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# Messianic Perspectives<sup>®</sup>

*God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.*

**SEVEN**

**THINGS**

**EVERY CHRISTIAN**

**SHOULD**

**KNOW**

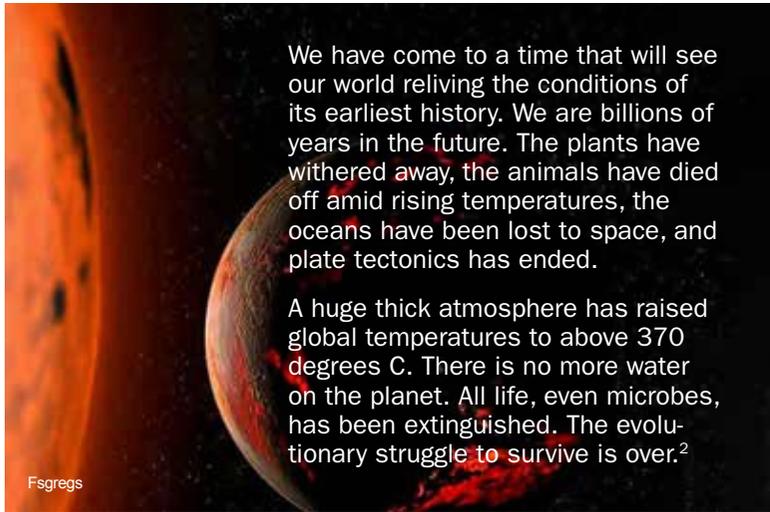
**ABOUT THE**

**144,000**

**BY DR. GARY HEDRICK**

Genesis and Revelation are the bookends of the Bible. They are its first and last books. In Genesis, God tells us how the world began; in Revelation, He tells us how it will end.

There's a great deal of controversy these days about the end of the world. No one is arguing about *if* the world will end someday. Pretty much everyone agrees that it will. The question, then, is *how*. Even the secularists and naturalists—the high priests of Darwinism—think they know how the world will end. They have developed their own eschatology, complete with a prophesied, end-of-the-world scenario.<sup>1</sup> Here's how two professors from the University of Washington envision the future, evolutionary demise of Planet Earth:



The controversy, you see, isn't over the question of *if* the world will end. It's more about *when* and *how* it will end.

Much of the Darwinian scenario is speculative. Believers, however, don't have to do a lot of guesswork about this. The Bible provides us with very precise information about the future course of human history. The Book of Revelation, the magnum opus of future prophecy, covers three timeframes (relative to the time it was written—around AD 95): past (“write the things which you *have seen*”), present (“the things which *are*”), and future (“the things that *will take place* after this”).<sup>3</sup>

The *past*, from John's standpoint in the first century, was the vision of Yeshua (Jesus) he had seen earlier in Chapter 1.<sup>4</sup> The *present* (i.e., John's present, in the first century) referred to the seven churches in Asia Minor (Chapters 2 and 3). Those churches no longer exist. The *future* begins in Chapter 4 and goes to Chapter 22.<sup>5</sup>

Two key chapters regarding the future are Revelation 7 and 14, where we read about a mysterious army of 144,000 “servants of our God.” Who are they? Where will they come from? What will their mission be and how will it impact God's end-time plan?

## Revelation 7:1-17

- <sup>1</sup> After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.
- <sup>2</sup> Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,
- <sup>3</sup> saying, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”
- <sup>4</sup> And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed:
- <sup>5</sup> of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed;
- <sup>6</sup> of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed;
- <sup>7</sup> of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed;
- <sup>8</sup> of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.
- <sup>9</sup> After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,
- <sup>10</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”
- <sup>11</sup> All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,
- <sup>12</sup> saying: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”
- <sup>13</sup> Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?”
- <sup>14</sup> And I said to him, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
- <sup>15</sup> “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.
- <sup>16</sup> “They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;
- <sup>17</sup> “for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

## Messianic Perspectives®

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## Revelation 14:1-16

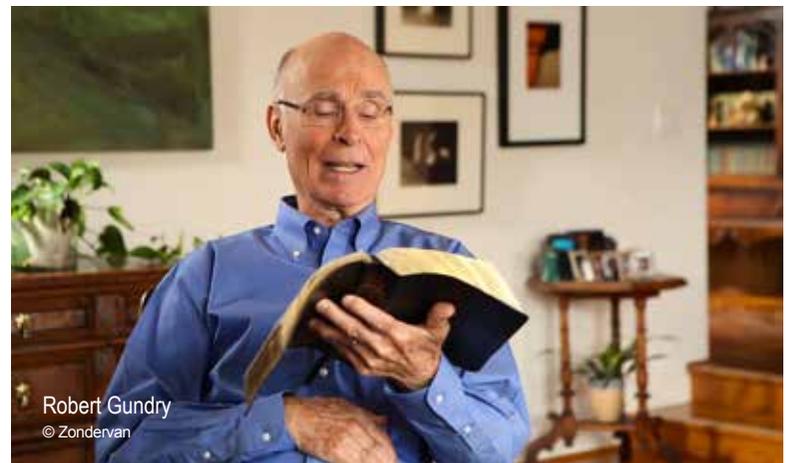
- <sup>1</sup> Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.
- <sup>2</sup> And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps.
- <sup>3</sup> 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.
- <sup>4</sup> 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.
- <sup>5</sup> And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.
- <sup>6</sup> Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—
- <sup>7</sup> saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”
- <sup>8</sup> And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”
- <sup>9</sup> Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand,
- <sup>10</sup> “he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.
- <sup>11</sup> “And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”
- <sup>12</sup> Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.
- <sup>13</sup> Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”
- <sup>14</sup> Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.
- <sup>15</sup> And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”
- <sup>16</sup> So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

A confusing array of answers to these questions has been proposed by Bible interpreters and teachers. Our preterist friends, for example, say that the entire Book of Revelation—including the description of the 144,000—is about the past (i.e., mostly about events that took place in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70).<sup>6</sup> They insist that Revelation has little, if anything, to do with the future. Another group, the amillennialists, take the “idealist” approach, for the most part, which says the Book of Revelation isn’t meant to be understood literally. They say it’s not about literal people or events in the future. It’s a collage of symbols and images that can be interpreted to mean almost anything, depending on how you attribute the symbols.

