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The Salvation, Sealing, and Ministry of the 144,000 by Pastor F.M. Riley

The Salvation, Sealing, and Ministry of the 144,000 (Part 1)

by Pastor F. M. Riley



PAUL, THE PATTERN

The following texts are too lengthy to reproduce in full in this study. I urge our readers to study these texts carefully in full for yourself.

“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 a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel,” Revelation 7:1-8.

“And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with Him a hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father’s name written in their foreheads,” Revelation 14:1-5.

Introduction

During the years of ministry the Lord has graciously given me, I have been repeatedly asked about the 144,000.

Who are they? Are they Jews or Gentiles? Are they a particular religious group, or limited to members of such a group? Are they individuals, or are they churches? Is their sealing literal or figurative? If they are individuals, are they saved like other repentant believers, or do they not need a salvation experience? What is the purpose of their sealing? Do they minister to others? If so, to whom do they minister, and how long do they minister? If their ministry is limited, what happens to them when their ministry is completed?

I have been asked all of these questions (*and more*) at one time or another. Many of God’s people [*true believers*] are puzzled about the role of the 144,000 in end-time events. Because of such uncertainty, many *false theories, false claims, and false teachings* have been put forth about the 144,000.

In this study I will use only the inspired Word of God in establishing the truth, and exposing those claims about the 144,000 which are obviously false. Join me for an enlightening study.

Historical Background

Some 3,400 + years ago the Lord chose the nation of Israel as His own special people through which He would reveal Himself to the other nations of the world. See ***Deuteronomy 26:18-19*** and ***Isaiah 43:21***.

Then from among the Israelites, the Lord chose one tribe to be the spiritual leaders of the whole nation. This was the tribe of Levi, ***Numbers 1:47-54***.

Then the Lord narrowed it down even further by choosing one family out of the tribe of Levi to serve as priests. This was the family of Aaron, ***Exodus 28***. From this one family was to come the priests that should minister in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple, and the High Priest that should intercede with the Lord for the whole nation on the Day of Atonement. This one family and their descendants were then chosen by the Lord to be the appointed spiritual leaders of the nation of Israel.

For many centuries, except during times of apostasy, Israel's worship was carried out according to God's ordained plan. The tribe of Levi served as the appointed spiritual leaders of the nation, and the descendants of Aaron in the office of High Priest.

But during the third century preceding the first coming of Christ, the Jewish people became divided by various religious sects that sprang up. Foremost among those sects were the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Pharisees ultimately became the dominant religious sect, followed by the Sadducees, the Herodians, the Essenes, etc. What this means is that over the centuries the Jewish people had become disenchanted with God's appointed order, and the spiritual leadership of Israel gradually passed out of the hands of the Levites, and, for the most part, into the hands of the Judaistic Pharisees and Sadducees. Some of these religionists were not Levites at all, yet they had ascended to a position of spiritual leadership in the nation. This truth was verified by the Lord Himself.

In ***Matthew 23:2-3*** the Lord told the Jews, which included His own disciples, ***"The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not."*** It is evident, from this statement of the Lord Himself, that the spiritual leadership of the nation of Israel had passed into the hands of the scribes and Pharisees. It is also evident from this statement that these religionists were hypocrites. They preached one thing and practiced another. See also ***Matthew 15:12-14***.

Corrupt Leaders

In the first twelve verses of **Matthew 23**, the Lord warned the multitude, and His own disciples, about following the wicked practices of these spiritual leaders of Israel. Then in verse **13**, and continuing on through this chapter, the Lord delivered the most blistering rebuke against those "religionist" to be found anywhere in the Bible. In verses **38-39** the Lord concluded His rebuke by saying to them, "***Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.***"

During the remainder of His personal ministry, the Lord never again made any appeal to those wicked spiritual leaders of Israel. A few days later they crucified Him. During the turmoil leading up to His crucifixion, the Lord never once offered them salvation or appealed to them in any way. Rather, the Lord fulfilled **Isaiah 53:7** to the letter. The Lord had already pronounced their "***damnation,***" **Matthew 23:33**. Neither them, nor the Jewish Rabbis who would come after them, would see the Lord again until that time when they would willingly cry out, "***Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.***"

A Notable Exception

Four days after rebuking the wicked spiritual leaders of Israel, the Lord was crucified. Three days after that the Lord was resurrected. Then forty days later He ascended up into Heaven, **Acts 1:11**, which was to receive Him "***until the times of restitution of all things,***" **Acts 3:20-21**. This should have closed the matter of the spiritual leaders of Israel until the end of the age. But it didn't! The Lord Himself made one notable exception to His statement in **Matthew 23:39**.

After the Lord ascended back to Heaven, a young man by the name of Saul, from the city of Tarsus, came to the forefront as one of the most zealous of all the spiritual leaders of Israel. Saul, a Pharisee [**Acts 23:6; 26:4-5**], was filled with such zeal for the God of Israel, and the traditions of his fathers, that he bitterly opposed and persecuted the Lord's churches. See **Acts 7:58-59, 8:1-3, 9:1-2, 9:13-14, 22:3-5, 26:9-11, Galatians 1:13-14**, and **1 Timothy 1:12-13**. Saul was a blind religionist, hating and despising everything and everyone connected with Christ and the Christian movement. He had become one of the most prominent and influential spiritual leaders in the nation of Israel.

