

## The Original Sealing Message

“And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal 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, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.” Rev. 7:1-4.

We have heard people say, and the impression has even been given in denominational publications, that the sealing message is not important, because Sister White wrote:

“It is not His [God's] will that they [God's people] shall get in to controversy over questions which will not help them spiritually, such as, Who is to compose the hundred and forty-four thousand? This those who are the elect of God will in a short time know without question.” 1SM 174.

This statement, if correctly understood, does not say that we do not have to pay much attention to the sealing message itself, but that we should not speculate about certain details which God has not revealed. For example: Who can identify beforehand the individuals that will be saved? Only God can. But this does not mean that we should ignore the plan of salvation. Although we do not know the day of Christ's return (Matt. 25:13), for instance, the doctrine of the second coming of Christ is still a vital point of our faith. The same is very true as far as the sealing message is concerned.

The sealing work-which belongs to the third angel of Revelation 14-is one of the main pillars in the Threefold Message. Its correct understanding has much to do with the stability of the whole doctrinal system of SDA's. It is, in fact, the very essence of the third angel's message. It is so important that the Lord's servant wrote the following warning:

“We have but a little space of time left to work for God. Nothing should be too dear to sacrifice, for the salvation of the scattered and torn flock of Jesus.... We must work while the day lasts, for when the dark night of trouble and anguish comes, it will be too late to work for God. Jesus is still in His holy temple, and will now accept our sacrifices, our prayers, and our confessions of faults and sins, and will now pardon all the transgressions of Israel, that they may be blotted out before He leaves the sanctuary. When Jesus leaves the sanctuary, then he that is holy and righteous will be holy and righteous still; for all their sins will be blotted out, and they will be sealed with the seal of the living God. But those that are unjust and filthy, will be unjust and filthy still; for then there will be no Priest in the sanctuary to offer their sacrifices, their confessions, and their prayers before the Father's throne. Therefore, what is done to rescue souls from the coming storm of wrath, must be done before Jesus leaves the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. The Lord has shown me that precious souls are starving, and dying for want of the present, sealing truth, the meat in due season; and that the swift messengers should speed on their way, and feed the flock with the present truth.... Those only who have the seal of the living God, will be sheltered from the storm of wrath that will soon fall on the heads of those who have rejected the truth.”—*Present Truth*, Sept. 1849 (RH vol. 1, p. 11), [emphasis supplied].

“I then saw the third angel. Said my accompanying angel, ‘Fearful is his work. Awful is his mission. He is the angel that is to select the wheat from the tares, and seal, or bind, the wheat for the heavenly garner. These things should engross the whole mind, the whole attention.’” EW 118 [emphasis supplied].

When we read statements like these from the Spirit of Prophecy, we wonder how some professed believers among the Adventists can say that the sealing message, under which 144,000 are to be sealed

with the seal of the living God, is not important for our salvation. The early Adventists understood that this message was to lead every soul to decide his case either for life or for death.

## I-THE ORIGINAL SDA DOCTRINE

Originally it was the official belief of the SDA Church that the sealing of the 144,000 commenced in 1844 and will go on until the close of probation.

Just a few statements, quoted hereunder, are sufficient to confirm the original belief:

### 1. J. Bates:

“Now all advent believers that have, and do, participate in the advent messages as given in Rev. 14:6-13, will love and keep this covenant with God, and especially His Holy Sabbath, in this covenant; this is a part of the 144,000 now to be sealed.

“The other part are those who do not yet so well understand the advent doctrine; but are endeavoring to serve God with their whole hearts, and are willing, and will receive this covenant and Sabbath as soon as they hear it explained. These will constitute the 144,000 now to be sealed with ‘a seal of the living God,’ which sealing will bear them through this time of trouble.”—*A Seal of the Living God*, pp. 61, 62.

### 2. S. N. Haskell:

“After the disappointment of 1844, the people of God saw . . . the binding claim of the fourth commandment as well as the nine other commands of the decalogue. The Sabbath reform commenced at that time; by 1848 it [the Sabbath reform] began to be recognized as the fulfillment of Revelation 7:1-4.”—*Bible Hand book*, p. 88.