The way many evangelicals look at these “144,000” passages is driven by their supersessionist (i.e., Replacement Theology, or RT) presumptions. RT says ethnic Israel is all washed up, as far as God is concerned. He rejected Israel when her rulers rejected His Son 2,000 years ago. He has replaced Israel with the Church, they claim.<sup>7</sup>

Even those RT people who agree that the Book of Revelation is about the future can’t identify these 144,000 “servants of our God” as ethnic Jews because, according to the RT paradigm, Israel as a nation has no future role in God’s plan.<sup>8</sup> So, they must conclude that the 144,000 sealed servants in Revelation 7 and 14 are symbols for something else—namely, the Church. The number 144,000 (12,000 x 12), they claim, signifies completion—that is, the total number of believers comprising the Church.

But it’s a shaky thesis. Even Robert Gundry, the well-known preterist scholar, rejects the notion that the 144,000 represent the Church. He says they can only be Jewish believers “Therefore, these ‘servants of God’ from the ‘twelve tribes of Israel’ (7:4-8) are racial Jews who accept the Lamb of God for salvation (they later appear with him on Mount Zion, 14:1-5).”<sup>9</sup> He’s right! Any other interpretation deviates from the most natural reading of the text.



Robert Gundry  
© Zondervan



Nonetheless, the RT people stick by their guns. Such notable evangelical organizations as the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) and the Gospel Coalition occasionally contribute to the confusion by promoting a supersessionist viewpoint.<sup>10</sup>

Why should we care about the 144,000? Is this topic all that important, or is it peripheral at best? After all, many believers have never heard of the 144,000—let alone care about who they are. However, we care for the same reason our RT opponents care: that is, because the topic touches not only on future prophecy, but also on biblical hermeneutics, textual studies, and other areas of theology. It is hugely consequential.

## 1. These 144,000 servants of God aren't mere symbols.

First, these “servants” aren't just symbols. Everyone—including those of us who consider ourselves literalists—realizes there are many symbols and images in the Bible, especially in the Book of Revelation. One thing that makes the interpretation of Revelation a bit dicey in places is the sticky task of unraveling literal and figurative elements that are intertwined. A simple rule of thumb is that if a passage's plain sense makes common sense, seek no other sense<sup>11</sup>—but in Revelation, that's often easier said than done. The easier way out, of course, is to take the amillennial approach and just spiritualize everything. That way, we can make it mean anything we want. Alas, however, one of life's universal axioms is that the easier way typically isn't the best way.

Amillennialists, however, spiritualize (or allegorize) much of the Bible—and almost all of the Book of Revelation. And, they make it sound convincing! They're especially fond of spiritualizing God's promises to Israel so they can be diverted to the Church. A.A. Hodge, a 19th-century proponent of the allegorical (spiritualized) approach, writes: “The Old Testament prophecies, . . . which predict this [Davidic] kingdom, must refer to the present dispensation of grace [the Church], and not to a future reign of Christ on earth in person among men in the flesh.”<sup>12</sup>

The venerable Church Father, Augustine, began his career as a literalist-premillennialist,<sup>13</sup> but later changed directions and developed early Amillennialism and its allegorical approach to Scripture. Virtually all amillennialists say the 144,000 in Revelation symbolize the Church. True to form, they avoid the negative implications of post-tribulational eschatology (i.e., the view that the Church will go through the Tribulation) simply by allegorizing the Tribulation, too.<sup>14</sup>

However, I respectfully submit that this (i.e., the 144,000 in Revelation 7 and 14) is one of those instances where the literal, plain sense (see below) makes much better sense than the spiritualized alternative.

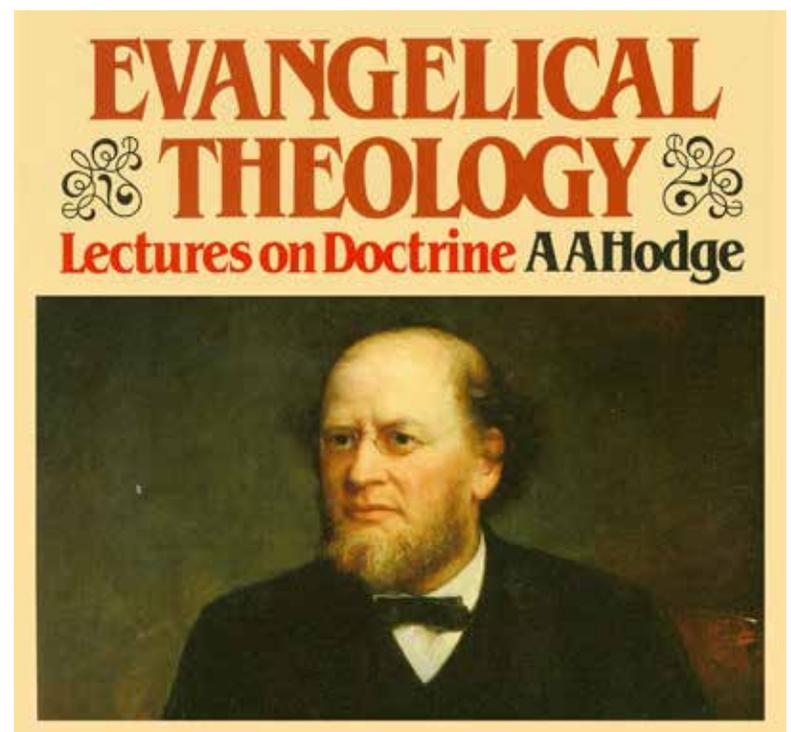


Saint Augustine  
Philippe de Champaigne

## 2. They will be Jewish believers representing the 12 tribes of Israel.

We've already observed that many commentators say the 144,000 in Revelation symbolize the Church. One problem with this spiritualized approach is that John provides so much specific detail about who the 144,000 are. Not only does he provide a detailed, tribe-by-tribe listing, but he prefaces that list by saying they're from “all the tribes of the children of Israel” (7:4).<sup>15</sup> How much clearer can it be?

John is referring here to an army of Jewish believers who will be called by God to be His servants during the future Tribulation Period. Will there really be exactly 144,000 of them? The symbolism of the number (12 x 12 x 1,000) is clear enough—it's the number of the tribes of Israel squared and then multiplied by a thousand, signifying completeness or fullness. But this is one of those cases where the reference can be symbolic and literal at the same time. I see no reason to assume that there won't actually be 144,000 of these men.<sup>16</sup>



The “144,000” passage is so obviously and unmistakably Jewish, some critics have theorized that those verses in Revelation 7 must have been inserted in the text later: “A Christian writer [i.e., John], it is argued [by the critics], would hardly have listed the twelve tribes separately as is done in vv. 5-8 in speaking of the church as the 144,000.”<sup>17</sup> So they try to resolve the problem by saying the text must have been tampered with—and in doing so, they confirm my point. Taken at face value, these 144,000 men are Jewish!