But seven years after the ascension of Christ, Saul had an amazing experience. Saul was traveling to Damascus for the express purpose of arresting and persecuting Christians. While on the road to Damascus, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself suddenly appeared to Saul in blinding light "***above the brightness of the sun,***" **Acts 26:13**. On that occasion the Lord appeared face to face to Saul, a spiritual leader of the Jewish people. There, in the dust of the Damascus road, Saul acknowledged Jesus Christ as

"that Just One." Right then Saul experienced the life changing miracle of *the new birth*. Saul of Tarsus, the defiant blind religionist, *by the grace of God*, was transformed into Paul the Apostle, who would become a mighty preacher of God's grace and a great defender of the faith.

But this shouldn't have happened! It was not the time that the Lord Himself had appointed for the *spiritual leaders* of Israel to be saved, ***Matthew 23:39***. Saul of Tarsus was one of the most prominent of those wicked *spiritual leaders*. Why had the Lord made an exception for Saul, and saved him before the appointed time?

A Pattern

The truth that the Lord had made an exception when He saved Saul of Tarsus cannot be denied by anyone willing to deal honestly with the Scriptures. Saul (*Pau*) himself stated in ***1 Corinthians 15:8***, ***"And last of all He was seen of me also, as one born out of due time."*** The Greek text literally reads, ***"as one brought to birth (aborted) before the appointed season."*** This makes it quite clear that the Lord made an exception when He saved Saul of Tarsus, one of Israel's most prominent *spiritual leaders*, before the time appointed in ***Matthew 23:39*** for those spiritual leaders to be saved. Why did the Lord make an exception for Saul...??

The answer to this question is found in ***1 Timothy 1:16***, ***"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting."*** Folks, let this statement sink in. Here is the answer!

What this verse tells us is that Saul (*Pau*) had obtained mercy because the Lord had chosen him as the ***"first"*** of the *spiritual leaders* of Israel, ***"which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting."*** Glory! Paul was to serve as ***"a pattern"*** [*typos...type...Greek*] to display God's ***"longsuffering"*** before all mankind. Compare ***2 Peter 3:9*** and ***3:15***. Because he was to serve as ***"a pattern,"*** in ***Acts 9:15*** the Lord Himself referred to him as ***"a chosen vessel."*** Paul's salvation, life, and ministry would prophetically portray God's future dealings with the *spiritual leaders* of Israel.

In ***1 Timothy 1:15*** Paul testified of himself, ***"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."*** Before his salvation, Saul was a blind religionist, hating and despising Christ and the whole Christian movement. He hated them so much that he gloried in persecuting, torturing, and even killing Christians, ***Acts 26:9-11; Galatians 1:13-14***. Saul had indeed become the ***"chief"*** of sinners. But remember that he is ***"a pattern."***

Some 2,000 years ago the *spiritual leaders* of Israel vehemently opposed Christ. They hated Him so much that they instigated the Jewish people to crucify Him, and then lied to the people about His resurrection, ***Matthew 27:20; 28:11-15***. Right through the

centuries the spiritual leaders of Israel have continued to lie about Christ to the Jewish people. After all of these centuries the spiritual leaders of modern Israel are still bitterly opposed to real Bible believing Christianity. Christians living in the land of Israel today are lied about, ostracized, oppressed, and persecuted for the “terrible crime” of trying to share the gospel of Christ with the Jewish people. Verification of this accusation is easy for our readers to find, for the Jerusalem Post and other Jewish publications often print letters, news items, and even advertisements that reveal how the Jewish Rabbis really feel about Christ, Christian missionaries, the New Testament, and Christianity in general. Some of the Jewish Rabbis in Israel, and in other countries, are the most bitter enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ and Bible believing Christianity to be found among mankind. Just like Saul of Tarsus, they have become the “**chief**” of sinners.

Ironically, it is many of these same Jewish Rabbis who are soon going to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior and the Messiah of Israel. I want to develop this truth so that our readers can marvel at the greatness, majesty, and grace of our wonderful God and Savior.

The Pattern Displayed

Most of God's people today have totally missed (*or ignored*) Paul's statement about being “**a pattern to them which should hereafter believe....**” In order for our readers to understand how the 144,000 fit into end-time events, this truth about Saul needs to be understood.

Paul's Salvation – Saul's salvation occurred when he was on the road to Damascus, the capitol city of the nation of Syria. Now is it just coincidence that today one of Israel's foremost goals is to achieve peace with Syria? Looking at the Middle East today from a political and military perspective, Israel today is exactly where Saul was some 2,000 years ago. Today Israel is on the road to Damascus.

