

Commentary — From the Margins

The Endurance

Part Two

Then I [John] was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months. And I [Jesus] will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.”

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire. And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them (Rev 1:1–7).

2.

The question of what happens to the saints during the Tribulation and during the Endurance is not easily resolved in Scripture; for Scripture forms the shadow and type of what is written in the heavenly Book of Life, in which the lives of disciples are epistles (2 Cor 3:3). And because disciples in which there is no lawlessness are “light,” and because light casts no shadow—it is those things that block the light that cast shadows—what disciples who keep the commandments do during the Tribulation is not recorded in Scripture. It is, rather, what those who are of the Rebellion do that is recorded. Therefore, it is primarily in what is written to the angels of the seven churches that endtime disciples see what the saints do or have done, with the notable exceptions of (1) the two witnesses

who are human beings given the use of the power of God and of (2) the intercalary seventh chapter of Revelation.

Beginning with the intercalary chapter, the “144,000 sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel” (Rev 7:4) is the same 144,000 that “follow the Lamb wherever he goes” (Rev 14:4)—and the “great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” (Rev 7:9), the great multitude that the angel identifies as “the ones coming out of the great tribulation” (v. 14), is the third part of humankind that calls upon the name of God and the name of the Lamb, the people about whom the Lord will say, “They are my people” (Zech 13:9).

This third part of humankind is not today “Christian,” does not identify itself as “Christian,” and will not claim any association with Christianity prior to the second Passover liberation of Israel. This third part will not be born of spirit until the world is baptized in spirit when the kingdom is given to the Son of Man; thus this great multitude comes out of the Endurance. They will be those human beings who, by having endured to the end, will be saved (Matt 24:13).

John dates the intercalary chapter seven to after the sixth seal was opened (Rev 7:1); so the first six seals are opened before the 144,000 are “sealed.” And only after the 144,000 are sealed does the great multitude come into existence. As such, the 144,000 are sealed during the Tribulation and before the Endurance; they are sealed during the first 1260 days of the seven endtime years ... in the construction of a timeline for the Tribulation, the Kingdom, and the Endurance, the 144,000 stand on Mount Zion with the Lamb, who comes to fight on a day of battle when nations have gathered against Jerusalem (Zech 14:2–4), both a physical city and after the thousand years, the heavenly city constructed of glorified disciples (Rev 21:2, 9–10) that constitute the Bride of Christ.

The 144,000 will flee through the split Mount of Olives to escape the flood that is sent against them (Rev 12:16), with this flood being an army similar to Pharaoh’s army that was swallowed by the Sea of Reeds. Only instead of water taking the lives of men as the Sea of Reeds took the lives of Pharaoh and his army and as the Flood in the days of Noah took the lives of men, it will be the split granite monolith known as the Mount of Olives, a stone not cut by human hands (Dan 2:45), that swallows (by closing upon the armies of the man of perdition) the lives of men (Ex 15:12), thereby bringing to his end the prince who had come to destroy the city of Jerusalem and the sanctuary (Dan 9:26).

In the days of Noah, the world was baptized into death because of its disobedience. The world was given into the hand of the spiritual king of Babylon, the old serpent, Satan the devil. Thus, when the Lord “liberated” Israel from the hand of Pharaoh, who had to have his heart supernaturally hardened so that he could serve as a type of the prince of this world, the Lord delivered Israel from death by crossing the Sea of Reeds on dry land ... this is what’s meant by Paul writing that “death reigned from Adam to Moses” (Rom 5:14), for on the other side of the water Israel received the commandments of God. Elsewhere Paul writes “that the person who does [keeps] the commandments shall live by them” (Rom

10:5); i.e., the person has passed from death into life without coming under judgment if the person hears the words of the Lord and believes these words (John 5:24) by faith (the negative connotation translators have given to Paul's allusion to Leviticus 18:5 is not in what Moses told Israel about keeping the commandments being the cause for life).