Yet RT proponents persist in their insistence that the 144,000 servants are the Church, despite the tribe-by-tribe enumeration. That's a bit like me saying that I enjoy watching the Chicago Cubs play baseball. Then, someone pipes up and says, “Well, Gary's using the Cubs as a symbol. He's talking about baseball in general, not the literal Chicago Cubs.” So, I elaborate. I say, “I like seeing Zobrist, Schwarber, and Almora in the outfield, Rizzo at first base, Happ at second base, Baez at shortstop, Bryant at third base, and Contreras behind the plate.”

That pretty much clinches it, don't you think? I'm talking about the real Cubs. I'm not using them as a symbol for something else.

The point is this: the more confirming details we have, the less likely it is to be merely symbolic. The fact that even our critics agree only strengthens our case. In Revelation 7, the tribe-by-tribe listing points clearly to ethnic Israel (see above). After all, the Church has no tribes. (Even if the 144,000 were somehow a symbol, it would be a symbol for *Am Yisra'el*, the People of Israel, not for the Church!) To make RT work in Revelation 7, its proponents are forced to plug in a definition of "Israel" that's used nowhere else in the Bible.<sup>18</sup>

There is little doubt that these 144,000 men are Jewish believers in Yeshua (Jesus). They represent the 12 tribes of ancient Israel whose scattered descendants will have survived even into the future Tribulation Period. In ancient times, those 12 tribes comprised two distinct kingdoms (north and south); but today they are one united Israel (Ezek. 37:21-28).

**THE PROPHETIC TIMETABLE**  
*Intersecting with Events in Revelation*

The Rise of the Antichrist  
Dan. 7; Rev. 17:12

The Ratification of the Seven-Year Treaty  
Dan. 9:26-27; 1 Thess. 5:3

The Redemption of the Remnant  
Matt. 24:14; Rev. 7:4-17

The Roar of the Bear (Gog & Magog I & II)  
Ezek. 38 & 39; Rev. 20:8-10

The Ransacking of the Temple ("Abomination of Desolation")  
Dan. 9:27; 12:11; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:3-4

The Retreating of the Jewish People to Petra  
Isa. 16:1;<sup>1</sup> Dan. 11:41; Rev. 12:6, 14

<sup>1</sup>In Isaiah 6:1, the Hebrew *Sela* (סֵלָא) means "Rock" (equivalent to the Greek *Petra*), so the reference here is seen by some scholars as pointing prophetically to "the rock-city of Idumaea" (Strong's H5553) or the ancient "Red Rock" city of Petra in modern-day Jordan.

By the way, the fact that the tribal listing in Revelation is irregular (i.e., this exact arrangement of 12 tribes isn't found anywhere else in Scripture) isn't unusual.<sup>19</sup> In fact, manipulating the list of tribes is a very Jewish thing to do. In Genesis 30-31, for example, the tribes are listed in birth order: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. In Genesis 49, they're listed in the order that Jacob blessed them. In Exodus 1:1-7, they're listed in their marching order on their way to Egypt. In 1 Chronicles 2:1-55, the emphasis is on the Davidic throne and the primacy of the tribe of Judah.<sup>20</sup> The arrangement in Revelation 7 likewise gives Judah the preeminent place. After all, our Messiah is "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah" (Rev. 5:5).

Remember that the New Testament—including the Book of Revelation—is just as Jewish as the Old Testament. If you want to read a Gentile "church" document, go to the library and find a papal encyclical or something Constantine, Calvin, or Luther wrote. The Book of Revelation is Jewish and is best understood when it's interpreted through a Messianic (Jewish-Christian) grid.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. They will be "sealed" by God.

In Bible times, a literal seal was a glob of hot wax that was marked with the owner's signet ring before it dried and hardened. Documents, scrolls, and letters were sealed in this way. When a document was received and the wax seal was still intact, the recipient knew it hadn't been tampered with. The wax seal could only be broken by (1) the rightful recipient or (2) someone higher in rank than the person who originally put the seal in place (Esther 8:8).

The term "seal" came to signify more than a literal, wax seal. It signified protection (Rev. 9:4), endorsement/identification (John 6:27), ownership (Esther 3:12; 2 Tim. 2:19), and security (Matt. 27:66; Rev. 20:3).

In the case of the 144,000, all these aspects will be in play. These divinely-called agents will be protected, endorsed, and secured by God. They will also belong to Him as His special servants.



### 4. They will carry out their mission during the Tribulation Period.

The 144,000 will need God's special help and protection because they will be His special messengers during the most dark and difficult times in the history of the world. It will be the long-awaited, eschatological Day of the LORD. It won't be a literal, 24-hour day, but a period of seven years or more,<sup>22</sup> when God judges the nations and brings this stage of human history to a definitive and judicious close.<sup>23</sup>

During the Tribulation, the cosmic conflict that's been going on in the heavenlies since before time began (Dan. 10:1-21; 2 Cor. 10:3-6; Eph. 6:10-12) will spill over onto the earth. Earth-dwellers will be terrified at the supernatural beings and phenomena they'll witness as the conflict heats up and the entire globe devolves into a dangerous war zone:

*And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,*

*and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"*

*"For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Rev. 6:15-17).*

## 5. Their mission will be to proclaim “the everlasting Gospel” to the world.

*Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people (Rev. 14:6).*

The word “preach” here (as well as the noun form for “gospel”) is *euangelizo* which means “to bring good news.” Contextually, note the following facts about this “everlasting gospel”:

- A. There’s a connection between events in the seen (earthly) and unseen (heavenly) realms (v. 6). They are related. The earthly stage is merely a reflection of the conflict happening in the heavenlies. An angel has this gospel in heaven—and it’s the mission of the 144,000 to proclaim it on the earth.
- B. The everlasting gospel will be preached to everyone—every nation, tribe, tongue, and people (v. 6). Anyone who responds positively (and hasn’t taken the mark of the Beast) can be saved.<sup>24</sup>
- C. The content of this tribulational Good News will be:
  - (1) Fear God and give glory to Him (v. 7).
  - (2) The Judge of all the Earth is on His way (v. 7).
  - (3) Worship Him as Creator (v. 7).<sup>25</sup>
  - (4) The Beast’s (i.e., Antichrist’s) earthly base (Babylon) has already fallen (v. 8).<sup>26</sup>
  - (5) Beware—don’t worship the Beast or take his “mark” (vv. 9-11).<sup>27</sup>

Note that ancient Israel waited about 2,000 years for the Messiah’s *first* coming—and the Church (the Messianic Community) has been waiting for about 2,000 years for His *second* coming.