Face to Face with Christ – It was on that Damascus road that the Lord appeared to Saul face to face. Quite significantly, **Ezekiel 20:35** clearly predicts that the Lord is again going to plead with the Jewish people “**face to face**.” This is not a figurative expression. **Zechariah 13:6** even predicts that the Jews will literally ask the Lord, “**What are these wounds in Thine hands? Then He will answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends.**” These Scriptures clearly establish a future “**face to face**” meeting of the Jewish people with the Lord Himself, just as Saul saw the Lord face to face on the Damascus road. Glory!

The Glory of the Lord – At the time Saul was saved, Christ appeared to him in brilliant glory surpassing even the light of the sun, **Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:13**. It is then more than coincidence that the prophetic Scriptures predict that the Lord will again visibly appear to Israel in His glory. See **Psalms 102:16, Isaiah 35:2, 60:1, Matthew 24:29-31, Revelation 1:7**, and many similar passages.

The Blindness of Saul – The glorious appearing of the Lord caused Saul to totally lose his sight for three days, *Acts 9:8-9*. Significantly, just as Saul was physically blind for three days, so unbelieving Israel has been spiritually blind for the past three thousand years. That is three days in God's great week, *2 Peter 3:8*. Proof of this truth is found in *Isaiah 42:18-20* and *59:9-10*. The prophet Isaiah ministered to Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel, nearly 800 years before the first coming of Christ. Spiritual blindness had already come upon the Jewish people before Isaiah began his ministry. So there is no question that just as Saul was in darkness for three days, so the Jewish people have now been in spiritual darkness for three thousand years; three days in God's great week.

Partial Blindness – Saul, after being totally blind for three days, was sent a messenger from the Lord *"that he might receive his sight," Acts 9:12; 9:17-18*. However, what many of God's people miss is that Saul's vision was not totally restored. Saul was left partially blind. As such, he is again set forth as a *"pattern"* [type] of the Jewish people. Some two thousand years ago the Heavenly Father sent His own dear Son to the Jewish people to bring them out of their spiritual darkness. See *John 1:1-9, 3:19-21, 8:12, 12:35-36, 12:46*, and many other similar passages. There was a small remnant of the Jews that responded to the light that Christ brought into the world, but most of them rejected the light, *Romans 11:7*. This is why God's people are explicitly told, *"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in," Romans 11:25*. So again, Paul, with his partial blindness, stands as a *"pattern"* [type] of Israel.

I am well aware that some of our readers will not want to believe that Paul was partially blind, but I am not backing down on this truth. Proof that Saul's sight was only partially restored is seen in the fact that when Paul was inspired to write his epistles, he always used a "ghost writer" [with one exception]. In other words, Paul used some other person to write down the inspired Word that the Lord gave to Paul. In each of Paul's epistles he wrote the salutation, but a ghost writer wrote the epistle. Why would Paul have done this if his sight was perfect? Since Paul was a highly educated and very capable man, there would have been no need for him to use someone else to write for him, except for the fact that his physical vision was severely limited. Check this out for yourself.

The fact that Paul, even though he was partially blind, became a great witness for the Lord, is typical of those Jews through the centuries who have renounced Judaism, and embraced Christ, and have become great witnesses for the Lord. Praise God!

Paul's Trip to Petra – Did I just blow your mind? Here is a Bible truth that is almost totally overlooked by God's people.

In *Galatians 1:17-18* Paul explicitly stated, ***“Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.”*** Here we are plainly told that Paul went into Arabia. If our readers will look at a good Bible map, they will find that what is known today as Jordan [*and ancient Edom*] was once a part of the ancient land of Arabia. Petra, located in Jordan today, was located in ancient Arabia. How long was Paul there? According to these Scriptures, and by comparing other passages about Paul’s travels, he must have spent about ***“three years”*** in Petra.

The prophetic Scriptures tell us that Israel is going to flee to Petra during the coming Tribulation. See ***Revelation 12:6, 12:14, Isaiah 16:1-4, Ezekiel 20:33-38, Micah 2:12-13***, and other similar Scriptures. How long is Israel going to be in Petra? The prophetic Scriptures indicate that they flee to Petra at, or just after, the middle of the Tribulation. They will be there during the last half of the Tribulation, a period of a little more than ***“three years.”*** Well, how about that! Since the Lord chose Paul to be a ***“pattern”*** for Israel, the Lord even sent Paul to Petra for approximately the same amount of time that Israel will be there in the future. Glory to God! Hallelujah! What a Savior we serve!

I want our readers to know that if you meticulously study the life and ministry of Paul, you will be able to find more types of Israel in Paul’s life that I am not taking the time to mention in this study. I have gone into some detail to emphasize that Paul was indeed a ***“pattern”*** of those *spiritual leaders* of Israel that shall ***“hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting,” 1 Timothy 1:16.*** Glory to God!

Due to the length of this study, and the attention span of some readers, I am going to bring this article to a close and continue the study in a second article. In the next article we will be discussing in detail the salvation, sealing, and ministry of the 144,000, which was typified by Paul, the ***“pattern,”*** so many centuries ago.



To be continued...



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