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One Hundred and Forty-Four Thousand.

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

One Hundred and Forty-Four Thousand.

Topics.

- Twelve thousand from the twelve tribes of Israel are sealed.
- 144,000 is a unique number.
- The whole scene is symbolical.
- The church is built on the foundation of Israel.
- The general sense of all scenarios.
- Overview of the one hundred and forty-four thousand.

A PERSONAL NOTE

Though I have always loved reading and studying the Scriptures and have now walked with Christ and in God's grace for around fifty years the following studies should not be taken to be dogmatic, inflexible or the final word on the matter since I am fully aware that my mind is limited by mortality and that greater understanding of God's revelation is continually becoming clearer before our eyes as we move closer to the time of Christ's glorious return in glory.

TWELVE THOUSAND FROM THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL ARE SEALED

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- **Revelation 7:5:** 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed, 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben, 12,000 from the tribe of Gad, ⁶12,000 from the tribe of Asher, 12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali, 12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh, ⁷12,000 from the tribe of Simeon, 12,000 from the tribe of Levi, 12,000 from the tribe of Issachar, ⁸12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun, 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph, 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.

144,000 is a unique number: (v4) the following list shows that one hundred and forty-four thousand is a unique biblical number:

- The square number of one hundred and forty-four is twelve the original number of the sons of Jacob and the tribes that formed the nation of Israel and the original number of the apostles that formed the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Twelve times twelve make one hundred and forty-four times one thousand makes one hundred and forty-four thousand, signifying a large number grew from a small number and that from a small group a larger multitude sprung up.
- The Old Testament had twelve tribes while the New had twelve apostles and the wall of the new Jerusalem has twelve gates with the twelve sons of Israel inscribed on them and twelve angels (Rev. 21:12).
- The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles (Rev. 21:14).
- The wall of the city measured one hundred and forty-four cubic measures. (Revelation 21:17), and the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with twelve types of jewels and precious stones (Rev. 21:19) and the twelve gates were twelve pearls. (Rev. 21:21).

This list highlights the truth that 144 is one of God's prime numbers. It is a perfect square number arising from 12 x 12 being the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles, while the 144,000 signifies the true, genuine and faithful that spring up from the twelve tribes of Israel, being firstly, the twelve apostles built on the foundation of the nation of Israel and afterward multiplying greatly by the ministers and evangelist who followed them. Amongst commentators there are various thoughts as to who the 144,000 are, however, most commentators agree that they refer to the global body of Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles for the following five reasons:

1. NOT A LITERAL NUMBER

The number one hundred and forty-four thousand, is not to be taken literally as though there is precisely twelve thousand faithful believers from each tribe, to make up the exact total number of one hundred and forty-four thousand, but is to be taken as a symbolic number, as many other literal things mentioned in this book are clearly to be taken. Twelve, multiplied by itself, and then by one thousand, makes one hundred and forty-four thousand signifying what began as something small has multiplied itself a thousand-fold. Since there were twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles, twelve became a sacred number in the synagogue and in the Christian church. Israel may be mentioned here first since the Christian church was formed out of the Jewish nation.

2. TWELVE IS THE NUMBER OF ALL WITNESSES

Twelve is used as the number of those who in every age have been called out to witness for God's word. The twelve tribes of Israel were called to witnesses to the covenant and laws of the Old Testament, and later, the twelve apostles were called to testify to the Gospel of Grace. The number twelve, then, stands for a world-witness of God's word. Twelve multiplied by the twelve carries the idea of a thousand-fold, meaning by the ministers and evangelist who came after the apostles God's word multiplied a thousand-fold and therefore the number signifies the global faithful church made up of Jews and Gentiles.

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3. THE WHOLE SCENE IS SYMBOLICAL

The four angels; the four corners of the earth; the four winds; the sea and the trees; the rising of the sun; the seal of God and the number are all symbolical. Supporting this view are the following facts:

- a) If taken literally, it is necessary to suppose that this refers to the twelve tribes of Israel, but the number is too exact, since it is inconceivable that exactly, the same number would be sealed and saved from each tribe and long before this ten of the tribes had been carried away, at which time the distinction between the tribes was lost and never again recovered which means that since the time of John such a literal distinction could not be made.
- b) Compared with the full number of the twelve tribes of Israel one hundred and forty-four thousand is comparatively small which means, it may signify that only a part of each tribe was sealed and saved (i.e., not all the tribe) which would be in harmony with the following words of Paul:
 - Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ⁸This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. (Rom. 9:6-8).

c) The number denotes a smaller number taken out of a greater number, a large number of believers multiplying from a smaller number, a part taken out of the whole (i.e., a portion of a tribe, taken out of the whole tribe) who are only known to God and the Lord Jesus Christ. If this same principal is applied to the church, it would then signify that not all who proclaim Christ belong to his church and that only a part of its members will be sealed and saved, this idea is also in harmony with the following words of Jesus:

- Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 7:21).

