

THE GREAT MULTITUDE⁺

—REVELATION 7:9-17.—

CHRISTIANS OF THREE KINDS—‘TARES’, OR FALSE CHRISTIANS—SAINTS, A LITTLE FLOCK OF SELF-SACRIFICERS—AVERAGE CHRISTIANS, A GREAT MULTITUDE—THEIR DESTINY SHOWN IN THIS LESSON—HOW THEY WILL BE CONQUERORS—THE OTHERS WHO WILL BE ‘MORE THAN CONQUERORS’—CONTRASTS OF THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE—PRIESTS AND LEVITES FOR THE COMING AGE—THE NUMBER OF THE FORMER KNOWN, THAT OF THE LATTER NOT KNOWN.

‘They shall hunger no more; . . . and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes’.—Revelation 7:16, 17.



ACCORDING to the Bible those professing the name of Christ are of three general classes. It is not ours to read their hearts; but it is ours, as Jesus said, to know them by their fruits. Yet even here we might deceive ourselves. The only safe way for us, therefore, in respect to persons who claim to be Christians and who live an upright and moral life is to take them for what they profess to be. One of these classes Jesus styles Tares—‘children of the Wicked One’—because their presence in the Church is the result of false

⁺ In some translations these are known as the ‘great crowd’.

For more commentary on Revelation (particularly Chapter 7, as it relates to this article), see the book: *‘The Keys of Revelation’*. Read online at: [**www.revelation-research.org**](http://www.revelation-research.org).

doctrines, false teachings, sown by the Adversary, Satan. (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43.) Many tares, we understand, are very talented, very honourable, and very wealthy. They really, however, have neither part nor lot with the true Church of Christ, all of whose members are spirit-begotten through the Word of Truth.

In the sense that the consecrated are all called in the one hope of their calling and all begotten of the one Spirit through the one Word of Truth, they are one class, one Church, under one Lord, one faith, one baptism. (Ephesians 4:4, 5.) Their division into two classes is the result of coldness, lukewarmness, fear to perform the sacrifice contracted, fear of death, on the part of some—the ‘great multitude’ referred to in this lesson. The Apostle describes them, saying, ‘Through fear of death they are all their lifetime subject to bondage’. (Hebrews 2:15.) Some of them fear also loss of business or name or fame or social standing. Therefore they compromise with the world and its spirit. They do not deny the Lord. Indeed, many of them would die rather than directly deny Him. Yet by their works they do deny Him—ashamed of the Truth because it is not popular, or ashamed of the Lord’s brethren because of their humble position or their unpopularity among the worldly.

While this class do not deny the Lord’s name, yet they fail to walk closely in His footsteps, and therefore will fail

to get the glorious prize of this Gospel Age; namely, glory, honour, immortality, joint-heirship with Jesus in His Millennial Kingdom, etc. Those great blessings and favours are to be granted only to the ‘more than conquerors’—the Little Flock, to whom it is the Father’s good pleasure to give the Kingdom—those who ‘follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth’, rejoicing in tribulation, esteeming it an honour to be counted worthy to suffer for Christ, His Cause, His Word, His Brethren. And yet this Little Flock, styled in the Bible the Lord’s jewels, are described by the poet, who says:

‘Those whom God makes His kings and priests
Are mean in human eyes’.

THE TWO CLASSES CONTRASTED

The Great Company described in our lesson will be overcomers; else they would never get any part in the everlasting blessings which the Lord is about to dispense now, at His Second Advent, when all of His faithful will be received to the Heavenly Home, the Father’s House. They will be overcomers, or conquerors, in the end because the Lord will help them through by forcing those of this class who will be living in the end of the present Age to come to a positive decision—to banish their fears and courageously count not their lives dear unto them in the great tribulation with which this Age will end. The fact that when the test does come, when the crisis is

reached, these will die rather than deny the Lord will constitute them overcomers and secure for them the blessing described in our text.

Nevertheless, there is a still higher position that will be attained by some. As it was not necessary for Jesus to be forced by tribulation either to acknowledge the Heavenly Father and stand for Truth or else to die the Second Death, so there is a class in the Church who are like the Master and who will have similar experiences to His. These are styled ‘more than conquerors’ because they not only do the right thing—stand for Truth, righteousness and the Divine arrangement—but they do it as Jesus did—voluntarily, with hearty good will, as soon as it is shown to them.

