

The 144,000 of Apocalypse 7 and 14

By Richard Joseph Michael Ibranyi

The 144,000 elect mentioned in Apocalypse 7 is not the same as the 144,000 elect mentioned in Apocalypse 14.

Apocalypse 7

The 144,000 mentioned in Apocalypse 7 is the total number of Catholic Israelites in a state of grace and of the elect who are on earth just previous to the second coming of Jesus Christ and thus will witness the destruction of this world and his second coming:

“After these things, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that they should not blow upon the earth, nor upon the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the sign 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, nor the sea, nor the trees, till we sign the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them that were signed, an hundred forty-four thousand were signed, of every tribe of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda, were twelve thousand signed: Of the tribe of Ruben, twelve thousand signed: Of the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand signed: Of the tribe of Aser, twelve thousand signed: Of the tribe of Nephtali, twelve thousand signed: Of the tribe of Manasses, twelve thousand signed: Of the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand signed: Of the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand signed: Of the tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand signed: Of the tribe of Zabulon, twelve thousand signed: Of the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand signed: Of the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand signed. After this I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands: And they cried with a loud voice, saying: Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.” (Apoc. 7:1-10)

Note that the Catholic Israelites who are signed in their foreheads are on earth just previous to the destruction of the earth and the second coming—“*Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees till we sign the servants of our God in their foreheads.*”

However, the great multitude mentioned in the following verses (9-12) are in heaven—“*I saw a great multitude...standing before the throne.*” These are the elect who will have died and entered heaven from the time of Adam to sometime previous to the destruction of this world and the second coming of Jesus Christ. They are from all nations and tribes and thus are Israelites and Gentiles. And they are all Catholics, as the elect from the Old Testament era who died during the Old Covenant era entered the Catholic Church and thus became Catholic sometime after Jesus’ resurrection and before his ascension into heaven when he took them with him into heaven.¹

Therefore, when all is said and done, there are more than 144,000 Israelites that will be saved because the 144,000 mentioned in Apocalypse 7 are the ones that are alive on earth at the second coming. We know that some Israelites were saved during the Old Covenant era (who are now Catholic Israelites and in heaven) and some Israelites will convert into the Catholic Church during the New Covenant era and will be saved. We also know that many Israelites (perhaps one

¹ See RJMI book *Baptism Controversy Revision: Other Allowable Opinions: Baptism of the Old Testament Elect.*

million or more²) will convert into the Catholic Church during the reign of the Antichrist and die as martyrs before the second coming and thus are not counted among the 144,000 Catholic Israelites who are alive during the second coming.

If the 144,000 had represented the total number of Israelites that will be saved, then none would be saved from the tribe of Dan because Dan is not mentioned. But we know that some from the tribe of Dan, such as Samson, will be saved. Because there will be no Catholic Israelites of the elect from the tribe of Dan at the second coming, that tribe will be extinct or, if not extinct, not even one of that tribe will be found among the elect at the second coming.

Also, the tribe of Joseph was split in two and consists of the half-tribe of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasses. Hence there will be 12,000 of the half-tribe of Manasses. And because the half-tribe of Ephraim was chosen over Manasses and sometimes referred to as the tribe of Joseph, the 12,000 of the tribe of Joseph mentioned in Apocalypse 7 is the half-tribe tribe of Ephraim.

Apocalypse 14

The 144,000 of the elect in heaven mentioned in Apocalypse 14 are the number of the elect who were born into the faith or converted and never fell away and thus never committed a sin against the faith. Hence they are said to be virgins in the spiritual sense—*“These are they who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins.”* And they died previous to Pentecost Day, when the gospel began to be preached to the world, and previous to Ascension Day, as they are among the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb:

“And I beheld, and lo a lamb stood upon mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty-four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the noise of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder; and the voice which I heard, was as the voice of harpers, harping on their harps. And they sung as it were a new canticle, before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the ancients; and no man could say the canticle, but those hundred forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb: And in their mouth there was found no lie; for they are without spot before the throne of God. And I saw another angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel, to preach unto them that sit upon the earth, and over every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people.” (Apoc. 14:1-6)

After St. John sees these 144,000 in heaven, he sees *“another angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the eternal gospel to preach.”* This occurred on Pentecost Day, in AD 33, when the gospel began to be preached to the world. However, these saints died before Ascension Day because they are among “the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb” and thus were the first humans taken to heaven by Christ on Ascension Day, when Christ ascended into heaven nine days before Pentecost Day. The second fruits are those who will die and enter heaven after Ascension Day.