## THE GRAND FINALE

As the smoke begins to clear at the close of the Tribulation, we strain our eyes to see through the haze. Did they make it through the Tribulation? Did the 144,000 survive? The answer is in Revelation 14:1.

*“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.”*

This is a hiatus in the prophetic sequence of events, giving us a glimpse of the 144,000 standing on Mount Zion in the Millennial Kingdom. They are singing in harmony with a heavenly chorus. Yes, they have survived!

Notice: The Shepherd started out with 144,000—and He ends up with exactly the same number. After coming through the Great Tribulation, He doesn’t have 143,998 or 143,999, but the full 144,000. He lost not even one, for He redeemed and protected them. Now, the Lamb of God has the final word: Babylon will fall, the one-world system of Satan will crumble, and the Beast will be judged. The darkness of Tribulation is already fading, because the morning is coming when the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings.

It’s exciting to think that CJF Ministries, along with other ministries like ours, all have the privilege of laying the groundwork for the fulfillment of end-time prophecies about the Messianic Jewish mission of evangelism during this future epoch. We are sowing seeds among the Jewish people now that will sprout and bring forth life someday when that army of 144,000 Jewish evangelists goes forth and takes the Gospel of the coming Kingdom to the four corners of the earth.

## 6. They will be “firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.”

Modern interpreters who want to transform these 144,000 Jewish believers into homogenous church members sometimes overlook the fact that they are referred to as “firstfruits to God and the Lamb” (14:4).

This means that whoever these 144,000 men are, they are *the first ones to be saved and sealed by God* from their demographic (i.e., whether Jewish or Gentile). It’s unlikely that they’re Gentiles, though, because the souls of Gentile martyrs are already in Heaven as early as Chapter 6 (vv. 9-11). Therefore, the 144,000 are not “firstfruits” from among the Gentiles, but from among *Am Yisra’el*, the People of Israel.



The Hebraic term “firstfruits,” then, means that on the tribulational timeline, the 144,000 are the first Jews to be saved—and they facilitate a much larger harvest of humanity (Jewish and Gentile) that comes later (7:9-10).

The critics, however, point out that the text says the 144,000 will be “redeemed from among men.” They claim this means the 144,000 are redeemed from the mass of humanity and therefore come from no specific ethnic demographic. However, this is a weak argument.

You see, Jewish people have spent much of their history fleeing persecution. When they have been attacked in Israel, they have fled to other parts of the world, both near and far. Even today, despite the existence of a vibrant and flourishing Jewish State in the Middle East, Jewish Diaspora communities remain scattered in virtually every corner of the world.

When God calls these 144,000 Jewish evangelists, then, they will come from every direction, including from Israel itself. The fact that they are said to be “redeemed from among men” (14:4) doesn’t mean they won’t be Jewish. It means they will come from all the nations where Jewish people have been scattered.

These Messianic operatives during the Tribulation will be a believing Jewish remnant—that is, a relatively small subset of the People of Israel. This is how God has worked throughout Israel’s history. Repeatedly, He has worked through (and on behalf of) the faithful, believing minority.<sup>28</sup>

In Elijah’s day, the Jewish remnant numbered only 7,000 men in all of Israel (1 Kings 19:18; Rom. 11:1-6). During the future Tribulation, however, they will number (at first) at least 144,000—with a much larger harvest coming later (cp. Rom. 11:26).

## 7. They will prepare the way for our Warrior Bridegroom.

The Book of Revelation portrays our returning “King of kings and Lord of lords” not only as a Bridegroom (19:7-9), but also as a Warrior: *Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war* (v. 11).

The text indicates that the Messiah will be extremely vexed when He appears at Armageddon: “He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (v. 15). Just think of all the pain, heartache, and misery that’s been inflicted on the human race since the beginning of time. Every time a heartbroken parent had to sit at a hospital bedside and watch a child die, He was there. Every time someone was sold into slavery, He was there. Every time the poor and the weak were browbeaten by powerful oppressors, He was there. He has witnessed all of it—every wretched work of the Enemy of our souls—and He is angry. The cup of His wrath is boiling over.

He makes quick work of the armies of the world; it happens so quickly, in fact, that John doesn’t see it. The destruction evidently takes place with lightning-quick efficiency between the 19th and 20th verses. In Verse 15, He’s about to “strike the nations”; and in Verse 17, birds are being recruited to clean up the bloody carnage in the aftermath of the battle. In Verse 19, the Beast and his hordes “make war against” Yeshua and His army; and in Verse 20, it’s over. The Antichrist and the False Prophet are already being led away in chains to their final judgment.

Verse 21 reports, after the fact, that the enemy armies were annihilated by our Warrior-Messiah. That’s what happened between Verses 19 and 20.

This is just one more reason to believe the Bible is inspired by God. If the Book of Revelation was merely a human literary work, the battle would undoubtedly have received more of a Hollywood-like treatment. If I had been the writer, I would have wanted to stretch the Battle of Armageddon out over at least two or three chapters. I would have made it graphic and dramatic. When I was finished, it would have resembled something that would rival the special effects of Industrial Light & Magic. That’s what a human writer would have done.

But God didn’t do it that way. As the scenes in this apocalyptic vision were passing before the aged Apostle’s eyes, he blinked between the 19th and 20th verses and the battle was already over. No drama; no spectacle; no special effects required. It’s just the Lord taking care of business.

Notice, too, how God’s justice levels the playing field for everyone. No one is exempt. No one escapes, not even kings. African warlords, human traffickers, drug kingpins, and billionaire power brokers can’t bribe their way out of this trouble because God’s justice isn’t for sale. They’ll die just like dirt-poor paupers. God invites the birds to “eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all *people*, free and slave, both small and great” (v. 18).



L'Ouverture du deuxième sceau (Opening of the second Seal)  
Philipp Jakob Louterbourg d. J.

These 144,000 Jewish “servants of our God,” then, will help prepare the way for our incensed Warrior-Bridegroom, much like John the Baptist prepared the way before Him at His first coming: *For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:*

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:  
‘Prepare the way of the LORD;  
make His paths straight’” (Matt. 3:3).



*Dr. Gary Hedrick  
is president of  
CJF Ministries.*

<sup>1</sup> The word “eschatology” comes from the Greek words *eschatos* (lit., “last things”) and *logos* (“study”) and signifies the study of end-time prophecy.

<sup>2</sup> *The Life and Death of Planet Earth: How the New Science of Astrobiology Charts the Ultimate Fate of Our World* by Peter Ward and Donald Brownlee (New York: Times Books, 2003), 149.

