

#23

THE MEANING OF THE 144,000

As Jesus hung on the cross He was tempted three times by Satan to come down from the cross. Christ could have done this because He was God but He hung on the cross and faced this last terrible temptation. In darkness, apparently forsaken of God, He knew His Father's character, His justice, His mercy and His great love. It was by faith that He overcame His feelings that told Him that God had abandoned Him. He looked past circumstances and His own feelings and had total trust.

In the same way, just prior to the second coming of Christ, our faith will be tested to the very end. Those whose faith will endure the "great tribulation" are called the "144,000" in the Bible. These represent those believers who have overcome just as Christ overcame.

This study will trace the experience of this group who have heard and accepted the gospel, the righteousness of Christ as presented in the three angels message and have responded to these messages in faith.

1. What question is asked when the day of God's wrath has come?

Revelation 6:12-17

Note: This is the second coming of Christ, which is good news to believers but bad news to unbelievers.

2. What similar question does Jesus ask in this text? Luke 18:8, last part

3. What is the answer to the question at the end of time? Revelation 7:1-4

Note: God will have a people before the angels let go of the four winds of the earth.

4. In this text what is the destroying wind a symbol of? Jeremiah 49:36, 37

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Note: Wind is a symbol of war, strife and destruction. Viewed in the light of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, these destructive forces represent the efforts of Satan to spread ruin and destruction everywhere. These angels are holding in check the plans of the enemy. They are keeping the armies of Satan at bay until the sealing of God's people shall be accomplished. When the work of sealing is completed then God will allow Satan's destructive forces to come onto the world.

5. How many are sealed? Revelation 7:4 _____

Note: This number is symbolic of the faithful found at the end of time just before Christ comes.

6. Are these all literally from the nation of Israel? Galatians 3:26-29; Romans 2:28, 29; 4:11

Note: A believer is a "spiritual" Jew according to the Bible. Thus, these 144,000 refer to a group that is described in symbolic terms. The number "12" in the Bible refers to perfection or completion. 12 tribes of Israel, 12 disciples, etc. Therefore $12 \times 12 = 144$. The thousand is for emphasis that would be ultimate completion or perfection.

7. What does the Bible call this period of time? Daniel 12:1; Revelation 12:12

Note: When God's people are completely sealed with His Spirit and are prepared to stand during this difficult time then He will allow this terrible time to begin. "The wrath of Satan increases as his time grows short and his work of deceit and destruction will reach its culmination in the time of trouble. Fearful sights of a supernatural character will soon be revealed in the heavens in token of the power of miracle-working demons. As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan will impersonate Christ."

The Great Controversy, p. 623, 624

8. What will happen to God's people during this time? Revelation 14:12

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Note: They must endure the strife and confusion during this time of the mark of the beast. They must remain faithful to God and to His commandments.

9. Where will God be for us at this time? Isaiah 41:17, 10

Note: “The people of God will not be free from suffering but while persecuted and distressed, while they endure privation and suffer for want of food, they will not be left to perish. God who cared for Elijah will not pass by one of His self-sacrificing children. He who numbers the hairs of their head will care for them and in time of famine they will be satisfied. While the wicked are dying from hunger and pestilence, angels will shield the righteous and supply their wants.”
The Great Controversy, p. 629

10. What description is given of the 144,000? Revelation 14:1-5

Note: This group has the Father’s name written in their foreheads. They are sealed in their minds and have settled into the truth so that they cannot be shaken from it. They are also described in symbolic language as virgins.

11. What does “virgin” symbolize? 2 Corinthians 11:2 _____

Note: They are totally dedicated and loyal to Christ.

12. What promise does God make to His people? Jude 24 _____

Conclusion: The time of trouble that will precede the second coming of Christ will be a difficult one but we shall in the end be preserved by our God who loves and strengthens us. God will seal us with His mighty spirit so that we can stand during this time. God does not give us strength until the exact moment when we need it. We can trust in Him that He will take care of us day by day as our faith in Him continues to grow.

ANSWER KEY TO LESSON #23

- Q. 1- Who can stand against God's wrath?
- Q. 2- When the Son of Man comes will He find faith on earth?
- Q. 3- Yes, God will have a people when He returns
- Q. 4- War and destruction
- Q. 5- 144,000
- Q. 6- No, it is spiritual symbolism
- Q. 7- A time of distress or trouble
- Q. 8- They will have to endure during this time with God's grace
- Q. 9- God will be protecting us
- Q. 10- They follow the Lamb wherever He goes and are considered blameless
- Q. 11- A true follower of Christ
- Q. 12- He keeps us from falling and presents us as blameless