

Chapter VIII

THE ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FOUR THOUSAND

No study of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ would be complete without a consideration of who the one hundred and forty-four thousand witnesses are, in the seventh and fourteenth chapters of the book of the Revelation.

We know from these two portions of Scripture that they are Jews who do not appear upon the earth until after the revelation of the antichrist. We know that once the deception that the antichrist is Christ has been perpetrated, the one hundred and forty-four thousand will be brought to mount Zion to be God's witnesses during the great tribulation period. (Revelation 14:1) We know from these same chapters that before the judgments of the great tribulation can begin, the one hundred and forty-four thousand witnesses will be sealed with the name of God in their foreheads. We know that once they have the protecting name of God upon them, they will then preach the truth of the everlasting gospel (Revelation 14:6-7) upon this earth, and many souls will be saved. We also know that almost as soon as these souls are saved, they will be put to death by

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

the regime of the antichrist (Revelation 7:9-17).

We have previously suggested that there is evidence that the one hundred and forty-four thousand witnesses will be the Old Testament saints who were raised from the dead when our Lord was raised from the dead. It is stated in the Scriptures that the witnesses are *the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb* (Revelation 14:4). It is also stated that Christ is *the firstfruits* (I Corinthians 15:23). *Firstfruits* is plural in both of these texts. This means that the Feast of Firstfruits (which we considered in the chapter on *The Seven Feasts of the Jews*) could not have been fulfilled by our Lord alone. It required the resurrection of more than one person to satisfy the plurality of the word, *firstfruits*. In consideration of this, while our Lord was being crucified, He *cried again with a loud voice and yielded up the ghost*:

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. (Matthew 27:51-53)

This Scripture tells of the resurrection of *many* after our Lord was resurrected on the Feast of Firstfruits. It tells of them showing themselves alive in the city of Jerusalem. After that, nothing more is said of them until we come to the book of the Revelation, chapters seven and fourteen. In these texts it does not say that they were the saints who were raised when our Lord was raised from the dead, but it does say:

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. (Revelation 14:4)

The Scriptures do not supply us with spurious information. Everything was written for a purpose. The use of the aorist verbs, *were redeemed*, and *were not defiled*, in this text suggests

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

two completed acts in the past. This means that the one hundred and forty-four thousand were redeemed in the past. It also means that they were not defiled in the past. This suggests that they were not saints of the New Testament era, but of the Old.

This takes us back to the text we cited in the book of Matthew for their identification. The fact that they are called *virgins* suggests that they had not been defiled with the false doctrines and idolatry of the nation of Israel (compare II Corinthians 11:2-3). They had faithfully followed the Lamb of God. In other words, they had stood for the truth of the Word of God in the ages in which they had dwelt upon the earth, and they will be ready to serve the Lord faithfully during the most difficult of times that are yet to come upon the earth. They could not possibly be neophytes (newly redeemed, after the rapture). The language used to describe them suggests they are seasoned veterans, specifically trained for *the time of Jacob's trouble*.

This proposition fits into the fact that the first resurrection is described in Scripture as a harvest. A harvest in Israel had three parts. There were *the firstfruits*. Then came the main harvest, when the majority of the crop was reaped. After that, there were fruits that were not harvested in the main harvest. The nation of Israel had specific instructions concerning these gleanings:

And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 19:9-10)

With respect to a harvest, then, our Lord and those who were raised with Him were the firstfruits of the first resurrection; those who shall be resurrected, when *the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed* (I Corinthians 15:52), will

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

be the main harvest; and the souls saved during the great tribulation period (*for the ... stranger*) will be a part of the gleanings; while the Jews, who will be saved at the appearing of our Lord (*for the poor*), when they look upon Him Whom they have pierced (Zechariah 12:10), will be the final gleanings of the first resurrection.

If the one hundred and forty-four thousand will be the saints that were raised at the time of our Lord's resurrection (and, to my mind, there is no doubt that they will be); and if they did not die a second time (because *it is appointed unto man once to die*, Hebrews 9:27) to be buried again, but were taken up with our Lord, when He ascended into heaven; then it can be assumed that they are presently being prepared to return to this earth to bear witness to the truth during the most difficult times this world will ever see. Consider our Lord's instructions to His disciples before He sent them out to preach:

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. (Matthew 10:16-23)

A review of these particular statements of our Lord to His disciples reveals that a part of the instructions could have been fulfilled by the ministries of the twelve. However there are certain instructions and declarations of the conditions of the world within these verses that will