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 1:19.

<sup>4</sup> Progressive dispensationalists see two timeframes (rather than three) in the Book of Revelation: the present age and the age to come.

<sup>5</sup> J. Vernon McGee points out that the Apostle John saw farther into the *past* (John 1:1-2) and farther into the *future* (the Book of Revelation) than any other biblical writer. John’s inspired observations, recorded in the NT, cover an immeasurable span from before the creation of the world, through the panorama of world history, and on into eternity future.

<sup>6</sup> The preterists rely heavily on a dubious early date (pre-AD 70 rather than the more traditional AD 95 date) for the composition of the Book of Revelation. For a classic, scholarly discussion (in German) in favor of our preferred mid-90s date for the writing of Revelation, see H. Giesen’s *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Regensburg, Germany: Pustet, 1997), 41-42. English readers will find a similar treatment of the subject in “The Book of Revelation” by Robert H. Mounce in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 15-21.

<sup>7</sup> The RT crowd could fire back and point out that our interpretation is driven by two of our own assumptions: (1) that much of Revelation can be interpreted literally, despite the preponderance of figurative language and images, and (2) that Israel still has a place in God’s plan because her divine (Abrahamic) calling is “irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29). Touché!

<sup>8</sup> There are numerous brands of supersessionism; however, they all teach essentially the same thing—i.e., that the Church has replaced ethnic Israel in God’s ongoing plan of the ages. One well-known supersessionist, for example, writes, “Without wresting Matthew 15:13 and Mark 12:1-9, our Lord announced in these passages that the Jewish nation no longer has a place as the special people of God; that place has been taken by the Christian community which fulfills God’s purpose for Israel.” He emphasizes that it’s the *nation* Israel that has suffered rejection. Individual Jewish people, he says, can still participate in God’s plan by coming in under the New Covenant: “The Jewish *nation* no longer has a place as the special people of God; that place has been taken by the Christian community which fulfills God’s purpose for Israel” (“Kingdom Promises as Spiritual,” an essay by Bruce Waltke in *Continuity and Discontinuity* by John S. Feinberg [Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1988], 274-75). Biblically, however, the New Covenant still belongs primarily to a united Israel (Jer. 31:31). Nothing has changed that (Rom. 11:29). The NT *Ekklesia* (that’s us!) comes under believing Israel’s New Covenant umbrella when we exercise Abraham-like faith in the Jewish Messiah (Rom. 11:17-24; Gal. 3:14). Abraham-like faith trusts in God’s grace rather than in our ability to keep the Torah’s 613 *mitzvot* (i.e., commandments).

<sup>9</sup> “A Preterist View of Revelation” by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., in *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, C. Marvin Pate, General Editor (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 56.

<sup>10</sup> In the *Spiritual Life* section of the CBN website, in an article entitled “The Church,” the late J. Rodman Williams of Regent University writes, “Unfortunately Israel as a nation failed to keep God’s commandments, to maintain His pure worship, to love Him and their neighbor. They were finally given up by God to punishment and captivity. Only a remnant of Israel returned, but few remained faithful—until Jesus Christ came to create a new ecclesia, a new assembly, a new fellowship, not circumscribed by race, as with the Jews, but containing all people who truly believe in Him. There is continuity with the ecclesia of the Old Testament, since Jesus of the flesh was an Israelite, but the new church rapidly broadens out to include all people” (cbn.org). Also, in an article on The Gospel Coalition website (thegospelcoalition.org) entitled “Who Are the 144,000 in Revelation?,” Kevin DeYoung writes, “There is no reason to make the 144,000 any more restricted . . . If you are a servant of the living God, you are one of the 144,000 mentioned here. In Revelation, the phrase ‘servants of God’ always refers to all of God’s redeemed people, not just an ethnic Jewish remnant (see 1:1; 2:20; 19:2; 19:5; 22:3).” This is all well and good; but if it’s true, one can’t help wondering which tribe Kevin is from. Also, to his point that the 144,000 are said to be “redeemed from among men,” and are therefore mostly Gentiles, Kevin overlooks the fact that they’re referred to as “firstfruits to God and the Lamb.” See Point #6 in this article regarding the significance of the Hebrew term “firstfruits.” If the phrase “servants of God” encompasses all of God’s redeemed people, like Kevin says (and we agree), then it also refers to the 144,000 since they are a subset of the redeemed community who are saved during the Tribulation Period.

<sup>11</sup> Distinguishing between literal and symbolic elements in Revelation can be tricky. However, it’s doable, even when the two elements are interwoven in the same passage. For instance, when John says, “Out of [Messiah’s] mouth goes a sharp sword” (19:15), it’s clear that the sword is a symbol for His response when the nations make war on Him. The Messiah, however, is literal—and so is His judgment on the world powers at His glorious Second Coming.

<sup>12</sup> Hodge (who wrote nearly a century before the modern State of Israel was born) continues: “The spiritual interpretation of this difficult passage [Rev. 20:1-10] is as follows: Christ has in reserve for his church a period of universal expansion and of pre-eminent spiritual prosperity. . . . The New Testament is entirely silent on the subject of any such return [of the Jews to the land of their fathers]. . . . The literal interpretation of these [Old Testament] passages is inconsistent with what the New Testament plainly teaches as to the abolition of all distinctions between the Jew and Gentile; the Jews, when converted, are to be grafted back into the same church (Rom. 11:19-24; Eph. 2:13-19)” (“The Second Advent and General Judgment,” Chapter 36 in *Outlines of Theology* by Archibald Alexander Hodge [New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1866], 454). It wasn’t uncommon for 19th-century commentators to place the Church in the OT. It was their way of dealing (albeit incorrectly) with the issue of OT-NT continuity.

<sup>13</sup> Early (Historic) Premillennialism was known as “Chiliasm” (a Latin-based term). It wasn’t as nuanced or as highly evolved as modern dispensational Premillennialism—and it didn’t identify a Rapture prior to the Tribulation (it didn’t deny one, either).

<sup>14</sup> Amillennialists generally propose that the earthly Church is always in tribulation. This highlights one of the advantages of the amillennial system—i.e., the freedom to redefine terms like “the Tribulation” at will, with little concern for consistency or context. It’s like taking a test where there are no “right” or “wrong” answers—everybody passes!

<sup>15</sup> Everywhere in the Bible (OT and NT) where the term “Israel” is mentioned, it refers to the nation of Israel, or ethnic Israel—the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That includes Galatians 6:16, where Paul uses the term “Israel of God” to refer to Jewish believers in Yeshua—the overlap between Israel and the Church.

