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The 144,000

The nature of the 144,000 is a topic of debate for many. The core debate is between whether there is a literally 144,000 people, or if the 144,000 are symbolic in some way.

Those are really our only two options. Random chance means that selecting either would give a 50% chance of getting it right, but we hope to do better than that.

This is not a subject matter that can be “proved” so to speak, until the event actually occurs. We are examining matters of prophecy, which is always an interpretive challenge.

The idea here is to suggest what might present itself as the most likely interpretation, letting the Bible interpret the Bible.

We first see the 144,000 first mentioned in Revelation 7.

Here we will see the following elements:

- These 144,000 are sealed prior to the resurrection.
- They are servants of God
- The 12 tribes of Israel are specifically mentioned.

Revelation 7:1-8

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed,
12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,
12,000 from the tribe of Gad,

12,000 from the tribe of Asher,
12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali,
12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,
12,000 from the tribe of Simeon,
12,000 from the tribe of Levi,
12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,
12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,
12,000 from the tribe of Joseph,
12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.

Because the 12 tribes of Israel are mentioned, some assumptions have been made that this cannot represent the foreigner or gentile that comes into the faith.

We would disagree with that position, as we believe those in the faith become part of the one true nation of YHWH.

Rather than re-teach that subject here, we would recommend the following teachings:

- [What Was The Mixed Multitude?](#)
- [Ekklesia](#)
- [The Error of Dispensationalism](#)

Why the tribe of Dan is not mentioned, we do not fully know for certain. Some theorized that it is because of Dan's guilt of severe idolatry. When we go into the land, at the return of our Messiah, we see that the tribe of Dan does receive land (Ezekiel 48:1).

The opinion is not ours, but that of Clarence Larkin. It does appear to be noteworthy. He writes:

"There is a remarkable difference in the names of the Tribes as here recorded and the names of the original Twelve Tribes. Here the names of Dan and Ephraim are omitted, and the names of Joseph and Levi are substituted. Why is this? The reason is plain. In Deuteronomy 29:18-21, we read that the man, or woman, or family, or TRIBE, that should introduce idolatry into Israel, should have their or its name "blotted out" from under heaven, and be separated out of the Tribes of Israel. This is just what the Tribes of Dan and Ephraim were guilty of when they permitted Jeroboam to set up "Golden Calves" to be worshipped, one at Dan in the "Tribe of Dan," and the other at Bethel in the "Tribe of Ephraim." (I Kings 12:25-30). This is the reason why the Tribes of Dan and Ephraim are omitted from the list in this chapter, and the names of Joseph and Levi substituted. But as the Tribes of Dan and Ephraim are in the list of the Twelve Tribes that shall occupy the Holy Land during the Millennium (Ezekiel 48:1-7,23-29) it is evident that the SEALING of the Tribes in this chapter is more for HEAVENLY PRESERVATION, than to keep them for an earthly inheritance, and this view is confirmed by the fact that they are later seen with the Lamb on the Heavenly Mount Zion. Rev. 14:1-5. The omission of their names in this list of these "SEALED ONES" is to show that the Tribes of Dan and Ephraim must pass through the Great Tribulation unprotected by sealing."

*The Book of Revelation; Clarence Larkin;
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The next occurrence of the 144,000 in Revelation is in chapter 14.

Here we will see the following elements:

- They have the same name of the Father and Son written on their forehead.
- They are with the Messiah on Mount Zion.
- These 144,000 are singing a new song that only they could learn.
- They are redeemed from the Earth.
- They are blameless, virgins and not defiled by women
- They follow our Messiah Yeshua

Revelation 14:1-5

Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.

They have the name of the Father and Son written on their forehead:

A name, or *shem* in Hebrew, denotes character and authority. The forehead represents the mind.

Writing His authority on our mind and heart determines what we think and desire.

Writing His authority on our hands represents what we do.

