

God ^{so}
Loved
THE WORLD

Bible Study Series

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The Remnant (144,000)

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Introduction

Jesus prophesied that before God will bring this wicked world to an end, “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness” (Matthew 24:14). When this prophecy is fulfilled, every person on this earth who has reached the age of accountability will have made his or her ultimate choice, either for or against Christ

At that time, the whole human race will be polarized into only two distinct camps. The Bible describes these two groups in many different ways:

2. Believers and unbelievers (John 3:18);
3. Sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46);
4. Those who build their houses on the rock (Jesus), and those who build on the sand;
5. Having the seal of God and those who have the mark of the Beast.

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In other words, the two groups will be (1) those who belong to God and (2) those who are still ruled by Satan (see 1 John 5:19). Because of this polarization, the closing events of this world's history will culminate with the final showdown in the great controversy between Christ and Satan. As pointed out in Lesson 22, this controversy began in heaven when Lucifer, the highest angelic being, rebelled against Christ, the second Person of the Godhead (see Revelation 12:7-9).

In this final showdown, which the book of Revelation describes as the war of Armageddon or “the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Revelation 16:12-16), the conflict will actually be between God's people – the last generation of Christians and Satan's people – those who have deliberately and ultimately rejected Christ and have chosen to be under the banner of Satan

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At that time, the faith of this final generation of Christians will be tried and tested to the utmost in a way that no other generation of believers has ever been tested.

This final test is described in the Bible as the great tribulation of the time of trouble. It will take place just before the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world.

Those believers who will endure this great time of trouble and will triumph over the full force of Satan's attacks are described in the Bible as the Remnant. They are the ones who "overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:11),

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According to Bible prophecy, we are presently living in the antitypical Day of Atonement, the closing events of this earth's history. This was the subject of our last study. Therefore, it is God's purpose that every believer living in these last days be part of that last generation of Christian who will vindicate Him in this final showdown between Christ and Satan. In this study we will examine what the Bible has to say about the Remnant, whom we will discover are "the 144,000," the ones who will vindicate the full power of the gospel by their unshakable faith.

Q1

What did Jesus say will take place before the end of the world?

Matthew 24:14

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. NIV

Note: According to Scripture, God does not want anyone to be lost (2 *Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (NIV)*). That is why He will not bring this sin cursed world of ours to an end until He gives everyone a chance to accept His gift of salvation in Christ.

Q2

How is the gospel of the kingdom described in the book of Revelation?

Revelation 14:6

Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. (NIV)

Note: The reason why this final message is called “the everlasting gospel” is because it was planned from eternity (see Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; Rev 13:8) and is the only message that offers everlasting hope to mankind. This is the message that will be able to carry the last generation of Christians through the great time of trouble.

Q3

Who gets angry when the everlasting gospel is proclaimed and why?

Revelation 12:12

Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short." (NIV)

Note: The devil hates the everlasting gospel because it is the only power he cannot defeat. He will therefore do his utmost to destroy anyone who proclaims this message and anyone who receives it.

Q4

How does the Bible describe the last generation of Christians?

Revelation 12:17

Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of [Remnant kjv] her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. (NIV)

Note: The last generation of Christians are described as “the remnant of her seed” (KJV). The word “remnant” in the Bible refers to God’s people who remain faithful to Him no matter what happens or whose faith endures to the end in spite of apostasy or persecution (*Romans 11:2-5*)

Q4

How does the Bible describe the last generation of Christians?

Romans 11:2-5

God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah-how he appealed to God against Israel: 3 "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"? 4 And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." 5 So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. (NIV)

Q5

According to the prophet Isaiah, who only will be saved?

Romans 9:27

Isaiah cries out concerning Israel:

"Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved.

(NIV)

Note: To experience ultimate salvation it is not enough to believe in Christ, that faith must endure unto the end (*Matthew 10:22 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. (NIV)*). In the last days the Christians who endure the time of trouble and remain faithful to Christ unto the end are called the remnant.

Q6

What question does Jesus raise regarding His second coming?

Luke 18:8

I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (NIV)

Q7

What similar question does John the revelator ask?

Revelation 6:15-17

Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. 16 They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (NIV)

Note: Judging from what is described in Revelation 6:15-16 it seems that no one will be able to withstand the second coming of Christ. But in Revelation 7, John answers the question by describing the remnant who will be able to stand. The word "Remnant" means the faithful ones.

Q8

What must happen before the great tribulation takes place?

Revelation 7:2-3

Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: NIV

Note: Before God allows Satan to test the remnant, their faith has to be sealed. This seal in their foreheads means that their minds are fully settled into the truth of the gospel. Their faith in God's love, and the truth as it is in Christ has become unshakable no matter what Satan and the wicked do to them.

Q9

How many of the last generation of believers will be sealed?

Revelation 7:4

Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. NIV

Note: The 144,000 who are sealed is not a literal number. In Revelation 7:4, John does not see them but only hears their number. The reason for this is because they are scattered throughout the whole world. However, in Revelation 7:9, he sees them and they are “a great multitude, which no one could number.” We know this vast multitude is referring to the 144,000 because in Revelation 7:13-14 they are described as being victorious in the great tribulation.