### 3. U. Smith:

“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 experiences 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 (Dan. 12:2; Rev. 1:7) which occurs when the voice of God is uttered from the temple, at the beginning of the seventh and last plague (Rev. 16:17; Joel 3:16; Heb. 12:26), they pass through the period of that plague, and hence may be said to come ‘out of great tribulation’ (Rev. 7:14), and having been 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 (1Cor. 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’ (Rev. 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.”—*Daniel and the Revelation*, p. 634, footnote, 1905 edition.

**4. J. White:**

“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. They are raised to mortal life shortly before Christ comes, and . . . are changed to immortality when Christ appears.” RH Sept. 23, 1880.

**5. J. N. Loughborough:**

“If there is still a doubt of the resurrected Sabbath keepers’ being numbered with the 144,000, consider the following from Sister White’s words in 1909. At the General Conference in 1909, Elder Irwin had a stenographer accompany him in a call upon Sister White. He wished to ask her some questions, and have an exact copy of the words of the questions, and the replies. Among other questions was this one: ‘Will those who have died in the message be among the 144,000?’ In reply, Sister White said: ‘Oh, yes, those who have died in the faith will be among the 144,000. I am clear on that matter.’ These were the exact words of question and answer, as Brother Irwin permitted me to copy from his stenographer’s report.”—*Questions on the Sealing Message*, p. 17.

**6. R. H. 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.

**7. L. R. Conradi:**

“In the same way, some will be resurrected from among the sleeping righteous who will complete the number of Israel according to Revelation 7.”—*Los Videntes y el Porvenir*, p. 271.

**8. W. C. White about E. G. White:**

“Now to the question: Did Sister White teach that those who died in the message since 1844 and of whom it is said, ‘Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth,’ that they shall be members of the 144,000?

“I can assure you, my brother, that this was the belief and the teaching of Ellen G. White. Many times I have heard her make statements to this effect, and I am in possession of a letter to Brother Hastings who is mentioned on page 237 of *Life Sketches* in which she says plainly that his wife who had recently died would be a member of the 144,000.

“In a letter recently received from a brother in Reno, Nevada, reference is made to a statement in Elder Loughborough’s book found on page 29 in which it is reported that Sister White said: ‘Those who died in the faith will be among the 144,000. I am clear on that matter.’

“And I testify, my brother, that that is in perfect harmony with her writings, her sayings and her teachings throughout the years of her ministry.” Letter of W. C. White, dated April 18, 1929.

**9. Sabbath School Lesson of August 1, 1908:**

“From this we may recognize that, at the coming of the Lord, all of the 144,000, as living saints, will be composed of those who have never seen death and those who have died during the preaching of the last message but have resurrected before the appearing of the Lord.”—Retranslated from the German Sabbath School Quarterly.

## 10. SDA Encyclopedia:

“The Sabbath was identified with the sealing message of Revelation 7, and as a result the Sabbath came to be seen as God’s seal. ‘The position of our people then,’ said Loughborough, ‘was that the sealing work at that time was going on, and that some of the 144,000 were then being sealed.’ During the next few years, Ellen G. White repeatedly spoke of the sealing work currently in progress (EW 36-38, 44, etc.).

“Corollary to the belief that those who accepted the third angel’s message and the Sabbath were being sealed, was the belief that any who died would not in that way forfeit membership in the 144,000 but would come forth in a special resurrection to join their brethren who remained alive to the coming of the Lord.”—*SDA Encyclopedia*, pp. 915, 916.

“Ellen G. White identified the seal of God with the Sabbath in November, 1848 (Joseph Bates, *A Seal of the Living God*, pp. 24-26), and Bates wrote his book on the subject in 1849. Also in 1849 Mrs. White wrote that the sealing work was then going forward (*Present Truth*, 1:21, August 1849).”—*SDA Encyclopedia*, p. 1163.

