

INTERESTING QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

Question. – I see it is your view that the 144,000 sealed (Rev. 7) are Spiritual Israel, "the true Israel of God," foreknown to him from the beginning, the predestinated "Abraham's Seed" which shall in due time bless the world. (Gal. 3:29.) I see too that you view it as a literal *number*, claiming that all the *numbers* of Revelation are literal. But let me inquire, Would not such a view overthrow the hopes of those who live today? Could we suppose that the entire Gospel age, with its reputed millions of martyrs, has not secured the 144,000 long ago?

Answer. – It would be a great mistake to suppose that the millions of martyrs, Catholic and Protestant, were all "overcomers," – "saints" in the Scriptural sense. In a vast majority of cases the principle fought for, and suffered for, was chiefly *liberty*. Politics, too, lay at the foundation of much of the butchery. Note in another column how a bishop became so excited in our own day as to declare himself willing rather to go to hell than see a political opponent elected. Many, too, would go to death from pride; – rather than yield after having taken their stand.

When we think of the fact that a membership in this "royal priesthood" implies a full, living *self-sacrifice* to the Lord and his cause, and the attainment, while sacrificing, of the fruits of the spirit – meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, – Love, we rather wonder that so many as 144,000 could be found in the past nearly nineteen centuries. And it is of those who cultivate these graces, and attain them in their *hearts* (even if they cannot always exercise them as fully as they could desire in their *flesh*) that the Apostle declares: "If ye do *these things* ye shall never fall, but so [doing] an entrance shall be ministered

unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." – 2 Pet. 1:5-11.

Our confidence is in God, – that he knew exactly how long this Gospel age should be to gather the "elect" class; and that he will get the exact number of "jewels," the "little flock," within the appointed time, before "the times of the Gentiles" run out. – See also our issue of April 1, 1899, page 67.

Question. – We are all making considerable effort, through the Volunteer work and otherwise, to present the truth to others, and through the WATCH TOWER we learn that the numbers of interested ones are continually increasing, and the intimation is that still further increase may be expected. Now, the question is, How does this harmonize with the presentations of MILLENNIAL DAWN to the effect that the general call has ceased since 1881, and that altho the door to the high calling is not yet closed, it could not be entered except by those whom the Lord will admit to take the place of some who have failed to comply with the terms of their covenant – to make their calling and election sure.

Answer. – We understand that in 1881 a considerable number of justified persons had made a consecration to the Lord, but had not yet been proven – how many, of course, we cannot judge. Suppose, for instance, that the number were 50,000, and suppose that only one-half of that number would eventually be of the overcoming class: it would mean that gradually 25,000 would have their names blotted out of the Lamb's Book of Life, and the crowns once apportioned to them no longer counted as theirs. In order to give all of these consecrated ones a full opportunity it might be a number of years before any considerable number of them would be thus rejected, and the admission of others to take their places would be correspondingly gradual. We are to remember, too, that of those who enter to take their places

probably not more than one-half would be overcomers – which would make 12,500 more to be admitted, and of these probably not more than one-half would be overcomers, which would mean that more than 6000 additional ones must be brought in; and so on. We think it not unreasonable that a considerable time has been left for many of the consecrated ones to note the tendency of the nominal church and her fallen condition spiritually, [R2782 : page 95] and to be tested thereby as respects their love for righteousness and their hatred of iniquity – their devotion to the Lord and to the principles of his Word, and their opposition to injustice, untruth, unrighteousness. Meantime, the truth, under the Lord's providence, has been going hither and thither throughout the civilized world, coming in contact with nearly all the consecrated, we may presume, and becoming more or less of a test to them. Some have gradually accepted it; others consecrated are, no doubt, still weighing the matter. Still others have probably sided against what they know to be the truth, because of love for the world or popularity or other selfish considerations. The testing of these cannot be expected to continue long. The light is growing so strong on the one side, and the darkness so strong on the other, that any who are unable to make up their minds respecting their proper position would thereby be showing themselves to be unworthy to be classed as "overcomers" and joint-heirs with Christ in the Kingdom. We may reasonably expect, therefore, that quite a good many places in the Lamb's book of Life will be declared vacant and new names be written therein to complete the elect number. To our understanding the ones thus favored of the Lord will be persons fully consecrated to him, and we would esteem it probable that such would early be brought in contact with present truth for their ripening as wheat for the garner, and the hearty acceptance of present truth by such as are fully consecrated to the Lord and to lay down their lives in his service would, we esteem, be in the nature of an evidence of their acceptance to the high calling. We would not understand that a knowledge of the truth without

