

THE GREAT COMPANY.

HAVE any members of the "Great Company" class existed prior to the harvest period of the Gospel Age? If so, how can we apply Rev. 7:14 to such?

We reply: This class is composed of consecrated believers who fail to go forward in the narrow way of self-sacrifice and who, failing to sacrifice, fail to attain joint-heirship with the Lord as members of the Bride company: nevertheless, having been sincere in their consecration, the Lord in much mercy does not count their lack of courage in turning back in the sense of denying him, for those who so draw back, the Apostle explains, "draw back unto perdition and destruction," Second Death. In mercy the Lord brings upon such persons trials and difficulties which they uncourageously attempt to escape. Since they have consecrated unto death and God has accepted their covenant and granted them the first-fruits of the Spirit, and since they neglected to sacrifice the flesh, the only alternative for them is the Lord's providential interference in their affairs, leading to the "destruction of the flesh," or failing this their portion will be the Second Death.

Why not grant them a share of restitution, do you ask? We reply that that which is begotten of the Spirit cannot be born flesh; it must be born of the Spirit or not at all.

These conditions which prevail today have prevailed in some measure since the beginning of the Gospel age. The Apostle speaks of such a one. Writing to the Church at Corinth, he says, I, being absent in person and present with you in spirit, judge such an one, and have delivered him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. – I Cor. 5:3,5.

It is safe, however, for us to assume that the proportion of the consecrated unworthy of a place in the Bride Company is greater today than it was in past times, because in the past the line of demarcation between wheat and tares, between the children of God and the children of this world, was much more marked than at the present time, when many have a form of godliness without its power – many have Christian mannerisms who do not claim to have been begotten of the Spirit. Today, therefore, it is more difficult than ever for the consecrated to see where duty lies and to follow its course of self-sacrifice, when so many good, noble and moral people are taking the opposite course. The narrow way is, therefore, more difficult to walk in today than it was some time ago. Hence, while the number of consecrations has increased rather than diminished, the number who appreciate the real meaning of their consecration and who joyfully lay down their lives in the service of the Truth is probably smaller. It therefore follows that the mass of **[R3445 : page 314]** the "Great Company" belong to the closing end of the Gospel age.

Respecting your last question concerning the proper applicability of Rev. 7:14 to this class, if it has existed throughout the age, we suggest that the majority of the class being here may be spoken of properly enough as though it were the whole, since the treatment it receives will represent the treatment accorded to all others of this class in the past, only in a more intensified form. All such have surely been called upon to pass through troubles – forced through them as it were because they did not freely sacrifice and lay down their privileges, interests, etc., in the service of the Truth. Similarly in the same chapter we have the entire 144,000 of the Little Flock spoken of as though it were filled and made up in this present time, whereas these also have been in process of development throughout the Gospel age. That is to say, the original Abrahamic promise descended to the twelve tribes of Israel, but those twelve tribes were **[R3446 : page 314]** typical of spiritual Israel. At the first advent spiritual Israel was started with those of each tribe who were Israelites indeed in whom there was no guile. There were not enough of these to fill the elect

number, 144,000, and hence the Gospel call was extended to the Gentiles to bring in from the Gentiles a sufficient number to complete 12,000 to each tribe.

This filling up of the tribes from those who were by nature Gentiles is similar to reenlistments made in the United States to fill up vacancies in military regiments in the Philippines. Thus a man from Ohio or Illinois might enlist in a New York or Pennsylvania regiment and become a regular member of the same, though the regiment would still be known by its original name. So with our incorporation into the elect twelve tribes. We know not to which tribe the Lord assigns us when we become his.

This is the same thought which the Apostle develops in Rom. 11, where he speaks of the original promise of God made to Abraham as the root of the olive tree, and the twelve tribes of Israel the tree itself. The branches of this tree are the individuals, and the Apostle explains that all except the Israelites indeed were broken off when that tree became spiritual at our Lord's first advent. He further explains that we who were by nature Gentiles are being engrafted into membership into this Israelitish tree, and are partaking of the richness of its root, the Abrahamic promise. – See Galatians 3:29.

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