

Dear Darryl,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You asked if the number 144,000 in Revelation 14 is literal or a symbolic representation of a larger number of people in the first resurrection.

Revelation 1:1 tells us that its message has been "signified" or put into symbols. Most often what the book appears to say is not what it actually means. For example, the beast, the woman, the dragon, etc. are not literal. They are representative of other things.

Although seven trumpets and lampstands, etc., are mentioned, they are not really actual trumpets or lampstands. We can, therefore, infer that the numbers seem to be literal, but not the objects they modify. This gives credence to the thought that the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation 7:4 is literal, but not the tribes of Israel, which it modifies. In Revelation 7:3 the 144,000 are defined as the servants of God or Christians, consecrated ones, who have devoted their lives to follow after the Master. Revelation 9:4 confirms this thought, placing this group who have the seal of God on their foreheads, in the time of the fifth trumpet or the time of the fifth angel, or messenger, to the Church. Because we believe that each messenger ministered to a stage of the Church throughout the Gospel Age, it then becomes evident that the 144,000, the sealed ones, spoken of in Revelation 7:3, are one and the same with those of Revelation 9:4, and, therefore, they are an on going class existing throughout the Gospel Age. We are told that this class is a "little flock," a "peculiar people," a "royal priesthood" a "chosen generation" whose names are written in heaven. Ephesians 1:11-14 adds to the thought by speaking of those marked with a seal, the Holy Spirit of promise, a promise of further development in their lives. Revelation 14:1 says that the 144,000 have his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. Revelation 14:3 says no man could learn a new song but the 144,000. Only they could learn the new song. These scriptures speak of the Church and tell us that it is composed of 144,000 members.

All of the above references show us just how select the very elect Church class is. To be called out from the billions of people in order to have an opportunity to become a member of this tiny class is truly a privilege. Revelation 7 opens with the four angels holding back the four winds, which most agree symbolize war or destruction, the beginning of Armageddon. The angels are instructed to hold back these winds of destruction until the servants of God are sealed. Revelation 7:4 then states that the number of those sealed were 144,000.

We hope we have answered your question. Please write us again.

Sincerely,  
Christian Questions Radio

Dear Darryl,

Thank you once again for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You said that you

realized that those in the first resurrection would be "a little flock compared to all that ever lived since the time of Christ, but 144,000 seems a ridiculously small number." You further stated, "When Jesus told his disciples to go forth and baptize he did not say baptize until you reach 144,000 and then stop. It would seem very arrogant for any one to say there are only 144,000 and then claim to be one of them."

Your questions are well taken and have been the concern of many inquiring Christians. 144,000 is indeed a very small number compared with the millions in almost 2000 years who have consciously made a covenant of sacrifice to give up their wills and follow after Jesus. It is important to remember that consecration is not an arbitrary, emotional response. It is a well thought out decision that cannot be made until one thoroughly understands just what that sacrifice entails. The loftiness of the call requires total submission to the will of God and sacrifice of self will in every matter of life. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:1-2) "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:2-3)

Once a covenant of sacrifice of self will unto death is made, many, although they love the Lord and obey His laws, fall short by not giving their all to Him in one or another aspect of their lives. Their lack of zeal, or total commitment for life, prevents them from becoming part of the very elect overcomers, the 144,000, who inherit immortality. Although they will not inherit immortality, they are, nonetheless, a spirit-begotten class and will be resurrected as spirit beings. They are often referred to as the "great multitude" or "great company." This group is referred to in Revelation 7, just after the 144,000 are discussed. "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. . . . These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:9, 14) Since the scripture says that no one could number them, we can assume that millions of consecrated Christians will compose this group. Revelation 19:6-7 further clarifies that this group is not the 144,000, the Bride of the Lamb, because they attend the Lamb's wedding. "Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: 'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.'"

In summary, we believe there is only one call during the Gospel Age, and that is the high calling to be part of the Bride of Christ, composed of 144,000 individuals from every race and nation on the earth. Because many fall short of their goal ("Many are called, but few are chosen." Matthew 22:16), God provided a heavenly mercy class, the Great Multitude.

As consecrated Christians we dedicate our lives to doing the will of God by offering our

bodies as living sacrifices, praying that all we say and do is holy and pleasing to Him. Unfortunately, we are imperfect and fall into sin, missing the mark. Consequently we are constantly approaching the throne of grace asking forgiveness. "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Hebrews 4:16) We know how weak and frail we are. Any strength we have comes from the Lord. Without His guidance and forgiveness we could never attain our heavenly goal. When Jesus walked the earth, he set an example of humility and obedience for us to emulate. His goal was always to honor his Father by doing His will perfectly. We pray daily that we will follow more closely in our Master's footsteps as we earnestly strive to honor our Father and grow in heavenly grace. "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." (Colossians 3:12) And if we remain faithful, we will be with Him in glory. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Revelation 2:10)

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