

144,000 ELITE GROUND TROOPS SEALED BY GOD

The Lamb and his select troops ... the opposition forces ... those who would stand against the unholy trinity of the dragon, the antichrist and the false prophet.

Having fully identified malignant forces of evil in chapters 12 and 13 as the dragon, the beast from the sea, and the beast from the land, **John turns in chapter 14 to a discussion of God's response to this diabolical attack (Patterson).**

- (Revelation 7:2–4 ESV) Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” And I heard the number of the sealed, **144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel.**
- (Revelation 14:1 ESV) Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him **144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.**
- The triumphant 144,000 will be completely loyal to the Lamb, no matter what the cost. In the words of John Phillips, They allow no rivals, no refusals, and no restraint to mar their dedication to Him. Does He need someone to stand upon the steps of the Vatican and cry out against the marriage of Christendom

to the Beast? There are 144,000 ready to go! Does the Lord need someone to beard the Beast at some high function of state and roundly denounce him, his policy, his statecraft, his religion, his economic boycott, his mark, his ministers, his alliance with Satan? There are 144,000 eager to go! Does the Lamb need evangelists to proclaim to the untold millions the gospel of the coming kingdom of God? to climb the highest Himalayas, to cross the desert sands, to blaze evangelistic trails through steaming jungles, or to mush huskies across wide arctic wastes? There are 144,000 ready to go! And though the Beast's Gestapo dog their footsteps and wreak upon their converts his direst vengeance, yet on they go undaunted and undeterred. That was the very spirit of their consecration as they followed the Lamb whithersoever He led them on earth, and their reward is in kind. *[(Exploring Revelation, 180–81) MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2000). Revelation 12–22 (p. 78). Chicago: Moody Press.]*

- Having fully identified malignant forces of evil in chapters 12 and 13 as the dragon, the beast from the sea, and the beast from the land, John turns in chapter 14 to a discussion of God's response to this diabolical attack. First, the intervention of God in the lives of his people is demonstrated in the reappearance of the 144,000 who were first introduced to the reader in chapter 7. Then the seer moves to the response of the living God in terms of the judgment of God on all those who by their own willful act have become the pawns of the malignant trinity. Interpreters who have argued that a futurist reading of the Apocalypse is of no comfort to Christians enduring persecution in the latter decade of the first century point to the future judgments of God as evidence that little comfort could have been derived in behalf of suffering first-century Christians. However, even those who see the book in preteristic or historical terms have to admit that the judgments in this chapter appear to be eschatological in nature. Far from failing to comfort, they do provide the promise of God's ultimate hand of justice and his hand of providence in history, thus encouraging Christians in any era of persecution. The first-century readers would no doubt be fortified by the pictures of providence and justice unveiled in chapter 14. *[Patterson, P. (2012). Revelation. (E. R. Clendenen, Ed.) (Vol. 39, p. 284). Nashville, TN: B&H.]*
- 14:1–5 Some interpreters have supposed that the 144,000 of chapter 14 is a different group than the 144,000 of chapter 7. This conclusion, however, seems ultimately unlikely. To the contrary, much greater information about these 144,000 is now provided. In chapter 7, the reader

observes them as 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel and is informed that they received the seal of God on their foreheads. The seal, which is normally a mark of ownership, is also generally an indication of protection, though in some cases the sealing might be for judgment. In this case almost certainly protection is in view. In 7:9 and following, information is provided concerning those who are martyred for the cause of Christ, but this seems to be distinct from the 144,000 who are sealed for their protection. These 144,000, including 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel, have a particular function via the tribulation period, which now is the focus of chapter 14. *[Ibid.]*

- Consequently, one is driven to a conclusion that these 144,000 are in fact celibate and therefore properly presented here as parthenoi or virgins. Within itself this is not so surprising since the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 mentions that he personally wishes all Christian men could be in this state in which he finds himself being unmarried and probably never married (1 Corinthians 7:8). Jesus also spoke of eunuchs who had made themselves such for the kingdom of God and commends this kind of commitment (Matthew 19:12). *[Ibid.]*
- These 144,000 are living during the great tribulation in the most troubled times in the history of the earth. For them to have family concerns would only seriously complicate God's assignment to them. So apparently the 144,000 constitute an order of men who choose to abstain from marriage in order to give themselves wholly to the task that is before them during the great tribulation. *[Ibid.]*