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

require the reign of the antichrist and the conditions of the great tribulation period in order to be fulfilled. This can be seen in the entire text, but it becomes more clear in the last paragraph, and particularly in the last statement about the coming of the Son of man. This was not, and could not have been, fulfilled during the ministries of the twelve. It will require the second coming of our Lord to this earth for this statement to be fulfilled. Before that day, however, the following prophecy (which agrees with the instructions of our Lord to the twelve) will probably be fulfilled by the one hundred and forty-four thousand:

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you. (Zechariah 8:20-23)

The proposition that the one hundred and forty-four thousand will be those saints that were raised with the Lord, and that they were the firstfruits of the first resurrection, satisfies me. It does so because it agrees with the immutable nature of God. This is an important attribute of God that is revealed throughout the Word of God. Therefore this proposition is consistent with the great commission: *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature* (Mark 16:15). It is consistent with Paul's question to the Romans, *And how shall they preach, except they be sent?* (Romans 10:15). It is consistent with the statement, *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Romans 10:17). It is consistent with the fact that the Scriptures say, *For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe* (I Corinthians 1:21). It is consistent with the

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

qualifications of those who are to preach the Word of God: *Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil* (I Timothy 3:6). It is consistent with the fact that the natural (unsaved man) cannot understand the things of God (I Corinthians 2:14). And it is consistent with the fact that God has always used redeemed men to bear the message of redemption to the lost of this world.

In view of this, the idea that men can bring themselves to faith by reading tracts and other literature (that they might happen upon during the tribulation period) does not agree with the way God has brought redemption to man throughout the Word of God; and it certainly does not agree with Paul's statement to Timothy, *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also* (II Timothy 2:1-2).

Thus with the revelation of the antichrist upon the earth, in the sixth chapter of the Revelation; after the completion of the church age, in the second and third chapters of the Revelation; after the rapture of the church, in the fourth chapter of the Revelation; after the loosing of the seven-sealed book by our Lord, in the fifth chapter of the Revelation; John revealed, in the seventh chapter of the Revelation, those who will be the witnesses of the truth upon this earth throughout the seventieth week of Daniel, *the time of Jacob's trouble*:

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And 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 given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand. (Revelation 7:1-8)

A careful examination of these verses reveals one very obvious fact, and two facts that might be easily overlooked. The obvious fact is that the one hundred and forty-four thousand will all be Jews, twelve thousand of each of the twelve tribes of Israel. They will not be from any sect or denomination of the Christian era, no matter what is claimed by various groups, nor will they be newly converted Jews.

The Christian era was foreseen in the Feast of Pentecost. Pentecost was between the first three feasts and the last three feasts of the Jews. The era prophesied by Pentecost will end, as we have seen, with the main harvest of the first resurrection, commonly called the rapture. The revelation of the antichrist will begin the seventieth week of Daniel's vision. The seventy weeks were determined upon Daniel's people, and upon Daniel's city, Jerusalem. Therefore those who will do the preaching during the last seven years before the return of our Lord will be Jews, who *were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.*

The first fact that might be easily overlooked in the seventh chapter of the Revelation is

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

that Dan is missing from the list, and Levi is included in the list. According to the following Scripture, Levi would not ordinarily be included in the numbering of the nation.

These are those that were numbered, which Moses and Aaron numbered, and the princes of Israel, being twelve men: each one was for the house of his fathers. So were all those that were numbered of the children of Israel, by the house of their fathers, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war in Israel; Even all they that were numbered were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty.

But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them. For the LORD had spoken unto Moses, saying, only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel: but thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle. (Numbers 1:44-50)

Joseph's inheritance was given to his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. This made thirteen names for the tribes of Israel, instead of twelve. God separated Levi, in the stead of the firstborn, to provide for the priesthood and for the service of the tabernacle. Consequently when the land was divided to the tribes of Israel, no portion was divided to Levi. Rather each tribe was compelled to provide the Levites with cities, out of their inheritances throughout the land, in which to dwell (Numbers 35). Despite this, in the listing of the tribes in Revelation, chapter seven, Levi is reinserted into the number of tribes in Israel to account for the omission of the tribe of Dan.

The second not-so-obvious fact is that the name of Ephraim has been omitted from the listing of the tribes, but not the posterity of Ephraim. This is true because Ephraim's posterity would be included in the name of Joseph, who is listed.

It is important for us to determine, if possible, the reason the tribe of Dan has been omitted, as well as the name of Ephraim. In Judges, chapters seventeen and eighteen, we find the

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

most plausible reason for these omissions:

And there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah. And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son. And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee. Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah. And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes. And there was a young man out of Bethlehem-judah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehem-judah to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. Then said Micah, *Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.* (Judges 17:1-13, emphasis mine)

The key to understanding the severity of the sin of Micah is found in the Levite from Bethlehem-judah. Micah's system of worship was contrary to the truth of the Word of God. It was an idolatrous system. Nevertheless Micah sought to give credence to his corrupted system of worship when he persuaded a Levite (associated with the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ in the typology of Scripture) to become a part of his counterfeit system of worship.

