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"144,000 FIRST-FRUITS"

Where Are They?



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For 35 years I have believed that the 144,000 "first-fruits" should be located at the beginning of this day of salvation instead of at the end of it.

But as a recent writer thinks this is "a curious invention born of desperation" it may be well to consider the matter a little more carefully.

If the matter was not so serious, it would be amusing to think of some of the strange views that have been put forth concerning the 144,000 of Rev. 7 and 14. We will not waste time here to consider those false claims, but will examine the most popular view among dispensational teachers of the "Futurist" school, all of whom as far as I know, believe the "144,000" are connected with a "Jewish remnant" that are expected to be saved after the Church has been translated to heaven at the 2nd coming of Christ.

The 7th chapter of Revelation is a "salvation" chapter that covers this long day of salvation, beginning at Jerusalem with "the Jew first", and I can assure the reader this is no "curious invention born of desperation".

It is a protest against what I believe to be a false and dangerous doctrine which holds out a false hope of salvation for 144,000 Jews, and also for a great multitude of Gentiles "which no man could number," **after** this age of grace.

Some teachers have likened these sealed servants to a "144,000 Pauls" to be saved by sight at the coming of Christ, and then to become missionaries to preach the gospel with such power that the innumerable multitudes of verse 9 are saved in a short period of 3½ or 7 years **after** the whole Church has been taken to heaven. If that is not a "larger hope" doctrine I am sure I do not know what is.

When the apostle Paul spoke of himself as "of one born out of due time" I fail to see how that can have anything to do with an event at the end of the age. He was speaking of himself as an **Apostle** who had to be a witness of the resurrection, and the "due time" for seeing the risen Christ was during the 40 days between His resurrection and ascension.

But Paul was not saved then, and a special act of mercy and grace was needed to bring that "chosen vessel" into the Kingdom "out of due time", and make him "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles."

Is it not a dangerous thing to imagine 144,000 Jews getting saved in some such manner as the apostle Paul? What else is it but "another gospel" which perverts the gospel of Christ as Paul himself preached it?

If the 144,000 are "the **first-fruits** unto God, and to the Lamb," is it not more reasonable and Scriptural to locate them at the beginning of this age rather than at the end of it?

I am aware that some try to evade this important point by saying this is a different company from that of chapter 7. Mr. Walter Scott for instance, says "The 144,000 here witnessed are of **Judah**". But he offers no Scriptural proof for that, and we believe there is none to offer, and are convinced they are one and the same company.

In chapter 7 they are sealed while on earth, but in chapter 14 they are seen in heaven with Christ which is "far better", and I believe Paul is one of them.

Under the first covenant "Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of His increase" (Jer. 2:3). But through rejecting and crucifying their King, that earthly nation lost the inheritance by the Lord breaking the covenant which He had made with all the people (Zech. 11:10).

That covenant has been taken away, and a new and everlasting covenant made to take its place (Heb. 10:9, 13:20). Christ is the mediator of this new covenant which He has made with a new Israel ("the Israel of God") chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, and who "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," in contrast to "Israel after the flesh."

About 10 years before the destruction of Jerusalem James, who was one of them, wrote to other believers also of "the twelve tribes", and reminded them that they were "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures."

Is it really "a curious invention" to associate the "first-fruits" of James with those of Revelation, or is it not rather an example of trying to rightly **unite** the word of truth?

Salvation through the blood of the Lamb is the subject of Rev. 7. That salvation was offered "to the Jew first," and we all know that many thousands of Jews were saved in those first days of this gospel age.

Where is the difficulty then in placing the conversion of the "144,000" in the period of 40 years between the Lord's ascension and the fall of the Jewish nation in A.D. 70? I suggest that the "angel ascending from the east" (Rev. 7:2), is the Lord ascending from the mount of Olives, and the hurting of the earth, **or land** (same word as Luke 21:33), corresponds with the "desolation", "vengeance", "distress", "woe", and "wrath" of Luke 21:20-23, which was fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem.

"Distress of nations" of verse 25 is another matter which concerns the end of Gentile rule. Surely it is only necessary to see that the book of Revelation contains a number of **parallel** visions covering this long day of salvation and that chapter 7 is one of them. But a modern dispensational interpretation and a false "millennium" doctrine robs us of this important truth, and is the cause of so much confusion concerning this whole matter.

Certainly the conversion of the great multitude which no man could number from all nations, is the work of this present age of grace to the Gentiles, which will be "**finished**" when the 7th and last trump sounds (Rev. 10:7, 11:15).

The resurrection and translation of all the Lord's redeemed people is when the "**last trump**" is sounded, which will be "at the **last day**", when "the **last enemy**" is destroyed (I Cor. 15:26,52; I Thess. 4:16; John 6:39,40,44,54).

How can anyone get saved after those **last things**?

But I will leave the reader to judge for himself if I have not given sufficient Scriptural evidence for locating the 144,000 "first-fruits" at the beginning of this age of grace instead of at the end of it; or whether it is nothing but "a curious invention born of desperation."