144,000 – Symbolic or Literal?

The symbolic nature of the 144,000 is conveyed in the rendering of the tribes of Revelation 7:4-8. Not all the tribes are listed (there are replacements with near kin), and their order is different than in the Old Testament. A secondary reason for ordering the tribes, as such, was to convey a special message, using the literal meaning of the Hebrew names.

144,000 – Symbolic or Literal?

In Revelation 7:9,10 John sees the great multitude **praising** (Judah – Gen 29:35) God (the Father) and the Lamb (the **Son**: Ruben – Gen 29:32). This **troop** (Gad – Gen 30:11) is immensely happy (Asher – Gen 30:13) because they **wrestled** (Naphtali – Gen 30:8) with Satan, overcoming him by the blood of the Lamb (Rev 12:11). They **forgot** (Manasseh – Gen 41:51) the trials of the great tribulation as they **heard** (Simeon – Gen 29:33) their reward: Forever, they will be “**attached**” (Levi – Gen 29:34) to the Lamb, following Him wherever He goes (Rev 14:1-4). There is **hire** (Issachar – Gen 30:18) for them, serving God day and night in His temple (Rev 7:15). He who sits on the throne will **dwell** (Zebulum – Gen 30:20; Rev 7:15) among them, for **He will add** (Joseph – Gen 30:20) them to be the **sons of the right hand** (Benjamin – Gen 35:18) with the Lamb.

Q10

What will the 144,000 sing in heaven which no other saint can sing?

Revelation 14:3

Note:

And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. 3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. NIV

Q11 What makes these 144,000 so special in God's eyes?

Revelation 14:4

These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. NIV

Note: The reason that the 144,000 will sing a new song is because it is the song of total victory over Satan. That is why they will be given special privileges in heaven. Their faith will have endured the great tribulation and in doing so, they will have vindicated God in the final showdown between Christ and Satan.

The 144,000 are described as firstfruits to God because although they are the last group of Christians, they are the first, as a group, to attain total spiritual maturity.

Q12 How does the prophet Daniel describe the great tribulation?

Daniel 12:1

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. NIV

Note: The great tribulation will be a time of trouble that has not been experienced by any previous generation. The prophet Jeremiah gives a similar description (see *Jeremiah 30:7 Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. (KJV)*). But both prophets indicate that God's sealed people, the remnant, will ultimately be saved.

Q13 What will make the time of trouble so terrible for the Remnant?

Isaiah 54:7a

"For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. NIV

Note: The issue in the great tribulation will be much more than physical torture. Rather, it will be similar to what Christ faced on the cross when He felt forsaken of God (Matthew 27:46). In this great tribulation, God will produce a people who will manifest the faith of Jesus even though they feel God has abandoned them (Revelation 14:12). This is the faith Christ manifested on the cross and which will be reproduced in the remnant.

Q14

What must the Remnant be rooted and grounded in for their faith to become unshakable?

Ephesians 3:16-17

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, NIV

Note: The word “dwell” in the original actually means “to permanently dwell.” This is possible only when our faith in Christ is rooted and grounded in God’s agape love, which we studied in Lesson 2. It is faith in this unconditional love that is able to keep us from falling in the great tribulation (read 1 John 4:16-19).

Q15

What should all Christians be convinced of regarding God's love?

Romans 8:38

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. NIV

Note: When we are rooted and grounded in God's agape love, we will know that nothing on earth or in heaven can ever separate us from God's love, which was manifested to mankind in Christ (Romans 5:5-10).

Rom 5:5-11 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. 6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! NIV

Q16

How does the prophet Jeremiah describe God's love?

Jeremiah 31:3

The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness. NIV

Note: There will never come a time when God will stop loving us. We may fail Him and we do many times; but He will never fail or forsake us. Even though we will feel forsaken of God in the time of trouble, our faith in His love will be unshakable.

Q17

According to the apostle Paul,
Who is the source of our power
in Christian living?

2 Corinthians 4:3-7

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. NIV

Q18

How does Paul describe the Christian battle between faith and feeling?

2 Corinthians 4:8,9

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. NIV

Note: We must never confuse faith with feelings. The two may be in harmony when all is well, but under distress or persecution the two will part company so that our feeling will contradict our faith. Our feelings will then tell us that God does not love us or that we are not good enough to be saved. In contrast, our faith will convince us that we have been accepted in Christ and God will never stop loving us or forsake us. This is the kind of faith the last generation of Christians must develop in order to be sealed by God and be part of the Remnant.

Summary

Be prepared! During the Great Tribulation, our faith and feelings will part company. But never, ever give up your faith. You may feel that you have let God down. Do not be dismayed, for all fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Do not ever forget that it is only because of Jesus' righteousness – 2000 years ago – that believers stand completely righteous in Him today (see Colossians 2:10). It is only as we are united to Christ by faith that He may present us “holy, and blameless, and irreproachable in His sight” (Colossians 1:22). What is the condition? “If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard.....”
(Colossians 1:23)