But crossing the Sea of Reeds on dry land as symbolism of being liberated from death was only the beginning of a journey that would see Israel at Sinai given the living words of the Lord, given these commandments with the expectation that they would be kept; for the journey begun would see, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, the entirety of the nation numbered in the census of the second year perish in the wildernesses of Sin/Zin because of unbelief. It was the children of the nation that left Egypt that entered into God's rest.

Following Moses by faith will liberate an Israelite from death by extending to the Israelite the promise of inheriting eternal life, but following Moses does not give to the person eternal life. Only the Father through Christ Jesus can give eternal life to the person.

The juxtaposition that hasn't been well explored is that of the 144,000 passing through the split Mount of Olives being analogous to Christ Jesus rising from the rock tomb, with passing through the cut stone symbolizing resurrection from death ... unlike the remnant of the Woman's offspring (Rev 12:17), with the Woman's offspring being the Sabbatarian Church, that enters the Endurance as physically living human beings, the 144,000 were not born of spirit when the Tribulation began. Prior to being "sealed" by God after the sixth seal was opened, the 144,000 were observant Jews that by faith kept the commandments in a world delivered into the hand of the man of perdition.

Paul, referencing the Moab covenant (Deut chap 29–32), writes that the observant Jew who has by faith returned to the Lord when in a far land has only to profess with the mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in the heart that the Father raised Jesus from the dead to be saved (Rom 10:6–9). The 144,000 will have so professed or they wouldn't follow the Lamb; thus passing through the split Mount of Olives serves for the 144,000 as the visible "sign" of entering into a new life in Christ Jesus, with passing through the rock serving as baptism served for the Woman's offspring. Instead of being baptized into water and into the death of the old self, the 144,000 will be baptized into life and into a resurrection like Christ Jesus'.

The 144,000 function for the natural descendants of the patriarch as the children of Israel functioned in the wilderness as a replacement for the nation that, because of unbelief, did not enter into God's rest—and a person needs to hold this declaration in tension with the realization that the great multitude that "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:14), this great multitude being approximately half of the third part of humanity, functions for Christianity as the nearly man-for-man replacement of Israel that is seen between Numbers 1:46 and Numbers 26:51 ... Israel was formerly a physically circumcised nation but is now a circumcised of heart (or spiritually circumcised) nation. Approximately a third part of the world professes to be "Christian," or professes to be circumcised of heart, but this third part is as lawless as the nation of Israel that left Egypt

was. Thus, Christianity will perish during the seven endtime years as the nation that left Egypt perished during the forty years Israel wandered in the Wildernesses of Sin/Zin, and Christianity will be replaced by its children, which will be the third part of humankind, born of spirit when the world is baptized in spirit (Joel 2:28; Matt 3:11). So the 144,000 is not a replacement number of Israelites for either natural Israel or for the Christian Church, but is rather, the chiral image of those Israelites who will begin the Millennium as human beings filled with inherent “life.” For all of the world will, in the Millennium, follow the Lamb of God wherever He leads, and will learn the song of redemption, and will keep themselves undefiled by sin and the ideologies of this present world ... it will be the ideologies of this present world that, like the many foreign women Solomon married, eventually enter into Millennium and cause or allow the saints to be deceived by the Adversary when he is loosed from the bottomless pit after the thousand years.

For pedagogical clarity let it be said that the 144,000 function as the shadow of those few human beings that will bodily begin the Millennium.

A person’s left hand is the non-symmetrical mirror or chiral image of the person’s right hand, but this does not mean that the person’s left hand is the same size as the person’s right hand; thus, it would be inappropriate to state that 144,000 human beings will begin the Millennium even though the prophet Isaiah records the Lord saying that He will empty the earth and men will be few in number (Isa chap 24). What can be stated is that after the earth has been harvested at the end of this era, with most human beings alive when the Endurance begins either glorified or condemned to the lake of fire, it will be only those human beings who have not sinned and who would have not taken judgment upon themselves that will enter into the Millennium—and this will not be a large number.