About the same time, there were five men from the tribe of Dan that were spying out the land for a place to establish their inheritance in the land of Israel. They, according to the eighteenth chapter of the book of the Judges, happened upon mount Ephraim and the household

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

of Micah, where they discovered Micah's *ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image* (Judges 18:14). They also recognized the Levite, who told them, *Thus and thus dealt Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest* (Judges 18:4). Then by force of arms (*six hundred men appointed with weapons of war*) they persuaded the Levite that it was better to be *a father and a priest* to an entire tribe in Israel than it was to one man. So they took the idols and the priest into the land of Dan (formerly Laish), where they established their inheritance in the north of Israel. *And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh* (Judges 18:31).

The sin of the man of Ephraim and of the tribe of Dan was not idolatry in the ordinary sense of the word. It was directed toward Jehovah, and it was also linked to the truth of the Word of God by a connection to the truth through an apostate Levite. This is illustrated in the parable of the tares among the wheat. Tares appear to be wheat until the time of harvest, when it is evident that they are tares (bastard wheat). The system that shall arise with the antichrist is the same. He will claim to be Christ *with signs and lying wonders, when he sits in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*. He will demand that the world worship him in order to be able to preserve their lives. Yet, while seeking to save their lives, they will lose their lives through the eternal damnation that comes by receiving the mark of the beast. This is the reason, I believe, Ephraim and Dan will not be allowed to have a part in the proclamation of the truth during *the time of Jacob's trouble*, during the reign of a counterfeit Christ.

Our Lord warned the Jews, in the twelfth chapter of Matthew, that they were in danger of committing a sin that could never be forgiven. This sin is commonly called *the unpardonable sin*.

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

What was it that they were doing that evoked such a warning? They were attributing the work of the Spirit of God to the devil, and the work of the devil to the Spirit of God. This is exactly what the antichrist will do when he sits in the temple of God, claiming to be God.

Once the antichrist makes this claim, he will demand (as Nebuchadnezzar did with the image he erected) that the world worship him as God. All who worship him will receive a mark in their foreheads or their hands, which will enable them to buy and sell. Without this mark, there will be no rational way to subsist (faith in the promise of God is not considered rational by the world). Even so the reception of this mark damns forever those who receive it. In other words, it is an unpardonable sin, the commission of which makes them children of the devil.

It is commonly believed that all unsaved people are children of the devil, but this is false. It is proven to be false by our Lord's parable of the tares and the wheat. In that parable, by our Lord's interpretation, the tares are children of the wicked one (i.e., the devil) and the wheat are the children of the kingdom (or children of God). The assumption is made because of this that there are two classes of people in the world: children of God and children of the devil. Those who make this assumption have failed to consider where the two types of seed are sown. They are sown in the field. The field, also by our Lord's interpretation, is the world. This makes a third class of people. This third class is simply the unsaved of this world who are neither tares nor wheat. Paul referred to this class of people as *children of wrath* or *children of [the] disobedience* in Ephesians 2:2-3.

During the great tribulation period, through the preaching of the one hundred and forty-four thousand, those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will become children of God. Likewise

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

those who believe the lie of the devil, that the antichrist is in fact the Christ, and receive his mark by an act of worship, will become children of the wicked one.

And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six. (Revelation 13:4-18)

One must not think that the commission of the unpardonable sin is reserved for the reign of the antichrist, because the spirit of antichrist is already in this world (II John 1:7). Deceivers (in the realm of the truth) are those who manifest the spirit of antichrist, and our Lord told us that they can be identified by their fruits. The fruit of the evil tree is always manifested by *a way*

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. Whereas the fruit of the tree of life is salvation by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. This tree recognizes the sinfulness of man and the Holiness of God. It recognizes that the sinfulness of man can never meet the demands of the Holiness of God, but that God was fully satisfied (in all of His attributes) by the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in behalf of the sinner. This is made evident in the first epistle of John:

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. (I John 3:7-10)

This is a marvelous proof text, but not in the English language. The English translators used the secondary meaning of the Greek word *poieo* in this text. The primary meaning of the word *poieo* is *to make*, while its secondary meaning is *to do*. Contextually, they should have used the primary meaning of the word, but they did not.