Here, then, we see the difference between two classes in the Church, all of whom are spirit-begotten, all of whom are called with the same High Calling, all of whom had similar opportunities for attaining the great prize. The ‘more than overcomers’, copies of God’s dear Son, faithful unto death in their voluntary laying down of their lives in God’s service and in behalf of the brethren—these will be the Little Flock to inherit the Kingdom—these will be the Royal Priesthood—these will constitute the Bride, the Lamb’s Wife and Joint-heir.

SCRIPTURES RELATING TO THE SECOND CLASS

The Great Company of this lesson are to be found everywhere. They fail to become members of the Body of Christ, fail to get the great reward, fail to become kings and priests. They will be granted a blessing, however, but an inferior position, which will correspond to that of the Levites of old, who were not priests, but of the priestly tribe—servants to their brethren the priesthood. Again, they are represented in the Bible as not being worthy to be of the Bride class, but as being granted the great honour of being ‘the virgins, her companions, who follow her’—bridesmaids.—Psalm 45:14, 15.

This class is also represented in the Lord’s parable as the Foolish Virgins. (Matthew 25:1-13.) They were virgins—pure, justified; hence they were fully consecrated to the Lord. But they were foolish in that they permitted the things of the present life to balance against the things of the life to come, to which they had made a full consecration. The Wise Virgins go in with the Bridegroom, become the Bride class, when the marriage of the Lamb takes place at the Second Coming of Christ. But the Foolish Virgins do not gain admittance, and they hear the Master’s words, ‘I do not recognise you’. But although they cannot be recognised as the Bride class, we praise God for His mercy in indicating that they all

belong to the company of virgins, the Bride's companions who follow after her.

A beautiful picture of this is given us in Revelation 19:6-9[†]. There also we are told of the Great Company who will praise God eventually that the Marriage of the Lamb is come and His Wife hath made herself ready—even though they will not be part of that Bride class. Awakened from their slumber and stupor, and separated from Babylon the Great by its fire, these finally recognise what they have missed; but they thank God that His Plan, so full of blessings, will still be carried out, though the true Bride class have gone before. Then the Lord gives to them the precious message, 'Blessed are they who are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb'. But they can go to that Marriage Supper only through much tribulation, which will test to the last their full devotion to the Lord—even unto death.

In Psalm 45 we have a picture of the Heavenly Father as the Great King, the Lord Jesus as the King's Son, the Church as the Bride, and the Great Company as the virgins, the Bride's companions, following after her. It is not only a beautiful picture, but one full of comfort and encouragement to all.

[†] See Chapter 19 of the book '*The Key of Revelation*', pages 483-484. Read online at: [**www.revelation-research.org**](http://www.revelation-research.org).

TWO COMPANIES—TWO REWARDS

In the account of today's lesson these are spoken of as a 'great multitude whom no man can number'—a poor translation, better rendered, 'a great company whose number no man knows'. We do know the number of the Elect, the 'more than conquerors'. It is stated to be one hundred and forty-four thousand of those who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth—a Little Flock indeed, as compared with the millions of earth for eighteen centuries, but a very choice company. The Great Company is not a foreordained number. No one can say what their number is; for they are castaways from the High Calling, rescued by the mercy of God through Christ, because they have not denied His name, because at heart they were loyal, even though they failed to manifest a sufficiency of zeal in performing the Covenant of Sacrifice which they covenanted and on the terms of which they had been accepted into the Lord's family.

St. John says that theirs is a position of glory and honour, not in the Throne with the Bride, but before the Throne, as those who are subject. He sees them not wearing crowns, the highest insignia of victory, which goes only to the 'more than conquerors'. But he sees them victors, nevertheless, with palm branches. Then he heard the statement that they were not members of the Temple class, but servants of the Temple, who serve God in His

Temple. Great will be their blessing. The Lord will lead them to the waters of life. But they will not be, like the Bride, possessed of immortality—which the Lord describes as water of life springing up in His people. (John 4:14; 7:37-39.) The water of life which Jesus will give the second class will be everlasting life on the spirit plane like unto the angels—but not on the Divine plane, not immortality, not the Divine nature.

Seeing these things set forth so clearly in the Word of God, shall we not be the more earnest hereafter, the more loyal, the more faithful, that we may obtain the highest reward, even that to which the Lord has invited us—to become members of the Body of Christ, members of the Royal Priesthood?

—ZION'S WATCH TOWER, March 1st, 1916; [R5864: page 75]—