Another reason a certain number is put forward for an uncertain number is the fact God clearly knows the exact number of faithful to be sealed and saved to eternal life, but we cannot know as the following verses show.

- He brought him (Abram) outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." (Genesis 15:5).
- I (John) looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands (Revelation 7:9).

Clearly the number of the great multitude is not 144,000, only God knows the final number of those who will ascend into heaven, so it is only natural that the author would put forward a certain number for an uncertain number.

4. THE CHURCH IS BUILT ON THE FOUNDATION OF ISRAEL

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The church is built on the foundation of Israel symbolised by the one hundred and forty-four thousand, the twelve apostles who were Israelites and Jesus Christ, who was not only an Israelite, but also the chief cornerstone of the church. The name of Israel's city Jerusalem will be written on Gentile believers in that they shall share in her citizenship and the commonwealth of Israel (Ephes. 2:11-22). For these reasons, the one hundred and forty-four thousand signifies the whole Israel of God, which is the global body of Christ made up of faithful Jews and Gentiles. Supporting this idea is the following words of Paul:

- For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God. (Romans 2:28-29).

And the following Christian principal:

- There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:28).

And the truth that the new Jerusalem embraces the whole Israel of God, the chosen generation and royal priesthood of every age who remained faithful to God and looked toward the coming promised Messiah, the Christ and Saviour of the world. The apostle Paul wrote: -

- The Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. (Gal. 4:26).

Jerusalem has always been a symbol of Israel's mother, and here Paul is saying that she is also the mother of the Gentiles. Those who hold to this view highlight the fact that it does not rob the Jews of God's promises (as some believe) as all the faithful (Jews and Gentiles) will inherit all the promises of God, even those Jews who at this time are living in unbelief, but come to repentance and accept their Messiah the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and King.

Following is a brief overview of what I think is the most fitting explanation. The previous chapter (6) ended with the words, "the great day of wrath has come, and who can stand?" which means that this chapter is an interlude of great encouragement for all faithful Jews and Gentiles in Christ, before God's wrath is poured out. The number 144,000 is far too exact, to literally refer to the twelve tribes of Israel, so must be taken symbolically (as the four winds, the four living creatures, the white robes and the Lamb are) to represent all the faithful of the true Israel. The idea is that some from all tribes will be saved and resurrected to eternal glory. Immediately after seeing the redeemed Jews in heaven John sees a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, signifying all the resurrected Gentiles from every nation. Putting both visions together the picture is of Jews and Gentiles that have come out of great tribulation throughout all generations and of all who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb being resurrected to heaven and standing before the Lamb of God and before God Himself serving Him day and night in His heavenly temple, where they will hunger and thirst no longer and the sun will not strike them, for the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their Shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. This does not mean that the resurrection takes place here, since that takes place when the seventh trumpet sounds, but that John is given a vision of it in this interlude. It is as though God gives the church this heavenly vision to encourage those who will be alive during the latter days reign of the man of lawlessness (man of sin in KJV) (2 Thess. 2:1-4) (an antichrist) (1 John 2:22) and his antichristian world empire. Immediately after this vision the interlude ends and the seventh seal is opened and great calamities fall upon the earth.

THE GENERAL SENSE

Though all these scenarios above may differ on certain points they all have one common theme, which is that the number 144,000 denotes the global body of Christ made up of Jews and Gentile in Christ. The general sense of them all, is that even though there is great persecution against the church (made up of Jews and Gentiles) and terrors, suffering and grief in the world during the period signified under the seventh seal soon to be opened, God will seal, preserve and save to Himself a great number of faithful Jews from Israel and a great number of faithful Gentiles from all nations, who would not apostatize. Despite persecutions, troubles and hardships those saved (i.e., sealed by the Holy Spirit) will hold fast to their salvation, and in this sense, their eternal inheritance will not be hurt, so that Christ's global church would not fail. Despite the fact many enemies come against the faithful church it will triumph in victory, because all these persecutions, troubles and hardships come by God's angels and His permission. Whether Jews or Gentiles, all believers of all generations who are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God are children of Abraham and as such belong to the Kingdom of Israel's Messiah the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

FOOTNOTE

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.