consecration would be an evidence in this direction, believing that many can see much that is reasonable in restitution, etc., who have never made a covenant with the Lord. We would believe, however, that none can appreciate deep things of God except by the holy spirit. – 1 Cor. 2:9,10,14.

Question. – What is the Christian's robe, of which the Apostle says that it should be kept "without blemish." – Eph. 5:27?

Answer. – We understand it to be the wedding garment mentioned by our Lord in one of his parables. It represents the righteousness of Christ imputed to his consecrated followers who are invited to suffer with him, and also to reign with him. Otherwise it is called justification by faith – our imputed or reckoned righteousness in Christ, through which we have a standing and acceptance with the Father, and are permitted to enter into covenant relationship with him and thus to become "heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, our Lord, if so be that we suffer with him." – Rom. 8:17.

In the representation of the Bride-class in Psalm 45, the Church, as the King's daughter, is represented as presented at the marriage in this clean linen robe, richly embroidered – the embroidery, we believe, representing the development of character on the part of all the faithful. The robe is the basis of any good works that we can perform, and even then before we can accomplish anything we must have and must follow the Pattern given us by our Lord.

This garment, if it would be a wedding garment, must be spotless, clean and white – "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." (Eph. 5:27.) In James 1:27, the Apostle urges us to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, which implies a possibility of having our robe of Christ's righteousness spotted. This does not signify that anything we could do could destroy the work of

Christ, or make of none effect his sacrifice for sins, nor blemish *it*. The robe signifies that share of Christ's merit which has been freely appropriated to us by him with the Father's consent. If, through receiving of the spirit of the world, we blemish or sully this wedding garment we shall be unfit to be of the Bride class, and be rejected; and yet we might say that in our present imperfect condition and many unfavorable surroundings and besetments it would be a miracle if we should never come so closely in contact with evil as to spot our garment or wrinkle it. – Compare Jude 23; Rev. 3:4; 16:15.

However, we find that God's gracious provision in Christ is not only that our Lord Jesus' sacrifice was a sufficient one for all of our imperfections of the past, prior to our acceptance with the Lord, but that **[R2783 : page 95]** it is a sufficient one also for any unintentional blemish or weakness or misstep that may come to us through our own imperfections or the weaknesses of others, after we become the Lord's children. In other words, we are not only provided with the robe covering all the past, but provided also in the same sacrifice of Christ with a spot-remover, and any who through weakness or temptation stumble by the way and soil their garments are to be restored by the brethren "in a spirit of meekness, remembering themselves also, lest they should be tempted." To restore means to help them to see the spot, and by faith to apply the provided cleansing, through penitence and prayer. All who are in the right attitude of heart, appreciating the purity of the robe, appreciating the Bridegroom and his favor, appreciating the great King and appreciating the honor of being called to the marriage, will be very careful indeed to guard against spots and wrinkles, and very careful also that if any should get upon their robes they should be as quickly as possible removed. This work of mutual helpfulness on the part of the Lord's consecrated people is represented as "the bride making herself ready." **[R2783 : page 96]**