## II – NEW LIGHT?

The statements just quoted under the previous subtitle show that it was a well-established belief among the early Adventists that the sealing of the 144,000 began in 1848. But this doctrine is not upheld any longer. We are told that we must leave the door open for changes when new light comes. “We cannot hold that a position once taken, an idea once advocated, is not, under any circumstances, to be relinquished. There is but One who is infallible – He who is the way, the truth, and the life.” TM 105. And we should not ignore that in the writings of E. G. White there are some declarations which seem to subvert the original SDA position about the sealing of the 144,000. Many have taken these passages as a basis for the new belief that the sealing of the 144,000 did not begin in 1844, but that they will all be sealed under the latter rain, because they must all meet the following conditions:

- (a) They obtain the victory “over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name.” (Rev 15:2; AA 590, 591; GC 648).
- (b) They witness the final judgements of God through the period of the seven last plagues. “They have seen the earth wasted with famine and pestilence, the sun having power to scorch men with great heat, and they themselves have endured suffering, hunger, and thirst.” GC 649.
- (c) “They have endured the anguish of the time of Jacob’s trouble; they have stood without an intercessor through the final outpouring of God’s judgments.” GC 649.
- (d) They are “translated from the earth, from among the living.” GC 649. This is why they are represented by Elijah. “Elijah, who had been translated to heaven without seeing death, represented those who will be living upon the earth at Christ’s second coming.” DA 422.

These statements are taken as strong evidences in behalf of the new belief – that all the 144,000 are the very last generation of saints, who will be sealed under the latter rain, who will never see death, and “are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:15).

There is no doubt that the new interpretation, based especially on GC 648, 649, would stand on its own legs if there were no counter-evidences in the writings of E. G. White. Adventists have from the beginning followed an important expository rule: If the proposed exegesis of one verse is in harmony with all other verses which refer to that subject, then the explanation should be acceptable. If the

exposition harmonizes, or seems to harmonize, with one verse, but conflicts with other verses relating to the same topic, then it is not acceptable. This is the problem with the new belief grounded on GC 648, 649. It does not harmonize with other Spirit of Prophecy statements, which clearly support the original SDA doctrine that the sealing of the 144,000 actually began in 1848.

### III – DOES E. G. WHITE CONTRADICT HERSELF?

The sealing of the 144,000 under the threefold message, according to Revelation 7:1-4 and 14:1-12, is described as a work which was going on in the days of Sister White. When she mentions the sealing work, she refers to a specific seal which only the 144,000 can receive, which the third angel places only on conscientious Sabbath-keepers identified with his message, which some of the saints had received already in the early days of the message, and which is a covering (or protection) against the seven last plagues. This is why every Adventist who wants to understand the truth of the sealing message should analyze both sides of the question and decide for himself, on the weight of evidence, whether he will abide by the old doctrine or accept the new interpretation. In case he endorses the new interpretation, what will he do with the counter-evidence? Will he ignore the Spirit of Prophecy statements which collide with the modern explanation of GC 648, 649? Or will he say that Sister White was mistaken when she spoke of the sealing of the 144,000, according to Revelation 7:1-4, as having begun in 1848, and that later on she corrected her previous declarations when she received more light on the subject? If, however, he holds on to the former Adventist stand, that the work described in Revelation 7:1-4 was started by the third angel in 1848, then he needs, for GC 648, 649, an acceptable explanation which will harmonize with the old doctrinal position.

We, as SDA Reformers, uphold the original doctrine, and, therefore, explain GC 648, 649, in unison with the old belief. We do not think that Sister White contradicted herself.

**1. Under the proclamation of the threefold message, “every one” of God’s children, who is identified with the message and qualifies for a place in the kingdom, receives a specific seal according to Revelation 7:1-4, which is placed only on 144,000 saints. This becomes evident from the statements transcribed hereunder.**

(a) The third angel’s mission is the sealing work of Revelation 7:1-4 in the antitypical Day of Atonement.

