

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and
strength and honor and glory and praise!

Revelation 5:11-12

Heaven's Worship

with Pastor Steve

The Seal of the Worshiper

Then I looked and behold a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

Revelation 14:1-3

Present with Jesus in the midst of Mount Zion is 144,000 who have his Father's name written on their foreheads. Who are these 144,000? We are first introduced to them in Revelation 7:4. John shares that he saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth who had been given the power to harm the earth and the sea. Suddenly another angel appears for the east with the seal of the living God. He commands the other angels not to harm anything until the servants of God have been sealed. The number of servants sealed by the angel were 144,000 from the tribes of Israel; 12,000 from each tribe.

Many bible teachers have taught through the years that the 144,000 are virgin Jewish males who will be sealed before the 1000 year reign of Christ. Though they may be right this is not a belief to which I adhere.

There are a couple of things that stand out to me as I read this passage. First, traditionally when Jewish genealogies were given the oldest son was mentioned first. In this tribal listing the tribe of Judah is listed first; he was actually the fourth born. The significance of this is that Jesus was born of the tribe of Judah; the tribe of praise. Secondly, this listing of the tribes is not the same as we see in the Old Testament. There was no tribe of Joseph, but Joseph is listed in verse eight. His tribe was split into two tribes; Ephraim and Manasseh. Ephraim is not mentioned among the tribes in Revelation 7 and neither is the tribe of Dan.

I believe numbers are important only as they represent concepts. If you take a careful look at the numbers used in the book of Revelation you will find many numbers that are either factors or products of twelve. For instance you have four living creature, twenty-four elders and 144,000 servants of God; 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Twelve or forms of twelve are used in numerous places throughout scripture. Jesus had twelve disciples. David appointed twenty-four courses of twelve singers, a total of 288, to worship twenty-four hours a day around the Ark of the Covenant that he placed in a tent in Mount Zion. Therefore it is my belief that the number twelve represents completion or totality. Hence the 144,000 represent the totality of the worshiping church which is the true Israel of God.

We have learned from Paul's teaching that, through Christ, God makes no distinction between races of people (Romans 10:12). He writes to the Roman Christians, *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.* (Romans 2:28-29) Paul also wrote to the Galatians and the Colossians that there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcised or uncircumcised, but that all are one in Christ (Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11). He clearly conveys that the true Israel of God consists of people who have believed on Jesus and have put away the works of the flesh, whether Jew or Gentile. This further establishes the true identity of the 144,000 servants of God.

John gives a detailed description of the 144,000. *These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.* (Revelation 14:4-5)

In addition to this description John says they have the mark of Jesus' Father on their foreheads and sing a new song before the throne, the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who were redeemed from the earth. These characteristics of the 144,000 servants of God outline the qualifications for those who are true worshipers of God.

All true worshipers have the seal of God on them. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 4:11 that circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of the faith of Abraham which he had while still uncircumcised. Today believers are sealed by circumcision of the heart; the cutting away of the old man and sin nature. He writes to Timothy that God knows those who are his and has sealed them. He continues, *Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.* (2 Timothy 2:19) True worshipers depart from iniquity. They are not slaves of sin, but slaves to God.

Paul also wrote to the Ephesians concerning the seal of God. *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. . . .* (Ephesians 1:13) *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* (Ephesians 4:30) Paul also wrote to the Corinthians, . . . *who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.* (2 Corinthians 1:22)

The 144,000 received the seal of God because they had trusted in him and believed the word of truth. Their belief in God was more than just a mental acknowledgement that he existed. Many people today have watered down what it means to believe in Christ. To believe in Christ means to come under the mastery of his lordship. This means being obedient to his word and participating in his works on earth. These servants of God had his mark on their foreheads. In other words they had a change of mind. They forsook the world's system to pursue the kingdom of God.

True worshipers today are given this same mandate. *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* (Romans 12:2) In his letter to the Colossians Paul wrote, *Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.* (Colossians 3:2) *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* (Romans 8:5)

Jesus said the greatest commandment of all was to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind (Matthew 22:37). God made a covenant with his people by saying, *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them.* (Hebrews 10:16)

Worship is more than a time slot to be filled on Sunday morning. Worship begins before the music or preaching starts; when no one is looking. Worship is a way of life; daily giving oneself to God and his purposes. True worshipers are those who have believed on Christ for salvation. They have been sealed by the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of that salvation. Consequently they have forsaken the world's system, the works of the flesh, and live by the Spirit of God. God's laws have been written in their hearts and minds and those laws govern their behavior. A true worshiper has an intimate relationship with the Father and loves him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength.

In Revelation 22:3-4 John shares his vision of the final resting place for the servants of God. *And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him. They shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads.*