

SALVATION IN SYMBOLS & SIGNS

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Corresponds to Programs 27, 28

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the NKJV and KJV.

THE 144,000, PART 2 STUDY GUIDE

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 144,000

Read Revelation 14:1-5

In Revelation 14:1-5 there are eight basic characteristics of the 144,000 that can be identified biblically and applied to every generation of God's faithful people:

1. They stand on Mount Zion. This is the place to be occupied by all the redeemed (Hebrews 12:22-23).
2. They have the Father's *name* written in their foreheads. This would include everyone who is redeemed (Revelation 22:4).
3. They were *redeemed* from among men. This would include every saved person (Isaiah 43:1; 1 Peter 1:18).
4. They are *virgins*. The apostle Paul identifies all who believe the gospel and who follow Jesus to be "chaste virgins" (2 Corinthians 11:2-4). Christ used the same symbolic terminology to describe those who professed faith in Him (Matthew 25:1).
5. They *follow* the Lamb. This also applies to all faithful believers and not just literal Jews (1 Thessalonians 1:6; John 12:26).
6. They are the *firstfruits*. According to the Bible this means they are "begotten" or "born again" (James 1:17-18; John 3:3). According to Jesus, this experience is a qualifier for all who are to enter heaven—Old Testament and New Testament faithful (John 3:3; Jeremiah 2:3).
7. They have *no guile* in their mouths. This also is the experience of all who genuinely accept Christ as their righteousness, whether Jew or Gentile (1 Peter 3:10; Psalm 32:2).

8. They stand *without* fault before God. The promise of the Word of God is that Jesus is able to present us faultless before His throne. This, too, is the privilege of everyone, including the thief on the cross, who trusts in Christ as Savior (Jude 24).

The Great Multitude

So far in our study we have looked at a good bit of evidence that indicates the 144,000 is an inclusive group and one that is not restricted to the final generation of believers. It will be helpful at this point to see if the same can be said for the great multitude. Are they also an inclusive group or do they represent an exclusive group? Are they limited to those who come into the church at the end of time or to the faithful martyrs of past generations? If so, then here again we have an exclusive interpretation. Let's first take a look at the characteristics of the great multitude found in Revelation 7:9-17:



"These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes..."

REVELATION 14:4

1. They come from all nations, tribes and tongues (verse 9).
2. They are clothed in white robes of Christ's righteousness (verse 9, 13-14).
3. They give glory to God alone for their salvation (verse 10).
4. They have come out of great tribulation (verse 14).
5. They serve God in His temple day and night (verse 15).

A further evidence of this can be seen in the explanation in Revelation 7:14 that describes the great multitude as coming out of "great tribulation." This designation applies to God's people in every age, as the following statements confirm:

"Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, 'We must through many

KEY SCRIPTURES

Rev. 14:1 FATHER'S NAME ON THEIR FOREHEADS

Rev. 14:4 THEY FOLLOW THE LAMB

Rev. 14:4 THEY ARE FIRSTFRUITS TO GOD AND THE LAMB

Rev. 14:5 NO DECEIT FOUND IN THEIR MOUTHS

tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” Acts 14:22. Jesus also confirmed this when describing the “great tribulation” of the dark ages where millions lost their lives for Him (Matthew 24:21, 29).

Closing Thoughts

Ponder some closing thoughts of encouragement as John looks upon the great multitude of the redeemed and points out some important characteristics about them:

1. First he states that “no one could number” them (Revelation 7:9). This gives hope to all. Though the road to heaven is “narrow” and “few” find it, there will be countless millions saved at last (Matthew 7:13-14).
2. John also declares that the redeemed come from “all nations, and tribes, peoples, and tongues” (Revelation 7:9). Here is eloquent evidence “that God shows no partiality” (Acts 10:34-35). People of every race, nation, tribe or language are granted a place in His kingdom.
3. Then John describes the redeemed as “clothed with white robes” (Revelation 7:9). This indicates they have received the free “gift” of the cleansing “blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14; see also Isaiah 1:18). They do not depend on their works for salvation, but they cry, “Salvation to our God” and “to the Lamb” (Revelation 7:10).

4. Though they have “come out of great tribulation,” “they shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore” (Revelation 7:14, 16). Neither shall they know sorrow anymore, for “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (Revelation 7:14, 16-17). Here is tremendous hope for us now. Someday soon, life is going to be different. Pain, sorrow, sickness, mourning, heartache, and death were never in God’s plan for us. And soon, very soon, all things will be new. This is the closing message of Revelation chapter 7.

Summary—Many view the 144,000 as solely the end-time people of God, primarily because they are described in the eschatological prophecy of the book of Revelation. Yet the characteristics of the 144,000 in Revelation 7:1-8 and Revelation 14:1-5 reveal character qualities that are found in God’s faithful people in all ages and not just in the final generation. Others feel that they could never be part of this elite group, but salvation is for all through the blood of the Lamb, not the works of the flesh. The blood of Jesus represents His perfect life and His penalty-satisfying death for our sin. We are called to follow the Lamb wherever He goes, to stay connected to the white horse Rider, to behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah. It is the Savior’s work to save us and what He authored, He is well able to finish for all who surrender to Him. ★