“The mighty angel is seen ascending from the east (or sunrising). This mightiest of angels has in his hand the seal of the living God, or of Him who alone can give life, who can inscribe upon the forehead the mark of or inscription, to whom shall be granted immortality, eternal life. It is the voice of this highest angel that had authority to command the four angels to keep in check the four winds until this work was performed, and until he should give the summons to let them loose.... Only those who, in their attitude before God, are filling the position of those who are repenting and confessing their sins in the great antitypical day of atonement, will be recognized and marked as worthy of God’s protection.” TM 444, 445.

Let us bear in mind: The work that is attributed to the third angel is the special sealing of a specific group, the 144,000, according to Revelation 7:1-4. The third angel does this work in the antitypical day of atonement, which began in 1844 (GC 433).

E. G. White testifies:

“I then saw the third angel. Said my accompanying angel, ‘Fearful is his work. Awful is his mission. He is the angel that is to select the wheat from the tares, and seal, or bind, the wheat for the heavenly garner. These things should engross the whole mind, the whole attention.’ ” EW 118.

“Who are voicing the message of the third angel, calling upon the world to make ready for the great day of God? The message we bear has the seal of the living God.” CT 459.

(b) In the early days of the message, the third angel was already doing his work, according to Revelation 7:1-4.

“I saw a little company travelling a narrow pathway. All seemed to be firmly united, bound together by the truth, in bundles, or companies. Said the angel, ‘The third angel is binding, or sealing, them in bundles for the heavenly garner.’ This little company looked careworn, as if they had passed through severe trials and conflicts.” EW 88, 89 (published in 1854).

We do not know how many had already been sealed by 1854, but we do know that the third angel, whose mission is depicted in Revelation 7:1-4, was actively sealing some of the 144,000 at that time.

In vision, November 1848, the servant of the Lord spoke the following words with reference to the sealing work of Revelation 7:1-4:

“He [God] was well pleased when His law began to come up in strength. That truth [the Sabbath truth] arises, and is on the increase, stronger and stronger. It’s the seal! It’s coming up! It arises, coming from the rising of the sun, like the sun, first cold, grows warmer, and sends its rays. When that truth arose, there was little light in it, but it has been increasing. Oh, the power of these rays!

“The angels are holding the winds. It is God that restrains the powers. The angels have not let go, for the saints are not all sealed. The time of trouble has commenced. It has begun. The reason why the four winds are not let go, is because the saints are not all sealed. It [the trouble] is on the increase more and more; that trouble will never end until the earth is rid of the wicked. Why, they [the winds] are just ready to blow. There is a check put on because the saints are not all sealed. Yes, publish the things thou hast seen and heard, and the blessing of God will attend.” — *A Seal of the Living God*, pp 24-26.

The declaration that the saints were “not all sealed,” way back in 1848, implies that some were already sealed. This fact was confirmed in another vision which was given to the servant of the Lord on January 5, 1849. She wrote:

“He [my accompanying angel] showed me that it was God that restrained the powers, and that He gave His angels charge over things on the earth, and that the four angels had power from God to hold the four wind, and that they were about to let the four winds go, and while they had started on their mission to let them go, the merciful eye of Jesus gazed on the remnant that were not all sealed; then He raised His hands to the Father and plead with Him that He had spilled His blood for them. Then another angel was commissioned to fly swiftly to the four angels, and bid them hold until the servants of God were sealed with the seal of the living God in their foreheads.” — *Present Truth*, August 1849.

Again, the same fact was repeated—that the saints “were not all sealed”—which implies that some were.

The seal of the living God was described as a covering, as a mark of protection, for the coming time of trouble – a shelter which the Lord was already drawing over His people in 1849, as the sealing time had already begun. Describing a vision received on March 24, 1849, Sister White wrote:

“Satan is now using every device in this sealing time to keep the minds of God’s people from the present truth and to cause them to waver. I saw a covering that God was drawing over His people to protect them in the time of trouble; and every soul that was decided on the truth and was pure in heart was to be covered with the covering of the Almighty.... I saw that Satan was at work in these ways to

distract, deceive, and draw away God's people, just now in this sealing time.... Satan was trying his every art to hold them where they were, until the sealing was past, until the covering was drawn over God's people, and they [the careless] left without a shelter from the burning wrath of God, in the seven last plagues. God has begun to draw this covering over His people, and it will soon be drawn over all who are to have a shelter in the day of slaughter." EW 43, 44.

