Lesson 23 - The Remnant and the 144,000



Jesus prophesied that before God will bring this wicked world to an end, “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness” (Matthew 24:14). When this prophecy is fulfilled, every person on this earth who has reached the age of accountability will have made his or her ultimate choice, either for or against Christ.

At that time, the whole human race will be polarized into only two distinct camps. The Bible describes these two groups in many different ways:

• Believers and unbelievers (John 3:18);

• Sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46);

• Those who have built their houses on the rock Jesus Christ and those who have built their houses on the sand of their own selfrighteousness (Matthew 7:24-27); and

• Those who are sealed with the seal of God and those who have received the mark of the beast (Revelation 7:1-3; 13:16, 17; 14:9, 10).

In other words, the two groups will be (1) those who belong to God and (2) those who are still ruled by Satan (see 1 John 5:19).

Because of this polarization, the closing events of this world’s history will culminate with the final showdown in the great controversy between Christ and Satan. As pointed out in Lesson 22, this controversy began in heaven when Lucifer, the highest angelic being, rebelled against Christ, the second Person of the Godhead (see Revelation 12:7-9).

In this final showdown, which the book of Revelation describes as the war of Armageddon or “the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Revelation 16:12-16), the conflict will actually be between God's people - the last generation of Christians, and Satan's people - those who have deliberately and ultimately rejected Christ and have chosen to be under the banner of Satan.

At that time, the faith of this final generation of Christians will be tried and tested to the utmost in a way that no other generation of believers has ever been tested.

666

False christs and prophets will incite the masses against

This final test is described in the Bible as the great tribulation or the time of trouble. It will take place just before the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world.

God’s people

once again.

Those believers who will endure this great time of trouble and will triumph over the full force of Satan's attacks are described in the Bible as the Remnant. They are the ones who “overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Revelation 12:11).

God’s people will have

an unshakable faith.

According to Bible prophecy, we are presently living in the antitypical Day of Atonement, the closing events of this earth's history. This was the subject of our last study. Therefore, it is God's purpose that every believer living in these last days be part of that last generation of Christians who will vindicate Him in this final showdown between Christ and Satan. In this study we will examine what the Bible has to say about the Remnant, whom we will discover are “the 144,000,” the ones who will vindicate the full power of the gospel by their unshakable faith.

1. What did Jesus say will take place before the end of the world? Matthew 24:14

According to Scripture, God does not want anyone to be lost (see 2 Peter 3:9). That is why He will not bring this sin-cursed world to an end until He gives everyone a chance to accept His gift of salvation in Christ.

2. How is this gospel of the kingdom described in the book of Revelation? Revelation 14:6

The reason why this final message to the world is called “the everlasting gospel” is because it was planned from eternity (see Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; and Revelation 13:8) and is the only message that offers everlasting hope to mankind. This is the message that will carry the last generation of Christians through the great time of trouble!

3. Who gets angry when the everlasting gospel is proclaimed and why? Revelation 12:12

The devil hates the everlasting gospel because it is the only power that he cannot defeat. He will therefore do his utmost to destroy anyone who proclaims this message as well as anyone who receives it.

4. How does the Bible describe the last generation of Christians? Revelation 12:17b

The last generation of Christians are described as “the remnant of her seed” (KJV). The word “remnant” in the Bible refers to God's people who remain faithful to Him no matter what happens; those whose faith endures to the end in spite of apostasy or persecution (see Romans 11:2-5).

5. According to the prophet Isaiah, who only will be saved? Romans 9:27

Finish Line

To experience ultimate salvation, it is not enough to believe in Christ; faith must endure unto the end (see Matthew 10:22). In the last days, the Christians who endure the time of trouble and remain faithful to Christ unto the end are called the Remnant.

6. What question does Jesus raise regarding His Second Coming? Luke 18:8

7. What similar question does John the Revelator ask? Revelation 6:15-17

Judging from the description given in Revelation 6:15, 16, it seems no one will be able to withstand the Second Coming of Christ. But in Revelation 7, John answers the question by describing the Remnant who will be able to stand. The word “Remnant” means the faithful ones.

8. What must happen before the great tribulation takes place? Revelation 7:2, 3

Before God allows Satan to test the Remnant, their faith has to be sealed. This seal in their foreheads means that their minds are fully settled into the truth of the gospel. Their faith in God's love, and the truth as it is in Christ, has become unshakable, no matter what Satan and the wicked do to them.