This is the core of the Hebraic concept of “*to hear and obey*” known as the “*shema*,” which is also the core of Deuteronomy 6:4-8

We discuss this Hebraic idiom in greater depth in the teaching “[*Welcome to the Whole Word.*](#)”

Interestingly enough, it is the frontal lobe of the brain that controls inhibitions, or recognizing wrong from right, and the application of consequences in the decision making process. As a side note, when one drinks alcohol, the frontal lobe is one of the primary parts of the brain that is immediately affected, which leads to the common occurrences of poor decision making and lack of inhibitions.

So what this means is that the authority of Word of God, which came from the Father, and was exemplified and taught by our Messiah, became the authority of their mind. It becomes what they desire, think, and do.

Romans 7:25

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ (Messiah Yeshua) our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind...

This is a prophecy of the New Covenant:

Hebrews 8:10

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put **my laws** (Torah) into their **minds**, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

This is a new covenant, but of the same law, or Torah, as stated by Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 31:33

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord (YHWH): I will put **my law** (Torah in Hebrew) **within them**, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

So, this is a new covenant, with the same law, or Torah, written on our hearts and minds.

They are blameless, virgins and not defiled by women:

The 144,000 are called "*virgins*" (Revelation 14:4).

Some have interpreted this to literally mean that implies a lack of sexual intercourse.

However, conceptually applying 2 Corinthians 11:2 affords a more logical interpretation.

The Corinthians had come out of as sexually active and perverted a culture as any in history, but Paul says that his goal was to present them "*as a pure virgin to Christ.*"

2 Corinthians 11:2

For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

Our Creator is not interested in whether we are literal virgins in coming to Him. He is interested in our spiritual state.

Ephesians 5:25-26 shows the people of the church, defiled by sin, becoming unspotted, unwrinkled, holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5:25-26

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

This is similar to Ezekiel 16:9 referring to Israel:

Ezekiel 16:9

Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil.

The 144,000 are cleansed by the water of the Word and presented as a pure virgin to our bridegroom.

"*Not defiled being defiled with women*" cannot mean that the 144,000 are only men.

The Bible often refers to false ways and doctrines as "*women.*" This, as a figure of speech means the 144,000 are not spiritually defiled with false doctrine.

We see this elsewhere as a concept introduced early in Revelation:

Revelation 2:22

Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works...

Is the 144,000 literal, or symbolic?

This brings us to the next matter of importance worth noting. The number for 144,000 is ONLY given in Revelation. We do not see that number in the TANAKH (Old Testament), so the interpretive methodology to understand that number likely stems from something in Revelation.

The New Jerusalem may unlock the meaning of the 144,000.

After Heaven and Earth pass away and are made new, the New Jerusalem descends.

The New Jerusalem is declared to be the bride.

Revelation 21:1-4

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Revelation 21:22-27

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Interestingly enough, there will be no more sun or moon. One of the main functions of the sun and moon was to be our Creator's calendar. Because light will exist eternally going forward, coming from the New Jerusalem, this represents an eternal uninterrupted day.

Our mourning and sadness is also taken away. This is all similar to Isaiah 60.

Isaiah 60

The sun shall be no more
your light by day,
nor for brightness shall the moon
give you light;
but the Lord will be your everlasting light,

and your God will be your glory.
Your sun shall no more go down,
nor your moon withdraw itself;
for the Lord will be your everlasting light,
and your days of mourning shall be ended.

So, with that aside, what we want to focus on at the moment is that the New Jerusalem is defined as the "*bride*."

Now, is YHWH married to a building?

No. Of course not...

The building is the "*wedding dress*" of the "*bride*" (us being the bride).

The building itself is a structure that contains us and metaphorically described as a wedding dress, so all of His people can be described as clothed in the New Jerusalem as it descends, and thus the New Jerusalem is referred to as His "*bride*."

The New Jerusalem consists of 12 gates, each gate being labeled as a tribe of Israel.