"Those only who have the seal of the living God, will be sheltered from the storm of wrath."—*Present Truth*, September 1849.

"The sealing time is very short, and will soon be over." EW 58.

The early Adventists expected Christ to come very soon. And He could have come in the days of the pioneers (GC 458). In this case, the faithful believers who received the seal of God would have been the last generation of Christians – those that stayed alive and remained unto the coming of the Lord (1 Thess. 4:15). The number of God's subjects would have been completed in a short time. And Christ would have come. It was in this context that E. G. White wrote about the sealing work of Revelation 7:1-4 as a present event. But there was a delay, because the Advent people were not prepared to receive the Lord. So, what will happen to those who received the seal of God as an initial and partial fulfilment of Revelation 7:1-4? Will they forfeit the position that was already assigned to them – the right to be among the 144,000 – only because others, who should have followed their example, failed to obtain the needed preparation? Not at all. They come under a special provision. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." Revelation 14:13. They will be brought back to life in the special resurrection (GC 637), before the coming of Christ, and, together with the other saints, sealed under the latter rain; they will make up the company of 144,000. This is what the statements quoted hereunder will prove.

(c) The saints who died in the faith of the third angel's message will come up in the partial resurrection, to be among the 144,000.

In 1848 or 1849, Sister White was given a vision of other worlds. She wrote:

"I begged my attending angel to let me remain in that place. I could not bear the thought of coming back to this dark world again. Then the angel said, 'You must go back, and if you are faithful, you, with the 144,000, shall have the privilege of visiting all the worlds and viewing the handiwork of God.'" EW 40.

The hope of Sister White, based on the assurance given her by the angel of God, was conditional. She would be with (or among) the 144,000 if she remained faithful. Since she received the promise of the Lord (1848 or 1849), there has been a delay, and she was not sure whether she would live until the coming of the Lord. But this would not change the promise, which was still hers, on condition of faithfulness. She wrote in 1907:

"I may live until the coming of the Lord; but if I should not, I trust it may be said of me: '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.'" 1SM 55, 56.

Due to this other promise of the Lord – "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth" (Rev. 14:13) – Sister White was sure that, if she remained faithful to the end, she would not forfeit her membership in the company of 144,000 saints. This promise belongs to all those who are sealed by the third angel (Rev. 7:1-4; 14:1-13). The numbered group referred to in Revelation 7:1-4 is the same group that is mentioned in Revelation 14:1-5, and again in Revelation 14:12, 13, where those among this group who happen to die before the coming of the Lord, are declared "blessed," because they still

retain the seal, the “Father’s name written in their foreheads,” and still belong to the same group. This is why E. G. White testified about a faithful sister who had been laid to rest and about others who had reached an advanced age:

“I saw that she [a certain sister who had died in the Lord – Mrs. Hasting] 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.

“There are living upon our earth men who have passed the age of fourscore and ten. The natural results of old age are seen in their feebleness. But they believe God, and God loves them. The seal of God is upon them, and they will be among the number of whom the Lord has said, ‘Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.’” 7BC 982.

“As he [John] looked with intense interest he beheld the company of God’s commandment-keeping people. They had upon their foreheads the seal of the living God, and he said: [Revelation 14:12, 13 quoted].” 6T 15.