These 144,000 are the most exalted humans in heaven, as they sing a canticle that no one else has the privilege to say—*“And they sung as it were a new canticle...and no man could say the canticle, but those hundred forty-four thousand.”* Because they are the most highly exalted in heaven, it is certain that the words *“These are they who were not defiled with women, for they are*

² Beware of the error that in the end times all the apostate Israelites will convert and be saved. The Word of God teaches that only a remnant of the Israelites alive in the final days will be converted and saved. *“For if thy people, O Israel, shall be as the sand of the sea, a remnant of them shall be converted.”* (Isa. 10:22) *“Return, O ye revolting children, saith the Lord: for I am your husband: and I will take you, one of a city, and two of a kindred, and will bring you into Zion.”* (Jer. 3:14)

virgins” is meant in the spiritual sense and thus they are spiritual virgins who after they were converted or born into the faith never fell away from the faith and thus were never defiled by spiritual fornication. If the word “virgins” were taken literally, then neither Noe, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, nor Job would be included in that number because they were married and had children and thus were not virgins. And no woman who was a virgin, no matter how holy, would be counted among that number because the text only mentions virgins who were not defiled by women. It does not say virgins who were not defiled by men. Therefore not one woman would be counted among this highest exalted group in heaven, not only among the first fruits (which Apocalypse 14 addresses) but also among the second fruits (the virgins of the elect who will die after Ascension Day). Hence the Blessed Virgin Mary would not be included in this highest exalted group even though she is indeed the highest exalted spiritual virgin.

Even though the following commentaries on the Bible contain heresies, their following commentary on these verses in Apocalypse 14 is correct:

Haydock Commentary on Apoc. 14: “Ver. 4. These are they, &c. In the style of the prophets, by fornication is meant idolatry, and virginity signifies cleanness from all sacrilegious worship. These, therefore, are virgins in this sense, who have not fallen into the impurities of creature worship.”³

The Jerome Biblical Commentary: “64. ...The 144,000 are not taken away from the world (Jn 17:15), but bought back by the blood of the Lamb (5:9). 4. They are virgins: Since they are contrasted with those who adore the Beast, the 144,000 virgins must be those who have refused to follow him; they have not yielded to idolatry (1 Kgs. 19:18). As the parallel passages show (7:3; 22:4), the 144,000 whose foreheads bear the seal...is not restricted to virgins in the proper sense of the word. In many OT texts (Hos. 2:14-21; Jer. 2:2,3,32; Zeph. 3:9-13) virginity is a metaphor for fidelity to God; idolatry is associated with prostitution (2:14; Ez 16; 23). Babylon is a whore (v. 8; 17:4-6); but the Church is the spouse of the Lamb (19:7; 21:2-9; see M.-E. Boismard, *RB* 59 [1952] 161-72; R. Devine, *Scr* 16 [1964] 1-5).”⁴

Hence it is certain that these 144,000 are spiritual virgins (both men and women, virgins and non-virgins) who, after having converted or being born into the faith, never defiled themselves with spiritual fornication and thus never committed a sin against the faith. We read in the Bible of seven thousand of this number:

“And I will leave me seven thousand men in Israel, whose knees have not been bowed before Baal, and every mouth that hath not worshipped him kissing the hands.” (3 Ki. 19:18)

“God hath not cast away his people, which he foreknew. Know you not what the scripture saith of Elias, how he calleth on God against Israel? Lord, they have slain thy prophets, they have dug down thy altars. And I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the divine answer to him? I have left me seven thousand men that have not bowed their knees to Baal.” (Rom. 11:2-4)

Therefore, even though Aaron is among the elect, he is not to be counted in this number because he fell away from the faith by worshipping the Golden Calf. But Moses and King David are counted in this number because neither of them committed a sin against the faith even though

³ *Haydock's Catholic Family Bible and Commentary*, by the apostate Bishop Fr. George Leo Haydock, 1859. Published by Edward Dunigan and Brother, New York, NY. Approved by many bishops.

⁴ *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, edited and Nihil Obstat by the apostates Raymond E. Brown, S.S.; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J.; Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm. Published by Prentice Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, USA, 1968. Pt. 2, p. 484.

they committed sins against the moral law.⁵ This shows how much more evil it is to commit a sin against the faith than a sin of immorality. Even though Abraham was an idolater before he converted, he never fell away after he converted and thus is numbered among the 144,000. One should not be astonished at how few of God's chosen people never sinned against the faith. Yet it is true because God said it. The Bible says that all the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel sinned against the faith and all but three kings from the southern kingdom of Juda:

“Except David, and Ezechias, and Josias, all committed sin. For the kings of Juda forsook the law of the most High, and despised the fear of God. So they gave their kingdom to others and their glory to a strange nation.” (Eccus. 49:5-7)

While King David sinned against morals, he never committed a sin against the faith. Hence these verses are more proof of how many of God's chosen people sinned against the faith and conversely how very, very few did not.

However, these 144,000 are not the only ones saved previous to Ascension Day but only the ones who never committed a sin against the faith while they were of the faithful. All others who were saved committed sins against the faith but converted before they died, such as Aaron.

Lastly, some of my earlier published works contained errors regarding the 144,000 of Apocalypse 7 and 14. I believe that I have revised all of them. If not, then let me know.

For the glory of God; in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael, St. Joseph, St. Anne, St. John the Baptist, the other angels and saints; and for the salvation of men

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⁵ When the following verses say that David did not commit sin, it means a sin against the faith: “*Except David, and Ezechias, and Josias, all committed sin. For the kings of Juda forsook the law of the most High, and despised the fear of God. So they gave their kingdom to others, and their glory to a strange nation.*” (Eccus. 49:5-7) Hence even though David sinned against the moral law, he never fell away from the faith.