

Sabbath School Lesson #6 – The Sealed People of God – 2-8 February 2019

Christ has redeemed us with His blood. The memory text reads: “And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14). We focus on the 144,000 who are sealed. “Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand” {RH March 9, 1905 Par 5}. Note that you cannot with impunity neglect to strive with all the power that God has mercifully given you to be among 144,000 and still hope to enjoy eternity!

Sunday: Restraining the Winds – John “saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth” (Revelation 7:1) until the 144,000 are sealed. To those four angels “holding the four winds,” the “angel ascending from the east” said, “Hurt not the earth” until “we have sealed the servants of our God” (Revelation 7:2-3). The holding back of the four winds signify a probationary time in which God’s servants should be sealed. Winds symbolise political commotion, strife, and war (see Daniel 7:2; Jeremiah 25:32-33).

The winds are restrained till the sealing is accomplished such that when it takes effect, no further work of the gospel can be accomplished; when the sealing ends, probation ends; the winds of destruction will sweep the world. “In a little while every one who is a child of God will have His seal placed upon him. O that it may be placed upon our foreheads!” {RH May 28, 1889}. “Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads, – it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved, – just as soon as God’s people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already” (1 *Manuscript Release*, p. 249).

Monday: The Sealed People of God – Many Seventh-day Adventists think the number is symbolic because 144,000 is too small a fraction of the over 20 million membership of our church. The 144,000 fit well the title of a “little flock” (Luke 12:32). They are a people who have been subject to a very rigid test. The prophet Daniel speaks of them: “Many shall be purified, and made white and tried” (Daniel 12:10). The Lord says, “Many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14). In *Testimonies to the Church*, Ellen White says, “Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy, will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat” {5T 81.1}; “Soon God’s people will be tested by fiery trials, and the great proportion of those who now appear to be genuine and true will prove to be base metal” {5T 136.1}; “Not all who profess to keep the Sabbath will be sealed” {5T 213.2}. At Sunday law, many will fall, for “a large class who have professed faith in the third angel’s message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, [will] abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 608). The hundred and forty-four thousand must mean a literal number, composed of just the 144,000 individuals. It cannot stand for a larger symbolic but indefinite number, for in Revelation 7:9 another company is introduced which is indefinite in its proportions, and hence is spoken of as “a great multitude, which no man could number.” If the 144,000 were designed to represent a symbolic and an indefinite number, then John would have said, in verse 4, ‘And there were sealed a great multitude, which no man could number, out of all the tribes of the children of Israel.’ But instead of this, he says, the 144,000, twelve thousand from each tribe, a number, which number can be easily enumerated. The reason for this distinction is apparent if we take the innumerable multitude of verse 9 to be the whole host of the redeemed, who will have part in the first resurrection (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), and the 144,000 to be those who will be alive on the earth when Christ first appears. And that the 144,000 are the ones who will be thus alive, and meet Christ at His second coming, appears from the prophecy where they are next mentioned, that is, Revelation 14:1-5. Here the 144,000 are represented as coming triumphant out of the last religious conflict in this world (Revelation 13:12-18) and as being “redeemed from the earth,” and “redeemed from among men” (Revelation 14:3-4).

Our Adventist pioneers, with the prophetess Ellen White overseeing, taught that those who, since after 1844, die in the third angel’s message are part of the 144,000. A few quotes from our Adventist pioneers: RH Johnson: “Among those who shouted victory over the beast

and over his image were those who had come forth from their graves in the special resurrection, and were seen on the sea of glass. They were ‘the living saints, 144,000 in number’” (RH July 27, 1905). JN Loughborough, writing in 1916, a year after Ellen White died, as faith of some started to depart from established truth, wrote: “If it be claimed that none will be numbered among the 144,000 but those who live until Christ’s second coming, without tasting death, what about those Sabbath keepers who in 1848 to 1850 were being sealed? There are not a half dozen of those now alive who were then keeping the Sabbath. If they were then sealed, they will be among those resurrected to eternal life at the voice of God” (*Questions on the sealing message*, 1916, Par 24.3). This truth was taught for many years in the standard book edited by Uriah Smith called *Daniel and the Revelation* (DAR), which book Ellen White unreservedly endorsed as containing “solid, eternal truth for this time” {1MR 61.2}. Note: “Those who die after having become identified with the third angel’s message, are evidently numbered as a part of the 144,000; for this message is the same as the sealing message of Revelation 7, and by that message only 144,000 were sealed. But there are many who have had their entire religious experience under this message, but have fallen in death. They die in the Lord, and hence are counted as sealed; for they will be saved. But the message results in the sealing of only 144,000; therefore these must be included in that number. Being raised in the special resurrection (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 1:7) which occurs when the voice of God is uttered from the temple, at the beginning of the seventh and last plague (Revelation 16:17; Joel 3:16; Hebrews 12:26), they pass through the period of that plague, and hence may be said to come “out of great tribulation” (Revelation 7:14), and being raised from the grave only to mortal life, they take their stand with believers who have not died, and with them receive immortality at the last trump (1 Corinthians 15:52), being then, with the others, changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Thus, though they have passed through the grave, it can be said of them at last, that they are “redeemed from among men” (Revelation 14:4), that is, from among the living; for the coming of Christ finds them among the living, waiting for the change to immortality, like those who have not died, and as if they themselves had never died” {DAR 634.1*}.

Tuesday: The Great Multitude – John saw the 144,000, a numerable number, and then saw “a great multitude”, an innumerable people. This fulfils the promise made to Abraham. We recall that “to Abraham and his seed were the promises made; He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ.” There is no other seed of Abraham except Christ and those who are His. Therefore this innumerable posterity which was promised to Abraham, is identical with that seen by John (Revelation 7:9-10, 13-14). The blessing of Abraham comes on all nations in the cross of Christ, so that in the statement that this innumerable company have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, we fulfilled the promise to Abraham, of an innumerable seed. “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29).

Wednesday: Those Who Follow the Lamb – Those who will follow the Lamb wherever He goes for eternity, must first follow the Lamb here on earth. The question posed in the Lesson is this: In light of Revelation 17:5, in what sense have the 144,000 not been defiled with women? John saw that the hundred and forty-four thousand “were not defiled with women; for they are virgins” (Revelation 14:4). In the Bible, a woman is a symbol of a church. “Say unto Zion, Thou art my people” (Isaiah 51:16) and “I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman” (Jeremiah 6:2). The 144,000 profess a pure faith.

Thursday: Salvation to Our God and the Lamb – The Lesson asks how the state of being “without fault” is achieved in the characteristics of the 144,000. It is by every word that we live. “The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). This shows that the Scripture contemplates the existence of the just, that is, righteous persons, – not people somewhat better than the average, but people “without fault before the throne of God,” because Christ’s life is perfectly manifested in them. Of such it will be said: “Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” With them principle will never be subordinated to expediency, nor will they be dominated by circumstances. The law will appear in their lives as fully as it did in the life of Jesus, for the life of Jesus will be manifested in their mortal flesh. Such people are rare, but there must certainly be 144,000 among the living when Christ appears.