The Bible texts (Revelation 7:1-14; 14:1-13), as explained by the Spirit of Prophecy, according to the quotations used herein, establish a chain of links as follows: The third angel, with the seal of the living God (TM 444; EW 118, 89), seals 144,000 servants of God (Rev. 7:1-4; 14:1), whose characteristics are given in the context describing the work of this angel (Rev. 14:3-5, 12). The description of his work includes a special promise to those who should be saved through his message but should die before the coming of the Lord (Rev. 14:13). These scriptures do not mention – nor does E. G. White in her comments on these scriptures mention – any other group of sealed saints besides the 144,000. Therefore, let us share the blessed hope of the servant of the Lord and her contemporaries, who are resting in the grave, awaiting the special resurrection, to integrate the number of living saints at the coming of Christ.

“Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-for thousand.” 7BC 970.

“As the result of the threefold message it is announced, ‘Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.’” GC 453, 454.

“When the third angel’s message closes, mercy no longer pleads for the guilty inhabitants of the earth.... All who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received ‘the seal of the living God.’ Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above.... The number of His subjects is made up.” GC 613, 614.

Those who have died in the faith of the third angel’s message will come up at the voice of God, before the coming of Christ, to hear the covenant of peace, which will be declared only to 144,000, when God shall announce the day and hour of Christ’s coming.

“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.’ Dan. 12:2. 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.” GC 637.

“The voice of God is heard from heaven, declaring the day and hour of Jesus’ coming, and delivering the everlasting covenant to His people.” GC 640.

“Soon we heard the voice of God like many waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus’s coming. The living saints, 144,000 in number, knew and understood the voice, while the wicked thought it was thunder and an earthquake.” EW 15.

When the voice of God is heard, declaring the covenant of peace to the living saints, 144,000 in number, where will those be who have been resurrected to hear the covenant of peace? If they are not among the living saints, 144,000 in number, where else could they be? The only other class of people on earth at that time, according to the prophetic description (EW 15), are the wicked.

## **2. There will be only 144,000 saints at the coming of Christ.**

### **ORDER OF EVENTS**

The fact that, at the coming of Christ, there will be only 144,000 living saints, is confirmed by other statements besides EW 15.

(a) At the voice of God, when “all the saints: are delivered, shortly before the coming of Jesus, only 144,000 rejoice with shouts of triumph.

“A decree went forth to slay the saints, which caused them to cry day and night for deliverance. This was the time of Jacob’s trouble. Then all the saints cried out with anguish of spirit, and were delivered by the voice of God. The 144,000 triumphed.” EW 36, 37.

(b) At the coming of Christ, the 144,000 will recognize their friends who were separated from them at the beginning of the Advent Movement.

The early pioneers, who were identified with the third angel’s message, and who are among the 144,000, will recognize Brethren Fitch and Stockman, and others, immediately, when they see them.

“The graves opened, and the dead came up clothed with immortality. The 144,000 shouted, ‘Alleluia!’ as they recognized their friends who had been torn from them by death.... Angels were all about us as we marched over the sea of glass to the gate of the city.... We all went under the tree and sat down to look at the glory of the place, when Brethren Fitch and Stockman, who had preached the gospel of the kingdom [in the days of William Miller], and whom God had laid in the grave to save them, came to us and asked us what we had passed through while they were sleeping.... Mount Zion was just before us, and on the mount was a glorious temple.... And as we were about to enter the holy temple, Jesus raised His lovely voice and said, ‘Only the 144,000 enter this place,’ and we shouted ‘Alleluia’.... The wonderful things I there saw I cannot describe.... I saw there tables of stone in which the names of the 144,000 were engraved in letters of gold. After we beheld the glory of the temple, we went out.... Soon we heard [Jesus’s] lovely voice again, saying, ‘Come My people, you have come out of great tribulation, and done My will; suffered for Me; come in to supper, for I will gird Myself, and serve you.’ We shouted, ‘Alleluia! Glory!’ and entered into the city.” EW 16-19.

Here E. G. White mentions two groups of saints – (a) the 144,000 and (b) their friends who had been laid in the grave before the coming of the third angel’s message. She even gives the names of two of them. To which of these two groups does Sister White belong? The reader can get the answer from the description. She entered the temple where no one besides the 144,000 was permitted to enter. That means she is with (or among) the 144,000, as we read in EW 40 and 7BC 970, quoted before.

