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The 144,000

We are first introduced to the 144,000 in chapters 7 of the book of the Revelation and again in chapter 14. The question at hand is, “Are the 144,000 mentioned in chapter 14 the same as the 144,000 mentioned in chapter 7. There is more than one opinion on that subject and I am going to endeavor to speak to both and determine which one I feel to be the accurate view.

Now, there are some heretical opinions as to who these 144,000 are, but that is not the subject of this paper and I will only refer to them in reference. The Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that these are the most faithful among them. These are those who are faithful in there service to the cause. They are the ones that wake up every Saturday morning and knock on the doors in order to convert unwary Christians and the lost to their cause.

The Seventh Day Adventists teach that these are those who were found observing the Sabbath at the return of Christ. They conveniently forget the exhortation that Paul gives when speaking to the Galatians in chapter 5, verses 2 through 4 where he says, *“Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”*

However, both of these views are absolute nonsense and cannot be justified with even one shred of evidence from the Scriptures. Unfortunately, those involved in these cults have simply bit into the arrogant teachings of men who have either left the faith or never found it from the start. I believe that is why the Bible says in Hosea 4:6a, “*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge....*”

The opinion that is prevailing in premillennial, pretribulational, literalist circles and the one that Dr. Jim Combs holds to in his book, “Rainbows from Revelation” is that the 144,000 in chapters 7 and 14 are one and the same. Dr. Combs says, “that these are the same 144,000 Israelite believers, saved and sealed by the Spirit in the first half of the last seven years.”

This opinion is by far the most popular and has been through out the centuries of the church as that in order to say that they are different one must spiritualize a lot of what is being said in chapter 14. That really goes against the grain of a literalist like myself; with good reason. We really don’t like to put question marks where God has already placed periods.

The other opinion that is held to by such noted authors as Dr. Tim LaHaye and William R. Newell concludes that these are not speaking of one and the same group, but separate groups entirely. They believe that the 144,000 spoken of in chapter 14 represent a very special group of saints. They see them as the super saints of the church age. Dr. LaHaye refers to them as “outstanding, elite and best Christians of this dispensation.” William R. Newell refers to them as “especially devoted saints of all ages.”

My basic problem with this second view is that it almost sounds like what the cults teach that I referred to earlier. The cults believe that these people spoken of here in chapter 14 and those in chapter 7 are those who were keeping the Jewish Sabbath and the most faithful among them. That sounds a lot like works theology to me.

There is nothing in the Bible that would indicate an elite status of any child of God in the next life. Instead the Bible say, “There is certainly mention of works and rewards and some will have more than others, but no where does it pull a select group out from among the others. To me it is just plain bad hermeneutics.

In my opinion, both chapters are speaking of the same group of people. In chapter number 7 there are sealed for the evangelistic work that God has for them during the Great Tribulation period and in chapter 14 they are simply receiving their reward for their faithfulness.

Now as to whether the 144,000 are reserved through the Tribulation or if they are martyred is up for the debate and I must confess that the Scripture is not perfectly clear on that.

What we do know is that in chapter 7 we are clearly told that these who are sealed with the Holy Spirit of God for this special mission are Jews. They are 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel; totaling 144,000. John, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God even goes on to list out each tribe from which each 12,000 are called.

That rules out any possibility of any of them being Gentiles as that all of the descendants of Jacob twelve sons are Jews just like he was. That being the case, those

mentioned in chapter 14, if they are one and the same, are Jews as well. Thus there is no room for Dr. LaHaye and Newell's interpretation.

Also, in chapter 14 it clearly states in verse 1, *"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."* These are clearly those who were sealed in chapter 7 when it says in verse 3, *"Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."*

I have never thought of it before, but this may be why Dr. LaHaye in his popular "Left Behind" series says that all of those who are saved in the Tribulation period receive a mark in their foreheads. I wondered where he got that from and now I know.

However, I still disagree and uphold the position that the 144,000 mentioned in chapter 7 and those mentioned in chapter 14 are one and the same.