In the days of Herodotus, before the New Testament was written, Herodotus used *poieo* to describe the adoption of a child, or the marrying of a wife. Thus he used it in the sense *to make something one's own*. (Greek English Lexicon, Liddell and Scott, Seventh Edition, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1961, page 651)

To reconcile the statements in the above text with the truth of salvation by grace, apart from the deeds of the law, or with the truth that it is not by works of righteousness that we have done that we are saved, we must adopt the primary meaning of the word *poieo* in the above text.

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

It then takes on a vastly different meaning, a meaning that clearly defines who is in Christ and who is not. By interpretation, then, using the primary meaning of *poieo*, the following verses are my paraphrased version of I John 3:7-10:

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that maketh Christ's righteousness his own righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that maketh the sin of Adam a source of righteousness, by a corrupted understanding of good and evil, is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning (i.e., he tried to make himself God, and then he introduced the same lie into the human family). For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil (that man can be justified before God by a corrupted sense of right and wrong). Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin (in the sense of making the devil's lie a source of life); for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin (in the capacity of making the devil's lie a source of life), because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever maketh not (Christ's) righteousness his righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother (that is: he withholds the love of God, how that Christ died for his sins according to the Scriptures, from his brother).

The identification of a true believer from a counterfeit believer, then, is found in what they deem to be the source of their righteousness. The true believer is at rest in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, and recognizes (for righteousness sake) that he has ceased from his own labors, as God did from His (Hebrews 4:10); whereas the counterfeit believer has his trust in the lie of the devil, which is manifested in *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs 14:12). This makes the christ whom he worships a false christ.

The Christ of the Bible supplies eternal life on the basis of His Person and work; whereas those who are involved in the lie of the devil make the Christ of the Bible a liar. They claim to worship Him (like Micah of mount Ephraim), but they deny Him by their insistence upon the works of their own hands to prove that they are believers (Titus 1:16). This makes their system

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

of worship as false as the system of worship of Micah of mount Ephraim, which became the system of worship of the tribe of Dan after they stole it from him. Thus the worship of a false christ by the works of one's own hands is akin to receiving the mark of the beast during the great tribulation period.

Despite the clear statements about the unpardonable sin in the first epistle of John, and in the book of The Revelation, regarding the mark of the beast, there is still a good deal of confusion about this sin. Perhaps some of this confusion comes because our Lord defined the unpardonable sin as the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit:

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers [i. e., offsprings of the serpent], how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. (Matthew 12:31-37)

Our Lord had healed the demoniac by the power of the Spirit of God. Yet the Jews said He had done it by the power of Beelzebub. Thus they attributed the work of the Spirit of God to the devil, and the work of the devil to the Spirit of God. Then our Lord said, *Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.* He ended this portion of His discourse with them, by saying, *For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.* Thus when a man's words agree

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

with the Spirit of God, he is justified, and when they do not, he is condemned.

After this, as recorded in the book of Matthew, our Lord spoke seven parables to his disciples. The first was about the Sower, and the second was about the tares and the wheat. These parables give us an understanding of our Lord's advice to His accusers. He told them, *the tree is known by his fruit.*

The Scriptures speak of many trees, but there are two trees that we can trace through the Scriptures from the book of Genesis to the book of the Revelation. They are the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is these two trees that enable us to discern the difference between the true prophet and the false prophet, and this was the essence of John's argument, in the third chapter of his first epistle, to identify the children of God from the children of the devil.

Throughout the Scriptures we have learned that God creates by His Word and by His Spirit (Psalm 33:6; 104:30). Believers are new creations in Christ Jesus (II Corinthians 5:17). They are created anew by the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God (Ephesians 2:5). Thus to claim that a man can become a believer in Jesus Christ by a counterfeit christ and a counterfeit gospel, in lieu of the true Christ and the true gospel, is a claim that falls into the category of doing the work of God by the power of the devil. This is the unpardonable sin. Further the Scriptures tell us:

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved [borne along] by the Holy Ghost. (II Peter 1:19-21)

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

Since *All scripture is given by inspiration of [the Holy Spirit of] God*, the man who rejects the clear testimony of the Scriptures, regarding the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the lie of the devil (that a man may become like God by his knowledge of good and evil), has committed the unpardonable sin. This sin cannot be committed accidentally. It takes a definite act of worship, in the realm of the truth, that has corrupted the truth (revealed by God's Holy Spirit) with the lie of the devil. In other words, it is rejecting the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ for the lie of the devil, that man can be like God through his knowledge of good and evil.

There is one more facet of the ministry of the one hundred and forty-four thousand that we should consider. It is related to a portion of the thirty-seventh chapter of the book of Ezekiel, which we considered in our first chapter, *A Key to the Prophetic Scriptures*.