<sup>16</sup> The 50 stars on the American flag are symbols; however, that symbolism doesn’t mean there aren’t 50 literal states scattered from sea to shining sea! The symbol doesn’t do away with the reality.

<sup>17</sup> *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary* by Robert L. Thomas (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 466. Thomas continues, “The problem with the section’s Jewishness is only apparent, resting on a misunderstanding of the identity of the 144,000. If national Israel instead of the church is in view, the difficulty dissolves.”

<sup>18</sup> “No clear-cut example of the church being called ‘Israel’ exists in the NT or in ancient church writings until AD 160. Galatians 6:16, where ‘the Israel of God’ can and probably does refer to some group other than the church as a whole, is no exception. . . . The term *Israel* must be referred to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is the natural understanding and the word’s normal usage in the NT as well as the OT” (Ibid., 476).

<sup>19</sup> There are 18 different arrangements of the 12 tribes of Israel in Scripture. Sometimes certain tribes are omitted (possibly due to idolatry or other shortcomings). In other listings, the tribe of Joseph is split into Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph’s two sons. Levi is left out in some instances because the Levites didn’t receive an allotment of land (Josh. 13:33). There are numerous other variations, as well. Rearranging the tribal listings to make a point is a very Jewish thing to do.

<sup>20</sup> Even today, the Jewish people have not forgotten their ancient, tribal/ancestral distinctions. Descendants of priests (*cohanim*, associated with the modern surnames Cohen, Kahn, or Katz), for example, are recognized in Orthodox Judaism as descendants of the tribe of Levi and have certain honors (and restrictions) in synagogues. “A genetic study in 1997 determined that large numbers of people who believe they are kohanim, whether they are Ashkenazi or Sephardic, share a group of markers on the Y chromosome” (“What Are Kohanim, or Jewish ‘Priests?’” by MJL on the *My Jewish Learning* website [myjewishlearning.com]). In Israel, tribal boundaries have been laid out and sometimes there are road signs indicating when you leave one tribal area and enter another. This is not to say, however, that all Jewish people today know what tribe they’re descended from. Most don’t.

<sup>21</sup> God inspired the biblical writers to do their work in koine Greek, which was the common man’s language and an important lingua franca of the first century. However, even the Greek text reflects the NT’s Jewish origins. The NT’s Greek text exhibits a number of “semitisms,” as well as instances of underlying Hebraic thinking, phrasing, and syntax. See “Semitisms in the New Testament” in “The Greek of the New Testament” by M. Janse at Universiteit Gent *Academic Bibliography* (biblio.ugent.be), 649-52. So, any way you look at it, the NT is Jewish. It’s a collection of Jewish writings penned by Jewish followers of the Jewish Messiah who lived in ancient Israel.

<sup>22</sup> In a certain sense, the eschatological Day of the LORD extends not only through the Tribulation Period, but also into the Millennium, which concludes with one final act of divine judgment a thousand years later at the second Battle of Gog and Magog (Rev. 20:7-10).

<sup>23</sup> Joel 2:31; Obad. 1:15; Zeph. 1:14; Mal. 4:5.

<sup>24</sup> God’s “elect” (chosen ones) will be saved. However, as John defines the term “elect” in Revelation 22:17, it’s inclusive rather than exclusive. He says the message of the Book of Revelation is addressed to: (1) Anyone who “hears” the message; (2) Anyone who is “thirsty” for it; (3) Anyone who wishes to “take the water of life freely.” The invitation is, simply, “Come.”

<sup>25</sup> Acknowledging God as Creator is critical. He is “Lord of all” because He made it all!

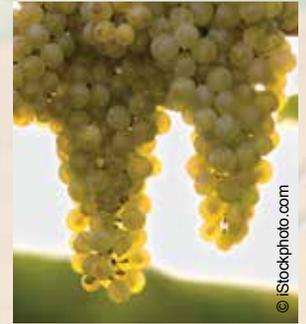
<sup>26</sup> Babylon doesn’t actually fall until a few chapters later (Chapter 18); yet, John says here that Babylon’s (and the Beast’s) demise is so certain, it’s as though it has already happened!

<sup>27</sup> Notice the contrast of “marks” here. The servants of God (the 144,000) are “marked” and so are the servants of the Evil One (14:9). A “mark,” like a “seal,” signifies ownership. The Beast’s (i.e., Antichrist’s) “mark” will be placed on those who belong to him (16:2; 19:20). Some people envision the so-called “mark of the Beast” as something like a tattoo or maybe a bio-chip under the skin. Others think it’s some type of universal ID card. Maybe it’s a metaphor for the interconnectedness of social media. There are dozens of possibilities. All we can say for sure, though, is that it’s something that identifies earth-dwellers as having joined themselves to the Beast’s world-system, which John code-names “Babylon” (Rev. 18). The mark will be necessary for commerce (i.e., buying and selling; 13:17). The key, however, is that the mark, whatever it is, is associated with *worship* of the Beast (14:11). Worshiping a false deity—a matter of the heart—is ultimately what spells doom, not an externality like a tattoo or even an embedded chip (Ex. 20:3). The Bible says the Lord knows His own (2 Tim. 2:19); and the evil one presumably knows his own, too, even without an external marking.

<sup>28</sup> See 2 Kings 19:30-31; Ezra 9:8; Isa. 10:20-22; 11:11; 37:31; Joel 2:32; Micah 4:7; Rom. 9:27; 11:1-6.

# Fruit from the Harvest

by Violette Berger



## Abundant Blessings

**Michelle Beadle, CJFM representative (New Orleans),** writes, “What a blessing the Jewish year 5779 has been. We are in revival, and over the last year we have immersed (baptized) four new Jewish believers.” One of these individuals has a Russian background and another is from Israel. Michelle always precedes immersion with teaching to reassure that the significance and all aspects of immersion are understood. She arranged to meet the Israeli believer at her home to discuss the details of her immersion. The day of their meeting happened to be the same day the woman’s son was in town for a visit. He was open to hearing about Yeshua (Jesus), and Michelle had the opportunity to share Isaiah 53 and many other Messianic prophecies with him. Michelle said, “He read them for the first time and was amazed by what he was reading.” She also shared her personal journey to faith with him and later sent him a link to an Israeli website with videos confirming why Yeshua is the Promised Messiah. It was, indeed, a divine appointment. Please pray for his salvation.

