

The People of the Apocalypse
“The Passing of the Torch”
[Part II]

As we have seen in Part I, Revelation chapter seven focuses on two significant groups of God’s children. The first is the 144 Thousand and the second is the great multitude in heaven which is the raptured saints of the ages. The 144 thousand are now God’s representatives on earth during the Day of the Lord’s wrath and the resurrected and raptured saints are home in heaven.

But, if this chosen group of men, the 144 Thousand, are truly children of God, then why were they not raptured when the saints were caught up into heaven? How could they be God’s children and not be raptured with the great multitude now in heaven? In order to answer these questions we must recognize just where we are in God’s program.

At this point in time we are well into what is known as Daniel’s 70th Week. The period known as the Day of the Lord is about to begin. God will be dealing with His chosen earthly people, the Jews, in these last seven years of Daniel’s prophesied time period which is 490 years in duration (Daniel 9:24).

The 70th Week of Daniel has almost run its course, there may be but a few years left before these seven years are finished. We must recognize that the Lord always brings those whom He has chosen into His family the same way and that is “by grace...through faith” (Ephesians 2:8).

However, in the Old Testament era which ran its course until John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit of God did not indwell all those who believed. This blessing of the indwelling Holy Spirit, was and now is “*the promise of the Father*” (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 2:33,39) which was given after Jesus ascended to heaven and was glorified on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) as taught in the New Testament.

Therefore, it is possible that the 144 Thousand will be redeemed under the Old Covenant which is in effect during these last seven years (70th Week of Daniel), and will not receive the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. Then, when the rapture occurs they will remain to serve the Lord not having “*the earnest of the Spirit*” (II Corinthians 1:22) in their hearts.

The earnest or down payment which is the indwelling Holy Spirit “*is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption (rapture) of the purchased possession*” (Ephesians 1:14) which in short means that those with the indwelling Holy Spirit will be raptured and those without will not!

So, those who believe God, just as Abraham did: “*And he (Abraham) believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness*” (Genesis 15:6), will be bona-fide children of God, but they will not possess the indwelling Spirit Who supplies the believer with the means whereby they are raptured into heaven.

The graves will open:

“*The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain (those with the indwelling Spirit) shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*” (I Thessalonians 4:16,17)

There are other believing Jews who will also remain on earth after the rapture. The “*two witnesses*” will prophesy for “a thousand two hundred and three score days” [3-1/2 years]. The rapture occurs during this 3-1/2 year time period. “*the woman*” [faithful nation of Israel] too, will remain on earth during this same time period (Revelation 12:6)

Therefore, at the end of the age, God's plan of redemption may well revert to the restored (Malachi 4:5,6; Matthew 17:11) "*holy covenant*" [*Old Covenant*] (*Daniel 11:28-31*) as He once again deals with the nation of Israel just as He did during the previous 483 years or 69 weeks of Daniel's 70 weeks. If that is the case, there will those believers of the church who enter the 70th week of Daniel, but, when those last seven years begin (*Daniel 9:24-27*), God will once again deal with the Jew under the Old Covenant.

And so, "The Passing of the Torch" will be accomplished. The church saints will pass the torch to the 144 Thousand and they in turn will be the Lord's representatives here on earth during the Day of the Lord judgment which is thoroughly described during the trumpet and vial judgments in Revelation chapters 8-16.

This chosen group of men will remain on the earth as they "*follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes*" (*Revelation 14:4*) indicating their full and complete dedication to His will. This mighty group of disciples will witness of their redemption and their glorious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to those who will remain, Jew and Gentile alike, during the great and dreadful Day of the Lord.

They will be supernaturally protected from the cataclysmic judgment of God as indicated:

"And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree: but only those men which have not the seal (signature) of God in their foreheads." (*Revelation 9:4*)

Here is the confirmation for the purpose of the signature of God in the foreheads of the 144 thousand! Only these choice men, the 144 Thousand, who have been supernaturally sealed at the beginning of the Day of the Lord's wrath will be protected from the tormenting judgment of the fifth trumpet!

Now, we must recognize that what has been written in "The Passing of the Torch" is a theory of how things may unfold during the time of the end concerning these two major groups of God's children. However, it is based upon Biblical truth and could well be the way the Lord brings about His plan for the end of the age!

If we examine the Scripture which describes these two groups it will be obvious as to who they are and where they fit into God's plan for the end of the age. The 144 Thousand have at least twelve descriptive attributes that provide the Bible student with the information necessary to determine their specific role during the Day of the Lord. The first of these twelve is found in Revelation 7:3:

"Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."

We have already covered the sealing or signature of God in their foreheads which provides their supernatural protection during the Day of the Lord. But the second attribute tells of their duty to God. They are called "*servants*" which literally means "slave or bondservant". This title is reserved for those who have surrendered their lives to the Lord for His service and glory.