You enter the New Jerusalem by being one of the 12 tribes. If that does not register with you, again, we recommend the teaching "[*What Was The Mixed Multitude*](#)."

We see that when the 144,000 are specifically mentioned in Revelation 7 that it refers back to the 12 tribes of Israel, with 12,000 in each tribe.

12 tribes of Israel x 12 thousand being equal to 144,000

Where else do we see this in scripture? ...if we are to use the Bible to interpret the Bible?

The New Jerusalem also consists of 12 gates as the tribes of Israel, and 12 foundations, representing the 12 apostles who taught and practiced what our Messiah taught and practiced (The Word)...as the New Covenant began to be actualized with those in the faith.

Revelation 21:9-14

Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

This numerical symbolism revealed in the design and description of the New Jerusalem reflects Israel and the Word of God also as $12 \times 12 = 144$

This still leaves us with 1,000 missing from the equation.

$$144,000 / 144 = 1,000$$

So, what does the 1,000 symbolically represent?

1,000 is often numerically and symbolically used in Scripture to denote His covenant with us...

Deuteronomy 7:9

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God **who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations...**

1 Chronicles 16:15

Remember his **covenant forever**, the word that he commanded, for a **thousand** generations...

Psalms 105:8

He remembers his **covenant forever**, the word that he commanded, for a **thousand** generations...

To simplify this, the following points can be made.

- The 144,000 consists of 12 x 12,000 of Israel.
- This brings us to the description of the New Jerusalem which is a 12 of Israel as gates x 12 apostles as a foundation. This also equals to a 12 x 12 which is 144.
- This symbolically represents Israel and the foundation of the Word of God as those who have a right to enter. This is the essence of the New Covenant
- The New Covenant is numerically connected to 1,000 in Scripture.
- 144 (New Jerusalem) x 1,000 (New Covenant) equals 144,000
- Thus, in the end, all of those who are the New Covenant represent the 144,000 and have a right to enter into the New Jerusalem.

Though some of the New Covenant promises are in effect now, and even more so at the return of our Messiah, ALL of the promises of the New Covenant will be fully manifested and delivered at the time of the New Jerusalem.

Thus, the 144,000 likely symbolically represents the full actualization of the New Covenant with all of those in the faith, when things are made new.

Meaning, it's not a literal 144,000, but represents everybody in the faith.

This interpretation uses the Bible to interpret the Bible.

Those who interpret the 144,000 to be literal usually have this particular problem.

A literal 144,000 often uses unsupported speculation to force assumptions as to the actual purpose of a literal 144,000.

So, there are two choices from what we can see.

1) A literal 144,000 that is stated to have no real purpose, other than we know they are sealed, redeemed and resurrected (Revelation 7 and Revelation 14). This is really nothing different than what we already know about all those in the faith, so a literal application provides no additional meaning or value, and is actually kind of confusing.

2) Or, the 144,000, symbolically represents all of those who are redeemed and resurrected through the covenant promises of YHWH, and interpreted and discerned by what is revealed later in Revelation 21.

Pay particularly close attention to the sequence of the twelve tribes in Revelation 7. This is the only place in the Bible that the list appears in this order.

Hebrews often named their newborn child a word that had a phrase or meaning to the name given.

For example, when Leah gave birth to Judah she said “I will praise the Lord.”

When Reuben was born she said “He has looked upon my affliction”.

Normally the first born is listed first, but in the list of Revelation 7 Judah is listed first, not Reuben.

Dan and Ephraim are completely left out, likely because of disbelief and idolatry (Deuteronomy 29:18-21; Hosea 5:9, 11) so it's a very interesting sequence put together for us.

Here is the list and order they appear in Revelation:

1. Judah
2. Reuben
3. Gad
4. Asher
5. Nephtalim
6. Manasses
7. Simeon
8. Levi
9. Issachar
10. Zebulon
11. Joseph

and

12. Benjamin

When we take the tribes as listed in the order given, and then take the time to discover the meaning of and/or why those names were given, we get something very interesting after constructing it in the listed order.