Michelle met two Jewish women who were attending a Shabbat service at a Messianic Jewish congregation for the first time. They told her that they had attended a Messianic Jewish Passover Seder while vacationing in Phoenix, Arizona, and were deeply touched by the experience. As a result, they looked for a Messianic Jewish congregation upon returning home. They exchanged contact information with Michelle and agreed to meet with her weekly over Facetime to study Messianic prophesy. They both prayed to receive Yeshua as their Messiah during one of those sessions and continue to study over Facetime with Michelle. Following a teaching on *t’vilah* (immersion), they were both immersed by their Messianic Rabbi.

## Evangelism and Apologetics

**CJFM representative Eric Chabot (Columbus, OH)** praises God for the opportunity to train some interns on evangelism and apologetics for another local ministry. They visited Columbus State to learn and observe his ministry on campus. Eric also had the privilege of teaching a class called “Is Jesus the Jewish Messiah?” at a local church. Numerous individuals in the class have Jewish friends, and it was a blessing for Eric to utilize the book he wrote, *The Resurrection of the Jewish Messiah*, in his teaching. Eric is also celebrating his 16th year of ministry at Ohio State University. He has planned a fall semester event featuring a lecture on the mystery of the origin of life by Dr. James Tour. Dr. Tour is a Jewish believer and one of the top chemists in the world. He is a professor at Rice University and extremely respected in his field. Eric asks, “Please pray for God to accomplish all He wants to do through us this year. It is His work, and He allows us to participate in it.”

## Blessings in the Holy Land

**Richard Hill, CJFM representative and pastor of Beth Yeshua Messianic Congregation (Las Vegas),** and his wife, Oanh, recently returned from a trip to Israel. They thank God for the opportunities He gave them to share the Gospel with **seven** Israelis while shopping in Tiberius and Jerusalem. Rich was also a guest on a radio show in Israel called, *A View from the Wall*. He discussed his book, *Israel in Prophecy*, and how the world is collectively coming against Israel, which will culminate in the battle of Armageddon. They attended a Messianic *Rosh Hashana* (Feast of Trumpets) service in Israel. It was an added blessing that an unsaved couple attended. The man is Jewish and was open to the Gospel message, and his girlfriend, who is Gentile, prayed to receive Jesus as her Lord and Savior during the altar call.

## A Celebration

**Yossi Ovadia, CJFM representative and pastor of Kehilat Haderech (The Way) Messianic Congregation (Israel),** recently celebrated the congregation’s 30-year anniversary. He shares some of the highlights of the congregation thus far this year:

**Youth Camp** – Eighteen teenagers participated in a camp that included hikes, team-building activities, and time dedicated to studying God’s Word based on the camp’s theme, “A Foundation of Faith.” **Baptisms** – Two young girls rededicated their lives to the Lord and declared their faith through baptism. **Young Adults** – The 20-35 group has grown, and many God-fearing men and women have joined who desire to serve the Lord. Two young couples will be married, and two more couples are in premarital counseling. Four more young adults will soon be attending various universities. **Outreach** – The congregation took a trip to the Golan during *Rosh Hashana* (Feast of Trumpets) as a testimony to other travelers. A few doors have opened for reaching out to the needy. In the past there has been opposition because of their faith.

## A Return Visit

**CJFM Representative Diann Parkas (New Jersey)** was excited about returning to a nursing home to teach about the Jewish holy days and how they point, prophetically, to Jesus. She was also looking forward to seeing again a Jewish woman she had witnessed to on her last visit. Although the woman missed the Bible study, she told Diann that she is now reading the Bible for the first time in her life. Diann offered to return during the week and do a Bible study with her. The woman eagerly agreed! Please pray for her salvation.

*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).*

# Bible Questions & Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

Have a Bible question?

Submit it to Dr. Hedrick at [garyh@cjfm.org](mailto:garyh@cjfm.org), or mail it to 611 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78215.

You may see your question addressed in a future issue of *Messianic Perspectives*.

**QUESTION:** *Do you believe Hell is real?*

**ANSWER:** Since the Bible is true, and it most definitely teaches that Hell is a real place, then we believe it. In fact, we capitalize the word “Hell” because it’s a proper noun and denotes a place that’s just as real as Chicago, Texas, the Himalayas, the Grand Canyon, or Lake Erie.

Hell isn’t just a metaphor or a symbol. The lyrics of a popular song say:

*Tell ‘em all I said hi, hope you’ve been well;  
You’ve been asleep while I’ve been in hell.*

However, using the term like this totally misses the point. No, my friend, you haven’t been in Hell—at least, not yet. Hell is much more than experiencing sadness and misery in this life. It’s an actual place—just like Heaven is an actual place. Think about that. Hell is just as real as Heaven. You cannot do away with one without also doing away with the other.

What, then, is Hell like? First and foremost, it’s a place where people who have rejected God’s grace and love (and His provision of salvation through Yeshua) will exist in a state of eternal separation from Him. What could be more tragic than someone who was created by God being separated from his/her Creator forever?

The creature and the Creator are like hand and glove. We belong together. He made us for Himself. We find our true purpose when we are with Him. Even ancient philosophers like Aristotle taught that true happiness (not pleasure) is attained by discovering our purpose in life and then fulfilling that purpose.<sup>1</sup> According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the “chief end” (purpose) of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever (1 Cor. 10:31). So, what could be more unimaginably horrible than being eternally separated from our Creator?

In His own teaching ministry as recorded in the synoptic Gospels, Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) left no doubt that Hell is a real, literal place. He mentioned it more than a dozen times (combined) in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.<sup>2</sup>

Chuck Swindoll affirms: “[Hell] is a place of sorrow, pain, darkness, memory, loneliness, remorse, and never-ending misery.”<sup>3</sup>

The Lord also described Hell as a place of fire: “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’ . . . And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:41, 46). In another passage, He says the fire is “not quenched” (Mark 9:44, 46, 48). That is, it never burns out like a normal fire does when it runs out of fuel.

## It’s Real, but Not Meant for Humans

Note that in the Matthew 25 passage (above), the Lord tells us that Hell was “prepared for the devil and his angels” (v. 41). It was not intended for human beings. God created Heaven for us; He created Hell for Lucifer and the fallen angels who supported his rebellion.

However, it is possible for human beings to *choose* to follow Lucifer just like the fallen angels did. God himself gives us that freedom of choice. He doesn’t force us to accept His grace and love. He doesn’t want to be surrounded by automatons who follow Him around like robots and do His bidding without thinking because they have no other choice. He wants to be with beings who love Him and who obey Him because they know it’s the right thing to do.