9. How many of the last generation of believers will be sealed? Revelation 7:4

The 144,000 who are sealed is not a literal number1. In Revelation 7:4, John does not see them but only hears their number. The reason for this is because they are scattered throughout the whole world. However, in Revelation 7:9, he sees them and they are "a great multitude, which no one could number." We know this vast multitude is referring to the 144,000 because in Revelation 7:13, 14 they are described as being victorious in the great tribulation.

10. What will the 144,000 sing in heaven, which no other saint can sing? Revelation 14:3

11. What makes these 144,000 so special in God's eyes? Revelation 14:4

The reason that the 144,000 will sing a new song is because it is the song of total victory over Satan. That is why they will be given special privileges in heaven. Their faith will have endured the great tribulation and in doing so, they will have vindicated God in the final showdown between Christ and Satan.

1 The symbolic nature of the 144,000 is conveyed in the rendering of the tribes of Revelation 7:4-8. Not all the tribes are listed (there is replacement with near kin), and their order is different than in the Old Testament. A secondary reason for ordering the tribes, as such, was to convey a special message, using the literal meaning of the Hebrew names.

In Revelation 7:9, 10 John sees the great multitude praising (Judah - Gen 29:35) God (the Father) and the Lamb (the Son: Reuben - Gen 29:32). This troop (Gad - Gen 30:11) is immensely happy (Asher - Gen 30:13) because they wrestled (Naphtali - Gen 30:8) with Satan, overcoming him by the blood of the Lamb (Rev 12:11). They forgot (Manasseh - Gen 41:51) the trials of the great tribulation as they heard (Simeon - (Gen 29:33) their reward: Forever, they will be "attached" (Levi - Gen 29:34) to the Lamb, following Him wherever He goes (Rev 14:1-4). There is hire (Issachar - Gen 30:18) for them, serving God day and night in His temple (Rev 7:15). He who sits on the throne will dwell (Zebulun - Gen 30:20; Rev 7:15) among them, for He will add (Joseph - Gen 30:24) them to be sons of the right hand (Benjamin - Gen 35:18) with the Lamb.

12. How does the prophet Daniel describe the great tribulation? Daniel 12:1

The great tribulation will be a time of trouble such as has not been experienced by any previous generation. The prophet Jeremiah gives a similar description (see Jeremiah 30:7). But both prophets indicate that God's sealed people, the Remnant, will be victorious and ultimately will be delivered.

13. What will make the time of trouble so terrible for the Remnant? Isaiah 54:7a

The issue in the great tribulation will be much more than physical torture. Rather, it will be similar to what Christ faced on the cross when He felt forsaken of God (see Matthew 27:46). In this great tribulation, God will produce a people who will manifest the faith of Jesus even though they feel God has abandoned them (see Revelation 14:12). This is the faith Christ manifested on the cross and which will be reproduced in the Remnant.

14. In order for our faith to be unshakable, in what must it be grounded? Ephesians 3:17

The word “dwell” in the original actually means “to permanently dwell.” This is possible only when our faith in Christ is rooted and grounded in God’s agape love, which we studied in Lesson 2. It is faith in this unconditional love that is able to keep us from falling in the great tribulation (read 1 John 4:16-19).

15. What should all Christians be convinced of regarding God's love? Romans 8:38, 39

When we are rooted and grounded in God's agape love, we will know that nothing on earth or in heaven can ever separate us from God's love, which was manifested to mankind in Christ (see Romans 5:5-10).

16. How does the prophet Jeremiah describe God's love? Jeremiah 31:3

There will never come a time when God will stop loving us. We may fail Him but He will never fail or forsake us. Although we will feel forsaken of God in the time of trouble, our faith in His love will be unshakable.

17. According to Paul, who is the source of our power in Christian living? 2 Corinthians 4:7

18. How does Paul describe the Christian battle between faith and feeling? 2 Corinthians 4:8, 9

We must never confuse faith with feelings. Under distress or persecution, the two will part company so that our feelings will contradict our faith. But we must not allow our negative feelings to get the better of us. Instead, our faith in God's love must be what directs our actions. May this be your experience.



Be prepared! During the Great Tribulation, our faith and feelings will part company. But never, ever give up your faith. You may feel that you have let God down. Do not be dismayed, for all fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Don't ever forget that it is only because of Jesus' righteousness - 2,000 years ago - that believers stand completely righteous in Him today (see Colossians 2:10). It is only as we are united to Christ by faith, that He may present us "holy, and blameless, and irreproachable in His sight" (Colossians 1:22). What is the condition? "If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard…" (Colossians 1:23).

My Response to Lesson 23

The word "remnant" means "faithful ones." In Revelation they are represented as the 144,000 who will vindicate Christ and the power of the gospel during great tribulation. Do you want to be one of them?

Response:

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