Paul, James, John, Peter, Moses and the prophets are just a few of the men that are described by this word in the New Testament so we should recognize up front, that these are not just nominal or newly saved children of God, no, these are the "cream of the crop", the best there is on the planet, chosen and choice bond-servants of the Living God! The third attribute mentioned is found in Revelation 7:4:

"And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed and hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children (sons) of Israel."

Here we learn that they are "*sons*" which is the meaning of this Greek word "*children*", so they are men, but also the Lord makes it clear that their heritage or bloodline is from His earthly chosen people, the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel.

The tribe of Dan is omitted and the tribe of Ephraim although missing in name is represented under Joseph as he had only two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. But, this brings up another question. Who is a Jew? Is a Jew a self-proclaimed proselyte of Judaism? Is a Jew one who wears the orthodox garb and is seen on the news at the wailing wall? No, a Jew is one who is of the bloodline of the original twelve sons of Jacob as listed in the book of Genesis.

Their fourth attribute is found in Revelation 14:1:

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with Him and hundred forty and four thousand.”

These select servants of God are seen *“with the Lamb”*. It appears that they are inseparable as the Lord’s presence on mount Zion at the end of the 70th week of Daniel is recorded. The next thing we are told concerns their ability:

“And no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand.” (Revelation 14:3)

They will be the only men that can learn *“the new song”* which will be played by the heavenly *“harpers”*. Their extraordinary musical ability is demonstrated here as they sing unto the Lord with the scene taking on a holy heavenly aura *“before the throne”* with both heaven and earth harmonizing in instrument and song.

Also in verse three we are told of their redemption: *“which were redeemed from the earth.”* The focal point of all Scripture is the word redemption. Here the word emphasizes the price that was paid for the redemption or buying back of something, which in fact is already owned by God because He created all that exists.

But now He gives the life of His own Son to buy back, out of the slave market of sin, the souls of men which He already owned! Underline the Price that was paid, the precious blood of Christ! This prize group of men stand upon Mount Zion with the Lamb...one of the first and the last title given to the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament:

“Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)

“And there shall be no more curse, but, the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.” (Revelation 22:3)

This is a book of redemption, no less than twenty-eight times the Lord is given the title of *“the Lamb”* in this the final book of Scripture, which has as it’s emphasis throughout it’s entirety the glorious topic of redemption!

Then, Revelation 7:4 tells of their undefiled physical purity: *“These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.”* They have given themselves fully to the Lord, they have kept themselves pure physically, and thereby lessen one of the great temptations which in the last days of this age will be at the highest level ever thereby drawing men into sin.

“These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes.” (Revelation 14:4b)

This brief but fully descriptive statement indicates their total dedication to the Lord Jesus Christ. “Follow, follow, I will follow Jesus, anywhere, everywhere, I will follow Him” should be the heart-song of all who have been redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb!

“These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God, and to the Lamb” (Revelation 14:4c)

Here the same word is used describing their redemption, emphasizing the Price paid for their eternal souls, but an added statement reveals their position of being the first fruits or first to be redeemed under the Old Covenant of that future harvest of Israelites (Romans 11:25,26) during the 70th Week of Daniel.

Their moral purity is also indicated:

“And in their mouth was found no guile for they are without fault before the throne of God.” (Revelation 14:5)

The word “*guile*” lays emphasis on lies or falsehoods. “*Without fault*” indicates their blameless conduct.

These men, as part of the believing remnant of Israel “*shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth*” (Zephaniah 3:13) thereby providing them with continual abiding access to the throne of God!

This mighty group of end of the age disciples of Christ are, therefore, clearly identified as:

1. Sealed by the Signature of God (7:3)
2. Servants of God (7:3)
3. Sons of Israel (7:4)
4. Standing with The Lamb of God (14:1)
5. Singing a New Song (14:3a)
6. Saved from The Earth (14:3b)
7. Sanctified Physically (14:4a)
8. Surrendered Saints (14:4b)
9. Saved from among Men (14:4c)
10. Saved as First fruits unto God and The Lamb (14:4d)
11. Sanctified Morally (14:5a)
12. Serving before The Throne of God (14:5b)

In order to clearly realize the potential of this magnificent group of disciples of Christ, their sheer number, 144 Thousand, reveals that they will be a mighty dynamic force for Christ during the time of the end when they “*follow Him wherever He goes*”. Remember, they are 12,000 times His original group of 12 *Disciples* “*who turned the world upside down*” during the beginning of this age!

While the known world has exponentially grown since those days, their impact will be tremendously effective indeed for the gospel of Jesus Christ, during the great tribulation (Daniel 11:32-35,12:3,10) when they are being prepared for their Day of the Lord ministry.

They will be the instruments of God’s mercy to those Jews and Gentiles who will be saved during the closing days of this age and the following time period called “*The great and dreadful Day of the Lord.*” (Malachi 4:5,6)

They will be ready and willing to serve the King of kings, and Lord of lords Who is:

“*The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29)!