As the 144,000 will be “virgins” (i.e., not defiled by sin — the logic for this juxtaposition will be explored in another section/Commentary of this work), the third part of humanity, born of spirit when the world is baptized in spirit, will also be virgins ... they are the virgins about whom Jesus said that five were foolish and five were wise (Matt 25:1–12), and when coupled with numerous references to one being taken and one being left, the logic for stating that of the 2+ billion human beings that compose the third part of humankind, only half will enter into the kingdom has solid footing. Hence, the great multitude that is separated by narrative from those saints that must be killed as earlier saints (Rev 6:9–11) were killed, is not today Christian and will not be “Christian” at any time prior to the beginning of the seven endtime years. This great multitude is not included in the two parts of the little ones against which the Lord of Hosts turns His hand (Zech 13:7–8). And this great multitude will number more than a billion people.

The number of human beings that will be physically alive to begin Christ’s millennial reign will be few and may be no more than 144,000 ... whereas the 144,000 referenced in Revelation chapter 14 will be glorified, they form the time-linked shadow of those human beings that will start civilization over again here on earth.

The remnant of the offspring of the Woman (Rev 12:17) that the Adversary pursues into the

Endurance is all that remains of the “Christian” Church liberated from indwelling sin and death at the second Passover—this remnant includes both the seven named churches and the single fellowship of every other church that will cross from death to life as the seven pairs of clean animals and single pair of every unclean animal entered the Ark with Noah and crossed from one world into the next world.

As the seven named churches coexisted in the 1st-Century, they will coexist in the 21st-Century when the Body of Christ is resurrected from death and revealed or disrobed ... the Body of Christ is also the Body of the Son of Man, and to reveal the Son of Man (Luke 17:30), the garment of grace will be stripped away from Christians once they are liberated from indwelling sin and death by being filled with spirit.

Liberation from indwelling sin and death comes at the second Passover, and comes through filling every disciple (as if the disciple were a vessel) with spirit [B<,@Ø:" 2,@Ø] so that there is no room within the disciple for lawlessness. And because the disciple will be filled with spirit, the Torah/Law will be written on hearts and placed in the minds of disciples: the first covenant, or Passover covenant made on the night that Israel left Egypt will finally have ended, and disciples will be under the New Covenant.

However, before the New Covenant can be implemented, death angels will again pass over all the land as the death angel passed over all of Egypt so long ago. Thus disciples will not be liberated from indwelling sin and death until the second Passover of the year so that those disciples who were spiritually defiled or who were on a long journey (i.e., not physically able to take the Passover) can cover themselves by drinking from the cup ... the second Passover occurs on the second Passover because it is the second Passover, a declarative statement sure to trip those disciples who remain carnally minded.

The filling of disciples with the spirit of God and the stripping away of grace to reveal these disciplines will function as the last Eve [Zion] giving birth to a nation in a day (Isa 66:7–8), and will therefore produce a separation of disciplines from the Father and the Son (although not a separation from Christ’s love); for a man doesn’t marry his body but marries his bride. A separation has to occur. And the liberation of Israel from indwelling sin means Israel will enter the Tribulation without indwelling sin, but also without the covering of grace, without being one with Christ Jesus. Disciples will enter the Tribulation being able to keep the commandments if that is what they desire, or able to return to sin if that is their desire. And if they return to sin, they will commit blasphemy against the spirit that fills them; for in a visualization of what occurs, they will have to reject or expel some of the spirit that fills them in order to take sin within themselves, with this rejection of the spirit being the blasphemy committed.

The second Passover recovery of Israel from sin and death during the seven years of the Tribulation and the Endurance is of such importance that Israel will forget about the exodus from Egypt (Jer 16:14–15; 23:7–8). Yet, today, Christendom either feigns ignorance of the second Passover, or is ignorant by neglect of what is about to happen. As such, great will be the inescapable rebellion that follows the condemnation of indwelling firstborn sons of God.