In C.S. Lewis’ *The Great Divorce*, he imagines a dream in which a group of people in Hell somehow manage to take a bus ride to Heaven. Once they arrive in Heaven, these visitors from Hell find that they are like “Ghosts” (i.e., unreal and transparent, almost invisible) and the inhabitants of Heaven are “Solid People” (real and substantial). In an exchange between a visiting Ghost and one of the Solid People, the Ghost wants to know what happens to people who never manage to get on board the Heaven-bound bus. The answer:

“Everyone who wishes it does. Never fear. There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock it is opened.”<sup>4</sup>

## Literal Fire?

Some Christians get hung up on the question of whether the fire in Hell is literal. Normal combustion consumes and destroys (i.e., breaks down) whatever is burning; however, the fire in Hell never consumes what it burns—it’s never quenched (Mark 9:48). This indicates that it must be a different type of “fire” from what we are accustomed to in this world.

Hell is portrayed in Scripture as a place of darkness. Jude says that evil people are like “raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever” (1:13; see also Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30).

Some people claim that fire and darkness are mutually exclusive; however, that’s not always true. I’m told that when you burn sulfur, it reacts with oxygen in the air to form sulfur dioxide. It burns extremely hot—and you

can easily burn yourself because you can't see the flame. If you turn the lights off and let your eyes adjust to the dark, you can barely make out the faint, eerie glow of a black flame. It is possible, then, to have a fire—even an earthly fire—in darkness.

Nonetheless, the “fire” in Hell is probably unlike anything we experience here on earth. Indications are that it's much worse than any earthly fire.

## Hell Isn't Just a Reality—It's a Necessity

The existence of Hell is not only a biblical fact—it's a logical and moral necessity. As I said earlier, if there's no Hell, logic dictates that there's no Heaven, either. Biblical revelation isn't like a smorgasbord where you pick and choose what you want and leave the rest. If Heaven is a reality, so is Hell—because the Bible talks about both places.

Some people say that when wicked people die, they just cease to exist.<sup>5</sup> But where is the justice in that? That would mean Hitler got away with murdering millions of Jewish people (among millions of others) in his Final Solution. All he had to do (if the annihilationists are right) is put a gun to his head in order to escape accountability for his crimes against God and humanity.

This is not what the Bible teaches, however. Note the words of the author of the Book of Hebrews: *And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment* (9:27). Peter adds, *Then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment* (2 Peter 2:9).

Hell, then, is a moral necessity. When wicked people commit horrible atrocities, they cannot escape judgment by dying or committing suicide. They will be held accountable for those acts—and they will be punished.

Justice is a major theme of the Bible (particularly the Book of Isaiah). God defends the poor, the weak, the powerless, orphans, widows, and the downtrodden (Isa. 11:4; 61:1; Jer. 20:13). Those who harm them—and anyone else who rejects the grace and love of God—will answer to Him on Judgment Day.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Nicomachean Ethics* by Aristotle. For instance, the purpose of a knife is to cut; so, the highest end, purpose, or goal for a knife is to be used to cut something (paraphrased from “Aristotle on Happiness: Happiness is not a state but an activity” by Neel Burton in *Psychology Today* magazine's online edition [September 17, 2017] at [psychologytoday.com](http://psychologytoday.com)).

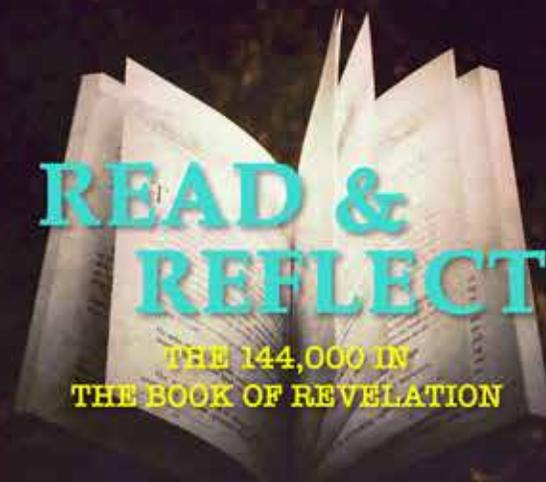
<sup>2</sup> The synoptics are Matthew, Mark, and Luke. They are called “synoptics” (lit., “seeing together”) because they are interrelated and contain similar and complementary material. (Mark appears to have composed his account first because Matthew and Luke both quote him.) John, on the other hand, presents an independent account. Interestingly, John is the only one of the four biographers not to mention Hell.

<sup>3</sup> *The Darkness and the Dawn* by Charles R. Swindoll (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 317.

<sup>4</sup> *The Great Divorce: Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), Kindle Edition (29).

<sup>5</sup> “Annihilationism” is the view that wicked individuals simply cease to exist when they die. Proponents of this view rely on a misunderstanding of NT (Greek) terms like “perish” (John 3:16) and “destroy” (Matt. 10:28).

<sup>6</sup> Evildoers are currently held in Gehenna, “reserved for judgment” (i.e., awaiting the final judgment—Matt. 7:23; Luke 16:23-26; 2 Peter 2:4, 3:7).



1. What does the term “eschatology” mean? How does the “eschatology” of naturalistic Darwinism differ from that of the Bible?
2. How do you feel when you hear people talking about the end of the world? Does it trouble you? Why or why not?
3. What simple, three-fold outline does John provide for the Book of Revelation (1:19)?
4. When we look at a topic like the 144,000 in Revelation 7 and 14, how are our conclusions often shaped by our presumptions? Are we (i.e., literalists-futurists) more or less prone to this than others (preterists, amillennialists) are?
5. If we view Revelation through a literal-futurist grid, does that mean we don't recognize legitimate symbols and figures when they appear? Can you think of an obvious symbol in Revelation that cannot be reasonably taken literally?
6. The term “Israel” appears 2,570 times in the English Bible. Out of those 2,570 occurrences, how many times does it refer to the Church?
7. What does the prophecy in Ezekiel 37:21-28 say will happen to the two ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah after their captivities?
8. Why do the tribal listings in the Bible often arrange the 12 tribes differently?
9. When will these 144,000 evangelists carry out their mission? What will be the result?
10. What is the message of “the everlasting Gospel” (Rev. 14:6)?
11. Why do you think biblical themes like judgment and divine accountability are so unpopular in today's culture?
12. In 14:4, what does the Hebraic term “firstfruits” tell us about the 144,000?
13. The remnant (i.e., the faithful minority) during the future Tribulation will number 144,000. How small was the remnant in Elijah's day?
14. Do you think God works more often through (and on behalf of) a relatively small minority? If so, why do you think this is the case?
15. How will the mission of the 144,000 during the Tribulation Period be similar to that of John the Baptist in the first century (Mal. 3:1; Matt. 3:3)?

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