We saw Israel resurrected out of the nations of the world when she became a nation again, May 14, 1948. We saw that the prophecy in the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel was only partially fulfilled, because God has not yet put His Spirit within the Jews. God's Holy Spirit only indwells believers, and the Jews (as a nation) have not yet believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently this aspect of the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel has not yet been fulfilled. It awaits the day when those Jews, who will have been preserved in the wilderness through the last forty-two months of the great tribulation period, *look on Him Whom they have pierced* and are saved.

Even so in consideration of the truth we have learned in this chapter about the ministry of the one hundred and forty-four thousand, there will be one hundred and forty-four thousand Jews (indwelt by the Holy Spirit) in the city of Jerusalem before the nation of Israel is saved. In

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

addition to those, there will be many Jews and Gentiles who will be saved through the preaching of the one hundred and forty-four thousand. These believers, also indwelt by the Holy Spirit, will be put to death almost immediately after they will have been saved.

We have indicated that the one hundred and forty-four thousand will not come to mount Zion until after the revelation of the antichrist. We have indicated that the antichrist cannot be revealed until after the first resurrection at the trump of God. We have also indicated that there will not be a prolonged period of time between the first resurrection, the revelation of the antichrist, and the coming of the one hundred and forty-four thousand witnesses, to preach the everlasting gospel. This has been confirmed by the Scriptures that we have considered thus far. However this truth is also veiled in an Old Testament prophecy regarding the regathering of the Jews, out of the nations of the world, back into their own land:

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem. (Isaiah 27:12-13)

This portion of Scripture (along with others in Isaiah 18:3 and 7; 58:1-14; and Joel 2:15-32) seems to imply that Israel will be regathered into the land at the sound of the trumpet. Yet we know that the Jews have already been regathered into the land of Israel and that Jews from around the world are immigrating to Israel daily. She is presently a nation again, back in her own land, but the trumpet, that will announce the first resurrection, has not yet sounded.

When it sounds, the trump of God will produce the first resurrection; which will produce the revelation of the antichrist; which will produce the regathering of the one hundred and forty-

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

four thousand; which will produce those who will preach the everlasting gospel during the great tribulation period; which will produce the redeemed during the tribulation period; which will produce the salvation of the nation of Israel, when *they look on Him Whom they have pierced*.

This is not a contradiction of the quotation from the prophet Isaiah, but a verification of a lesson we learned early in our studies together: prophetically speaking, things that are written together are not necessarily fulfilled together. Thus with the sound of a *great trumpet* in the above text, we will have a regathered and redeemed Israel in her own land in complete fulfillment of the prophetic Scriptures, as indicated by the above listing of events.

Theologians have long believed that the regathering of the nation of Israel would take place with the sounding of the trumpet at the Feasts of Trumpets. (See the Scofield Reference Bible, note 2, on page 157, Oxford University Press, 1909, 1917, 1937 and 1945.) Some theologians have taken this idea to the point of expecting a separate resurrection for the nation of Israel (at the end of the tribulation period). (*Systematic Theology, Vol. II*, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Dallas Seminary Press, 1947, page 149) It is easily seen, by the copyright dates for the Scofield Reference Bible and for Chafer's Systematic Theology, that these notes, and the position of Dr. Chafer, were written before the reconstitution of the nation of Israel on May 14, 1948.

We are not attempting to bring disdain upon the notes contained in the Scofield Bible, nor upon the eight consulting editors, nor on Dr. Chafer, but we are using these notes and statements to indicate the difficulty in interpreting prophecy before it has been fulfilled. It was perfectly logical for the editors of the Scofield Reference Bible to connect the Feast of Trumpets with the sound of the trumpet in each of the references we have listed. However with the reconstitution

The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

of Israel as a nation, without the fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets, their position must be reexamined: carefully comparing Scripture with Scripture, to see if it is still tenable.

Such an examination has produced the prophetical sequence, outlined in this book, of the first three feasts of the Jews representing the first advent of our Lord and the last three feasts of the Jews representing the second advent of our Lord. It has also revealed that the feast of Pentecost, which falls between the first three feasts and the last three feasts, represents the present church age. This examination has revealed that the church age will end with the sound of the trumpet and the first resurrection. This will start the events of the seventieth week of Daniel and the fulfillment of the last two feasts of the Jews (the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles). The fulfillment of these feasts will produce the return of our Lord and the establishment of His Kingdom upon this earth. When this has been done, all that was prophesied in Isaiah 27:12-13, as well as the other references we listed, will have been fulfilled completely and perfectly.