

Sabbath School Lesson #10 – Giving Back – 4-10 March 2023

Christ would have us fully understand the meaning of our Memory Verse: “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Revelation 14:13). We focus on the Memory Verse, as this is not addressed by the Lesson writer, yet it is very importance! Our Adventist pioneers taught that those who from about 1850 die in the third angel’s message are part of 144,000. “From henceforth” to close of probation, only 144,000 are sealed! A few quotes from our pioneers:

RH Johnson: “Among those who shouted victory over the beast and over his image were those who had come forth from their graves in the special resurrection, and were seen on the sea of glass. They were ‘the living saints, 144,000 in number’” (RH July 27, 1905). JN Loughborough, writing in 1916, a year after EG White died, as faith of some started to depart from the truth, wrote: “If it be claimed that none will be numbered among the 144,000 but those who live until Christ’s second coming, without tasting death, what about those Sabbath keepers who in 1848 to 1850 were being sealed? There are not a half dozen of those now alive who were then keeping the Sabbath. If they were then sealed, they will be among those resurrected to eternal life at the voice of God” {QSM 24.3}. J White wrote: “those who die under the third angel’s message are a part of the 144,000; there are not 144,000 in addition to these, but these help make up that number” {RH, Sept 23, 1880, par 216}.

This same truth was taught in the book by Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation* (DAR), which EG White unreservedly endorsed as containing “solid, eternal truth for this time” {1MR 61.2}. EG White wrote: “God used the author [Uriah Smith] of this book as a channel through which to communicate light to direct minds to the truth” {1MR 63.1}. We read this in DAR:

“Those who die after having become identified with the third angel’s message, are evidently numbered as a part of the 144,000; for this message is the same as the sealing message of Revelation 7, and by that message only 144,000 were sealed. But there are many who have had their entire religious experience under this message, but have fallen in death. They die in the Lord, and hence are counted as sealed; for they will be saved. But the message results in the sealing of only 144,000; therefore these must be included in that number. Being raised in the special resurrection (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 1:7) which occurs when the voice of God is uttered from the temple, at the beginning of the seventh and last plague (Revelation 16:17; Joel 3:16; Hebrews 12:26), they pass through the period of that plague, and hence may be said to come “out of great tribulation” (Revelation 7:14), and being raised from the grave only to mortal life, they take their stand with believers who have not died, and with them receive immortality at the last trump (1 Corinthians 15:52), being then, with the others, changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Thus, though they have passed through the grave, it can be said of them at last, that they are “redeemed from among men” (Revelation 14:4), that is, from among the living; for the coming of Christ finds them among the living, waiting for the change to immortality, like those who have not died, and as if they themselves had never died” {DAR 634.1*}. That is truly “Solid eternal truth”!

John heard a voice from heaven command him: “Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth;” and the response of the Spirit was, “Yea, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them” (Rev 14:13). “From henceforth” must signify from some particular point of time. This time is marked by the commencement of the third angel’s message. The numbering of the 144,000 started about 1850 when the third angel’s message was first being proclaimed {see JN Loughborough, QSM 24.3}. “From henceforth,” those who die in that message are blessed to be among the 144,000. Before the general resurrection of all righteous (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), is a special resurrection (see Daniel 12:2). The righteous in a special resurrection will be among the 144,000. Thus, “their works do follow them.” These works are held in remembrance to be rewarded at the judgment.

The special resurrection (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 1:7) embraces a limited number of both righteous and wicked – those to “everlasting life” are a part of 144,000 because they died in the third angel’s message; those to “everlasting contempt” are who had a part in Christ’s crucifixion. This special resurrection is a result of the voice of God: “It is done” (Rev 16:17).

That this is the voice of God, not of Christ (for that comes later when Christ calls all other righteous to life: 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), we are told: "Then I saw the four Angels cease to hold the four winds. And I saw famine, pestilence and sword, nation rose against nation, and the whole world was in confusion. Then we cried to God for deliverance day and night till we began to hear the bells on Jesus' garment. And I saw Jesus rise up in the Holiest, and as He came out we heard the tinkling of bells, and knew our High Priest was coming out. Then we heard the voice of God [referred to in Revelation 16:17] which shook the heavens and earth, and gave the 144,000 the day and hour of Jesus' coming. Then the saints were free, united and full of the glory of God, for He had turned their captivity. And I saw a flaming cloud come where Jesus stood and He laid off His priestly garment and put on His kingly robe, took His place on the cloud which carried Him to the east where it first appeared to the saints on earth, a small black cloud, which was the sign of the Son on Man. While the cloud was passing from the Holiest to the east which took a number of days, the Synagogue of Satan worshiped at the saints feet" {DS March 4, 1846 Par 2}. Notice here, it "took a number of days" between the voice of God and the coming of Christ. This voice of the Father shakes both heaven and earth, but speaks deliverance to the people of God (Jeremiah 25:30; Joel 3:16; Hebrews 12:26, 28). Of this time, EG White, speaks very clearly: "That voice shakes the heavens and the earth ... Graves are opened, and 'many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth ... awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.' All who have died in the faith of the third angel's message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God's covenant of peace with those who have kept His law. 'They also which pierced Him,' those that mocked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory, and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient" (GC 636-637).

"From henceforth" who die in the third angel's message are still regarded, in God's sight, as an integral part of the living 144,000; for when the covenant of peace is spoken to them, those of them who are then in their graves are raised up to hear it with the living. EG White says: "The living righteous are changed 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.' At the voice of God [referred to in Revelation 16:17] they [the living saints] were glorified; now they are made immortal, and with the risen saints are caught up to meet their Lord in the air" (The Great Controversy, 645). Those who were raised at the voice of God to hear the covenant of peace with the living, were also glorified at that time (another point of identity), and made immortal at the same time with the risen saints of a great multitude. The special resurrects rise at the voice of God, it takes "a number of days" {DS March 14, 1846 Par 2} before Christ appears; they are raised to the plane of mortality only; they take their stand with the living saints, as a part of them, though glorified, not yet made immortal; they are alive on the day of Christ's appearing in the same condition as the saints who have never died, and then, with them, are made immortal. The specially risen are as emphatically "redeemed from the earth," and "redeemed from among men," as those living who do not go into the grave at all.

Confirming that Mrs Hastings who had died on 28 February 1850 will be in a special resurrection, Ellen White said: "I saw that she was sealed and would come up at the voice of God and stand upon the earth, and would be with the 144,000" {2SM 263.3}. The phrase "with" does not mean in addition, for only 144,000 are alive at Christ's first appearance. That the 144,000 come "out of great tribulation" (Rev 7:14) does not exclude those who come up after six plagues are poured (Rev 16:17). Raised at the beginning of the seventh plague, they pass through the whole period of that judgment, and witness all its accumulated calamities. The plagues are cumulative. Under the fifth plague, the people are still suffering from the sores of the first plague (Rev 16:2, 10-11). In the seventh is found the climax of all the plagues. Whatever degree of suffering that falls to the lot of the saints on account of plagues (though "angels will shield the righteous" {GC 629.2}), those who are raised at the voice of the Father pass through the same as those who have not been through death. The accumulative horrors of the seventh plague will overbalance all the others; and those who are delivered from it are thus said to have come "out of great tribulation," though having not been at the start of the other six plagues. "Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand" – EG White {RH March 9, 1905 Par 5}.