Let us beware how we read this last text (EW 16-19). The very danger that exists in a merely literal and grammatical reading of GC 648, 649, also exists in EW 16-19, if such reading is used. It is just as easy to argue, on the basis of GC 648, 649, that all the 144,000 will remain alive through the time of Jacob’s

trouble, under the seven last plagues, as it is to contend, on the ground of EW 16-19, that all the 144,000 will recognize their friends who died in the time of William Miller.

#### IV – MORE ON THE NEW INTERPRETATION

One of the first difficulties that arise before the new interpretation based on GC 648, 649, is that the 144,000 scattered universally, are supposed to obtain tickets, passports, and visas, to be able to go from place to place, to see the destruction caused here and there by the plagues, which are not worldwide. (Compare Matthew 24:31; GC 628). The new theory supposes that also the saints who are “held in bondage for their faith,” within “prison walls” (GC 627, 637), until the beginning of the seventh plague, must go from place to place, during the time of trouble, in order to witness local plagues, no matter how far these imprisoned saints are from the affected areas. This should be enough to convince the reader that the new doctrine is inconsistent with facts.

The original SDA teaching offers no difficulty because there are examples – and the statement that the 144,000 will witness “the sun having power to scorch men with great heat” (GC 649) is an additional example – that one whole group may be considered as having experienced that which not all of that group, of only some of that group, have actually gone through. Since we are only one body composed of many members, that which is experienced by one is regarded as being experienced by all (1 Cor. 12:12, 26). Space and time do not alter the principle. Those who have already died and those who have not yet been born can be regarded as partakers in the actions of a people taken as a body. Here are examples: A long time before his birth, Levi was considered a tithe payer. As a matter of fact, Melchisedec received tithes from Levi through Abraham (Heb. 7:9, 10). Zecharias, son of Barachias, who lived centuries before Christ, was slain by the scribes and Pharisees who persecuted Christ (Matt. 23:35; Zech. 1:1). Belonging to the same body, possessing the same spirit, and seeking to do the same work, they were declared as having done the very things that had actually been done by others before them. More so, those who started the sealing in 1848 saw far more worse things, ridicule, abandonment, severity and standing peculiar in a small group for what others termed unpopular and left the movement.

In the same way, under the third plague the wicked are blamed for shedding the blood of saints and prophets who lived many centuries before (Rev. 16:6). This sentence will be pronounced upon the enemies of God because of the death decree that they have issued against the saints.

“By condemning the people of God to death, they [the wicked] have as truly incurred the guilt of their blood [the blood of the saints and prophets who lived centuries ago] as if it had been shed by their hands. In like manner Christ declared the Jews of His time guilty of all the blood of holy men which had been shed since the days of Abel.” GC 628.

#### **Another example:**

The Bible mentions heroes (Gideon, Barak, Samson, etc.), “who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, sopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Heb. 11:33, 34). If we take this scripture very literally and grammatically, as many brethren take GC 648, 649, and as they could just as easily take EW 16-19, then we should come to the conclusion that each one of those heroes fulfilled each one of those specifications. But it was not the intention of the writer of the book of Hebrews to convey such an idea.

In the light of the principle announced in 1 Corinthians 12:26 – “whether one member suffer, all the members suffer” – it is as easy to explain Hebrews 11:33, 34, as to explain GC 648, 649. There is more:

If we do not accept this principle, how could we explain the verse which says that, after His resurrection, our Lord Jesus Christ was seen “of the twelve” (1 Cor. 15:5)? If this text is taken literally, grammatically, mathematically, the way that some brethren take GC 648, 649, and if other scriptures are ignored (those that show the end of Judas before the crucifixion of Jesus), the way some believers ignore the statements which show that the sealing work of Revelation 7:1-1 began in 1848, then we wonder how 1 Corinthians 15:5 should be interpreted.

