this period, been laid to rest in the grave. No one would claim for them that **because of their Sabbath-keeping** they were sealed with the seal of the living God. But we have

every reason to believe that a multitude of them were sealed with the blessed name of Jesus Christ.

Why, then, should we go on preaching that the Sabbath is the seal? or that the Sabbath commandment contains the seal? The entire body of living Sabbath-keepers could not put forward one of the Revelator's "thousands" as sealed by means of the Sabbath, much less one hundred and forty-four of them. But we trust that a great many are already sealed for God with the name of Jesus Christ.

O for a great revival of the preaching of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ! O that all believers everywhere might cease to interpret these prophecies with private or sectarian interpretation, and that the name of Jesus Christ might be restored to its rightful place of honour!

Rightly understood, the book of Revelation is itself "the testimony of Jesus Christ." See ch. 1:2; 22:16, R.V. The prophecies of the book find the key to their interpretation in "the name of the Lamb," and "the blood of the Lamb." Let us cease from fantastic interpretations, that tend to justify a sect and magnify a people, and let us accept the Book's own interpretation, which magnifies the name of Jesus Christ. Let us accept the seal of that blessed name.

"He that was called, being free, is Christ's bond-servant. Ye were bought with a price; become not bond-servants of men. 1 Cor. 7:22, 23, R.V.

"As for me, I bear, branded on my body, the scars of Jesus as my Master." Gal. 6:17, Weymouth's translation.

"The purchased slave of Jesus Christ,
Who gave his life for me;
For me his blood most precious
Poured out on Calvary.
For me the ransom money,
The awful price was paid.
From me the curse was lifted off,
On Thee, O Christ, 'twas laid!
The oath of my allegiance
I here renew to Thee;
Thy purchased slave, my dying Lord,
For evermore to be."

How is it with you reader? Have you believed in the Name? Are you a bond-servant of Jesus Christ? Have you acknowledged Him to the world as your only Lord and Master? Is his name written on your forehead?

W. W. FLETCHER.

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