Here are all the verses with the names:

Judah —

Genesis 29:35

And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, NOW WILL I PRAISE YHWH, therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing.

Reuben —

Genesis 29:32

And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said Surely YHWH HAS LOOKED UPON MY AFFLICTION; now therefore my husband will love me.

Gad —

Genesis 30:11

Then Leah said, “HOW FORTUNATE!” So she named him Gad.

Asher —

Genesis 30:13

And Leah said, HAPPY AM I for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher.

Nephtalim —

Genesis 30:8

And Rachel said, WITH GREAT WRESTLINGS HAVE I WRESTLED with my sister, and I have prevailed and she called his name Naphtali.

Manasseh —

Genesis 41:51

Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: “FOR GOD HATH MADE ME FORGET ALL MY TOIL and all my father’s house.”

Simeon —

Genesis 29:33

And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, BECAUSE THE LORD HATH HEARD THAT I WAS HATED, HE HAS THEREFORE GIVEN ME THIS SON also: and she called his name Simeon

Levi —

Genesis 29:34

“And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, NOW THIS TIME WILL MY HUSBAND BE JOINED UNTO ME, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi.

Issachar —

Genesis 30:18

Then Leah said, “GOD HAS GIVEN ME MY WAGES because I gave my maid to my husband.” So she named him Issachar.

Zebulun —

Genesis 30:20

Then Leah said, “GOD HAS ENDOWED ME WITH A GOOD GIFT; NOW MY HUSBAND WILL DWELL WITH ME, because I have borne him six sons.” So she named him Zebulun.

Joseph —

Genesis 30:24

And she called his name Joseph; and said, YHWH SHALL ADD TO ME another son.

Benjamin —

Genesis 35:17-18

And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; THOU SHALT HAVE THIS SON also. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin.

Now, when we take them all and put them in the order that they show up in Revelation, we are shown the following:

“Now will I praise YHWH, Surely YHWH has looked upon my affliction, How fortunate!, Happy am I, With great wrestlings have I wrestled and I have prevailed, For God has made me forget all my toil, Because YHWH has heard that I was hated he has therefore given me this son, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, God has given me my wages, God has endowed me with a good gift; my husband will dwell with me, YHWH shall add to me, thou shall have this son.”

The name Benjamin literally means “Son of My right hand” so another reading of the last portion could also be “YHWH shall add to me the Son of [His] right hand.”

Let this sink in for a moment. The way that the 12 tribes are listed in Revelation 7 describes the Bride of the Christ and the complete story of our Messiah Yeshua marrying His bride after delivering her from her affliction.

This is fulfillment of the prophecy regarding Israel in Hosea 2:

Hosea 2:14,16,19,

“Therefore I am now going to allure her (Israel) ... ‘In that day,’ declares the Lord, ‘you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master... [and] I will betroth you to me forever.’“

This is one of the ways that points us to the understanding that believing Israel is the Bride of Christ.

She always has been.

This is confirmed elsewhere.

Revelation 21:9-12

Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, **I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.**” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, **and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed—**

The last thing that we would like to mention is a particular verse in Revelation 14.

Revelation 14:4-5

These have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb. And in their mouth no lie was found for they are blameless.

The mention of first fruits is important here. For those that have heard of the Greater Exodus, where the events of Exodus play out again as part of the Great Tribulation, this could suggest that the 144,000 are called out into the wilderness starting during the Feast of Unleavened Bread which contains the day of First Fruits.

An alternate interpretation could be that we are simply referred to as first fruits simply because our Messiah was also our first fruits and we are joined to Him.

Some verses that could be examined to show all of us as the first fruits would be 1 Corinthians 15:23, and James 1:18.

This would also be additional evidence that the 144,000 as the first fruits is certainly much more than a literal 144,000.

Regardless of however you choose to interpret the 144,000, we pray that there was some insight presented in this teaching that assisted in sorting that out.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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