Those that insist on supporting the new interpretation may argue: If Sister White, and that other sister, and many others, will be “with” of “among” the 144,000 (EW 40; 2SM 263; 7BC 982; 7BC 970), this means that they will not included in that number, but that they will be added to the 144,000. We cannot agree with conclusion for two main reasons: Both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy furnish examples where the prepositions “with” and “among” do not necessarily mean “addition to” a certain group. In John 20:24, Thomas with the twelve does not make thirteen. In DA 716, “Judas... among the twelve” does not make thirteen. And, in EW 255, “the fourth commandment among the ten holy precepts” does not make eleven. Other examples could be adduced to show that “with” and “among” are commonly used to indicate “inclusion in” a numbered company. The other reason why we cannot agree with the idea that those faithful believers must be “added to” the 144,000, is that, in a vision, Sister White entered a place where only 144,000 were permitted to enter (EW 19). Besides, John the Revelator saw on mount Zion a specific number of saints – 144,000 – without any addition. Therefore, those dear believers who died in the hope of being “with” or “among” the 144,000 must be included in this number.

The fact that the 144,000 will be translated “from among the living” has also been used as an argument against the original doctrine. We think that there is no difficulty with this expression, because those who come up in the partial resurrection (GC 637) are counted among the living, not among the dead. See example in Luke 24:5.

Another statement that has often been used in support of the new interpretation is this: “Jesus would be honored by translating, without seeing death, the faithful waiting ones who had so long expected Him.” EW 283. This passage refers to the time when “the saints left the cities and villages,” under the decree, and “were pursued by the wicked, who sought to slay them” (EW 284). Not the whole company of 144,000 is meant here only those who are alive at that time and who will be joined by others at the partial resurrection when the number of 144,000 will be completed (Cf GC 637; GC 640; EW 15). Besides, the “death” that the saints will be delivered from, in this description (EW 283, 284), is the death demanded or permitted by the decree, which the wicked will try to inflict on the people of God. Of course, if they have already received the seal of protection, they are not subject to death during the time of Jacob’s trouble.

In conclusion, we abide by the original SDA teaching about the sealing work of Revelation 7:1-4, which, in our thinking, is in perfect harmony with the Bible and the writings of E. G. White.

“In the issue of the great contest two parties are developed: those who ‘worship the beast and his image,’ and receive his mark, and those who receive ‘the seal of the living God,’ who have the ‘Father’s name written in their foreheads.’” 7BC 980.

At the coming of Jesus, besides “the living saints, 144,000 in number” (EW 15), there will be “a great multitude” who will be taken to heaven (Rev. 7:9; GC 665). This is “the risen throng” – “the sleeping saints” who will be called forth from their tombs by the voice of the Son of God at His coming. Then “the living righteous and the risen saints unite their voices in a long, glad shout of victory” (GC 644).

“The living righteous are changed ‘in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.’ At the voice of God they were glorified; now they are made immortal, and with the risen saints are caught up to meet their Lord in the air.” GC 645.

### **The Great Multitude**

Now Christ again appears to the view of His enemies. Far above the city, upon a foundation of burnished gold, is a throne, high and lifted up. Upon this throne sits the Son of God, and around Him are the subjects of His kingdom. The power and majesty of Christ no language can describe, no pen portray. The glory of the Eternal Father is enshrouding His Son. The brightness of His presence fills the City of God, and flows out beyond the gates, flooding the whole earth with its radiance. {GC 665.1}

Nearest the throne are those who were once zealous in the cause of Satan, but who, plucked as brands from the burning, have followed their Saviour with deep, intense devotion. Next are those who perfected Christian characters in the midst of falsehood and infidelity, those who honored the law of God when the Christian world declared it void, and the millions, of all ages, who were martyred for their faith. **And beyond is the "great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, . . . before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." Revelation 7:9.** Their warfare is ended, their victory won. They have run the race and reached the prize. The palm branch in their hands is a symbol of their triumph, the white robe an emblem of the spotless righteousness of Christ which now is theirs. {GC 665.2}

“And so shall be ever be with the Lord.” 1 Thess. 4:17.

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