And it is the realization that rebellion against God is inescapable by those disciples who, because they were unwilling to believe the truth, do not cover their sins by taking the Passover sacraments on the night that Jesus was betrayed that changes much of what has been previously taught about Sabbatarian disciples being able to enter the kingdom if they were willing to die for what they believe during the Tribulation.

The above is a long convoluted sentence ... reduced to its essential element, the sentence says that Sabbatarian disciples who are today absolutely confident in their righteousness cannot escape rebelling against God if they do not drink from the cup on the night that Jesus was betrayed. They will join the rebellion because the inner firstborn son of God was not covered when death angels passed over the land, and this inner firstborn son will be condemned to the second death.

Failure to take the sacraments on the night that Jesus was betrayed will cause Sabbatarian disciples to be part of the rebellion, not victims of the rebellion. It will be these Sabbatarian disciples that will betray other Sabbatarians and will hate other Sabbatarians (Matt 24:10). They are presently without love, and between now and the beginning of the Tribulation it is unlikely that they will develop love for brethren or neighbors. So through something as minor as the calendar issue these loveless disciples will trip themselves and not take the Passover sacraments on the night Jesus was betrayed, thereby leaving the indwelling sons of God uncovered when the dead angels again pass over all the land.

The two witnesses are clothed in sackcloth (mourning garb) because they know, from the moment their ministry begins, that disciples who outwardly profess to love the Lord will rebel against the Father and the Son, and cannot avoid rebelling because they do not, did not believe the truth and take the Passover sacraments on the night that Jesus was betrayed. In many cases, the two witnesses will personally know the rebels, who will include close relatives. And once the death angels pass over the land, there will be nothing that can be done for the unbelieving disciple who, when seeing the deaths of physical firstborns, will suddenly "see the light" and strive to "get right with God." They will come to the two witnesses with flattery; they will profess great understanding and a sincere desire to join with the two witnesses, but the inner new self within them will be condemned to the rebellion sure to happen 220 days into the Tribulation.

The two witnesses will know that genuine disciples will be martyred and unbelieving disciples will be condemned to the lake of fire without repentance being possible. Their mourning will be real, and will be ongoing as the dead continue to die.

Those genuine disciples will be Sabbatarians who drank from the cup on the night that Jesus was betrayed and who enter the Tribulation liberated from indwelling sin; they will enter as acceptable sacrifices to the Lord. Sin will not be able to harm them (Rev 6:5–6 — this third horseman is the four-headed leopard of Daniel chapter 7; dominion over humankind is given to this horseman). But they are also the disciples who will be killed as the saints sleeping under the altar were killed, beginning when the fifth seal of the Scroll is removed (Rev 6:9–11). And it this martyring or sacrificing that these Sabbatarians are not

today prepared to accept, for most of them still believe that they will be physically spared from death even though Jesus tells them that will not be the case ... if these Sabbatarians seek to save their physical lives, they will end up losing both their physical life and the their spiritual life.

The above is, from a human perspective, extremely fatalistic ... what is the benefit to keeping the commandments, especially the Sabbath, if the act of keeping them will get the person killed?

Frankly, I would write none of this if I were not called to do so. I have seen enough death to hate death, and that is the point: the Tribulation is about the great multitude seeing enough death that these human beings will do whatever it takes to end death, even if that "whatever" is keeping the commandments of God when faced with the loss of their own physical life. The Endurance is about the great multitude believing that God will deliver them, whether in simply supplying their daily needs when they cannot buy or sell, or when facing the Adversary who will claim to be the messiah.

I'm certain Jeremiah wasn't excited about telling Judah and Jerusalem that the Lord was bringing the king of Babylon against them to destroy the land and to take the people captive; Jeremiah understood what the destruction of Jerusalem entailed. But he was given a job to do, and he was told by the Lord, "They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you" (Jer 1:19). And so it will be during the Tribulation for all who are of Philadelphia.

What happens to the saints once the Tribulation begins? Except for a remnant, they will be killed, sacrificed as Jesus was sacrificed; for the disciple is not above his teacher (Matt 10:24–25).