Those not thus faithful are in a wrong condition, and spot after spot, wrinkle after wrinkle, coming to their robes, they become more or less careless, and especially as they see so many others in a similar condition. These are brought to our attention in Rev. 7:13-16. We are there shown that they will not come to the position of being members of spiritual Israel, the 144,000, filling up the elect number named after the twelve tribes. We are shown, however, that their unreadiness to be of the elect class was because of the spots upon their robes and the carelessness which this manifested. But the Lord does not reject them because, passing through manifold temptations, they have not been properly careful, for in wearing the robe they are still confessing their trust in him, in the merit of his sacrifice. He therefore provides for them an experience which will demonstrate to which party they really belong. He causes them to go through a great time of trouble in which, if they love sin and unrighteousness, they will succumb; but if they love the Lord and love righteousness they will come off victors eventually through the Lord's grace, and be permitted to cleanse their robes with tears and efforts, etc., as they should have done voluntarily before, spot by spot, as any blemish was noticed. They do not become members of the Bride class, even when cleansed; they do not sit with Christ in his throne as will the Bride; they do not constitute the Temple, but, on the contrary, they will serve God in his temple (the Church). They will serve *before* the throne; they will have palm branches, indicating final victory; but they will not have crowns, because they were not overcomers, in the sense demanded of all who will be joint-heirs with Christ.

Question. – I read in the TOWER of March 1, 1900, under the caption, "The Consecrated Home Honored," your suggestion respecting responsibilities of a husband and father as the head of his household. In that article you intimate that those who do not exercise the office of head of their families have reason to question whether or not they are overcomers, etc. The question

seems to me a very important one, in view of the fact that I know a great many of the brethren who seem to have comparatively little influence or control in their own homes. I therefore inquire to what extent is it reasonable for us to expect our households to be all consecrated?

Answer. – You have only partly grasped our thought, which is not that all the members of the family should be consecrated to the Lord, but that the home and its conditions should be of the consecrated kind, if the head of that home is consecrated, and is exercising the duties and prerogatives of the head of the house. Even if every member of the family were out of Christ, and out of sympathy with the religious views of the husband and father of the family, his kind and loving, but positive conduct of his house along Scriptural lines should secure to him such respect from every member of his family that they would not only not oppose his wishes, but, on the contrary would take pleasure in cooperating with them. Thus, if the Lord himself or one of the brethren, his representatives, were to pass that way, and the husband and father of the family thought to entertain him, the properly ordered household, being under the control of his consecrated mind, would be one in which all whom he chose to invite would be made most welcome and heartily entertained. And even if some dissatisfaction were felt, it would be a crime against the divine institution of the family to manifest opposition, for the husband and father is the head of the family, as Christ to the Church, says the Apostle. – Eph. 5:23,24,29,33.

Nothing in this would mean arbitrariness on the part of the husband and father, but rather that he would wish to consider, as far as possible, the interests of his home, and to contribute to the happiness of each member of it. But it would be his duty, as a child of God, to place the wishes of the Lord paramount to those of his family, so that he would be prompt to invite the Lord or his brethren into his home, as a tribute of his respect and love for the

Lord. And in requesting his family's cooperation in this matter, he would know that he was bringing a blessing to them, whether they appreciated it or not; and that any failure to follow this course would be giving his family and their wishes precedence to the Lord and his wishes, a matter not to be considered for a moment by any "overcomer." Nevertheless, everything should be done, not from the standpoint of force and demand, etc., if possible, but rather from the standpoint of love. Let the family see your love manifested in all ways, and also know your firmness in character on every point where principle or loyalty to the Lord are involved.

Nor do we mean that the wife and family should be imposed upon and overworked for the sake of visitors; on the contrary, their care and comfort are the first care of the husband. The head of the family must be watchful of the interests of all under his care to such an extent that he should sacrifice himself, his own comfort and convenience, for their proper care. But to purchase peace in the home at the expense of his own manhood would be wrong, and would encourage a wrong spirit in those he seeks to guide in the right way.

However, where the right way has not been seen and the wrong way has become habitual, it would be the part of wisdom not to approach the *right* too ruthlessly, but very gently; – praying for and seeking to exercise humility, patience, gentleness; – to let love, and love only, hold the reins of control.