Again, is this what the splintered Churches of God want to hear? Absolutely not! They want to be told what Herbert Armstrong told them about going to Petra where the saints would live somewhat comfortably while the world suffers, or what Ellen G. White told them about going to heaven for a thousand years. They do not want to be told the truth, and they will not believe the truth when told. Hence, few of them will drink from the cup on the night that Jesus was betrayed.

It is only Philadelphia that will be kept from the hour of trial, and Philadelphia will be kept because it has done a work that other Sabbatarian disciples were unwilling to do, a work that placed this fellowship into the same grouping of madman prophets as Shamaiah of Nehelam would have placed Jeremiah of Anathoth (Jer 29:26–27). But it was Jeremiah whom the Lord vindicated.

The sacrifice or mass martyrdom of spirit-filled Sabbatarian disciples will not occur long into the Tribulation, but will begin shortly after the lawless one is revealed (2 Thess 2:3) ... for 220 days, the length of time that it takes for Babylon to regain its equilibrium after the second Passover slaying of uncovered firstborns, Sabbatarians (especially Philadelphians)

have essentially free reins for they “called” what happened (the death of a third of humanity) before it happened. But false prophets will arise before the dead are cold, and these false prophets will emphatically state that what happened was the sixth Trumpet Plague, that they “know” where humanity is in the Tribulation, and they are to be trusted when they should not be believed about any prophecy.

The world will be eager to believe a lie, for all peoples not filled with spirit will still belong to the present prince of this world.

Sabbatarian disciples are today a divided group, with every disciple doing what is right in his or her own eyes. There is no unity of message, nor even unified acceptance of a calendar. But the cure for disharmony is death: the Father and the Son will not permit disciples who do not keep the commandments and hold the testimony of Jesus to bear witness to the great multitude, but will, rather, send these disciples to the grave.

The above cannot be overly emphasized: “the testimony of Jesus” is the spirit of prophecy (Rev 19:10). Therefore, if Sabbatarian disciples (who do keep the commandments) do not also possess the spirit or breath of prophecy, these disciples will die during the Tribulation and will not enter into the Endurance. We will not be allowed to confuse or mislead the great multitude.

The Lord used many signs and wonders to show that He was working through Moses, but Israel was not impressed by signs even though they feared hearing the voice of the Lord. Thus, endtime Israel enters into “life” in the middle of the on-going tenth plague, with the Passover Lamb of God already sacrificed and with Israel roasting the lamb with its fiery sins. Regardless of when the disciple is born of spirit (1st-Century through 21st-Century), the disciple is “born” after the Lamb is slain and before the death angels pass over all the land; thus the disciple finds himself (or herself) living during the first six hours of the long spiritual night that began at Calvary. The last six hours of this long night contain the opening of the seven seals of the Scroll, with the hour of trial that is to come being the sixth Trumpet Plague. The seventh Trumpet Plague of the seventh seal will see the dawn of the new day, with the Light returning to fight on a (note the indefinite article) day of battle (Zech 14:3–4).

The visible separation of Israel from Egypt that came with the first nine plagues (Ex chaps 5–11) will again be seen in the Tribulation, when the Lord makes a distinction between the three parts of the little ones (Zech 13:7–9), but no additional outward separation is presently being made. Outward separation has already been made, and is made through drinking from the cup on the night that Jesus was betrayed. Israel drinks and those who are of the world, including biological Israel, do not drink from the cup on the night that Jesus was betrayed—and if Sabbatarian disciples, after of decades of covering themselves by drinking from the cup, choose not to drink on the night that Jesus was betrayed in 2010 or in any other year, then their covering in previous years will be of no value to them. They will be as uncovered Egyptians were when the death angel passed over all the land. If they are physical firstborns, they will perish physically. And the firstborn son of God dwelling within

the uncovered tent of flesh will be condemned to the second death.

The burden that God places upon the two witnesses will be to mourn for the living as well as the dead — but more about this in the next section/commentary.

* * *

"Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved."