

PROPHETIC ALLUSIONS TO THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD (144,000 – 12 TRIBES)

A Moral “Dilemma”

Satan had been cast out of heaven like a bolt of lightning (Luke 10:18). John the Revelator saw him as a star that had fallen from heaven to earth (Revelation 9:1 – written in past tense). When the decision to terminate heaven’s Luciferian conflict came, Satan’s separation occurred instantly. This brought an intensified spirit of revenge to that pernicious heart. He then began his earthly mission of deception and terror against mankind, seeking to instill distrust against God, whom he now hated perfectly. Man succumbed to his specious work and veiled treachery.

- God activated a plan that Paul described as *“the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal”* (Romans 16:25).
- It required Christ to become a man – *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory”* (I Timothy 3:16).
- This “mystery” was introduced by a series of prophecies that would be given over a 4000-year period – which revealed, by the deeper issues of this conflict, the inspiring revelation that Satan would be defeated.
- At that end, we are informed that: *“In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets”* (Revelation 10:7).

That “mystery,” though hid in ages past, was initially unfolded to God’s people – the saints – by Paul (Colossians 1:26).

- *“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Colossians 1:27).
- But much of that mystery would remain “sealed” until the “time of the end” (Daniel 12:4, 9), defined when that book would be opened and eaten (Revelation 10).
- Who are those saints, that “body” of individuals within whom Christ can actually reside? What rescue mission is activated to restore fallen man to such honor?
- Who are those who will discover and reveal at the prophetic end the final beauty of God’s character?

These questions begin a story that penetrates into the mind of God. God’s character – His glory – His thoughts – are unfolded through Christ. The redemptive plan put Him in competition with Satan. How could a “Christ appeal” be made more attractive than a “devil appeal”? To reveal that divine mystery, Jesus had to first reside on earth as an inhabitant. Then to recover fallen man, He had to live as a man while revealing the character of God. So dramatic was this

God–man move that in “taking our nature the Savior has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through eternal ages He is linked with us.”¹ The mystery of godliness included a divine being assuming a nature that became fully subject to heaven’s laws. The assumption of the nature of a created being as an eternal submission is almost impossible to comprehend. Christ became a singular new order of being.

That, however, confronted God with a unique problem.

Satan Becomes a Judicial Activist

1. Satan – that brilliant but scurrilous fallen star made charges against God’s laws and, thus, His character – “they were unfair,” “they couldn’t be kept,” “God really is a tyrant for having made them.” His drive to be a superior “statesman” “like the most high” (Isaiah 14:14) unveiled his sinister intent to destabilize God’s government.
2. God’s “mystery” in presenting a Savior refuted virtually all his charges, except one. Jesus talked about a “kingdom of God” that would come (Luke 17:20). There, He would have subjects just like He was! Jesus even said that little children represented the very nature of that kingdom (Luke 18:17). The issue: Man already had fallen. Could it be possible that a corporate body might emerge that was divine-like? Satan charged that it was impossible.
3. The very question became a legal matter. God permitted Himself to be put on trial before the court of the universe. Much of prophecy that relates to the termination of sin and its provocateur and that emergent corporate kingdom is in this judicial setting.

Christ was His first star witness. Yes, He had others like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Elijah as examples. But the covenant provisions of that kingdom were not ratified. That required a signature in blood. Jesus Christ signed it. But that unresolved issue still remained: Could a “kingdom body” emerge from subjects who had been sinners? A giant 1000-year failure had just occurred with the Jewish people. Was there indeed a flaw in that divine administration?

Satan “had represented him [God] to man as arbitrary, stern, and unforgiving. All the misery and suffering he had brought upon man, he charged to God. He declared that man could not keep the law, and that God was arbitrary and cruel in demanding of him something that he could not do.”²

“He argued [as the chief attorney for the opposition] that man could not keep the law of God, and therefore that God had been obliged to change the laws which he had made, and had abolished the rule of his government. Satan’s work was to keep the agitation against God in progress, and keep the question to the front as to whether God was light and love or not. **Satan had charged God with his own attributes**, and thus sowed in the hearts of men the seeds of enmity against God”³

¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

² White, Ellen G.; *The Youth’s Instructor*, February 22, 1900.

³ White, Ellen G.; *The Signs of the Times*, March 7, 1895 (emphasis added).

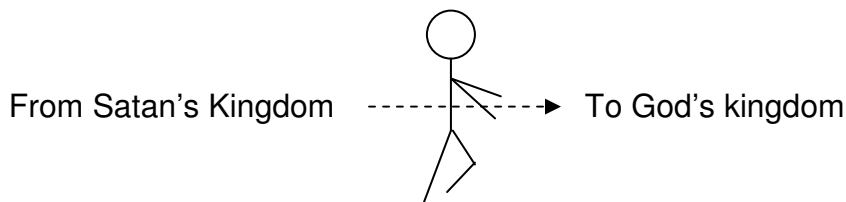
“The plan of Satan was by his lying philosophies to widen the breach that existed between God and man.”⁴

The moral law did embody demands of mankind. It was mandated within the everlasting covenant provisions (Exodus 31:16, Ecclesiastes 20:12). Its legal basis was housed in the Ark of the Covenant. But – to enjoin its moral purpose for man, “blood” had to be sprinkled on the Ark and before the Ark to cleanse sin from leaders and people. This was in anticipation of permanent atoning sacrifices. At one amazing time that blood, noted in Exodus 24:8, was even sprinkled directly “on the people,” symbolizing what must still occur at the cross. Could that loving purpose legally contain a way to transform man into Christ’s likeness? Would there be any loyal subjects to God’s kingdom from mankind that had been loyal to Satan previously? Or was the redemptive plan all symbolic and without substance?

We must then elevate our probing analysis.

Can there be a Moral People?

If so, that would imply a kingdom switch on man’s part:



Man had failed to lastingly connect with Him. Before the Cross, God’s giant Abrahamic experiment of creating a kingdom led by priests did not succeed. But a fascinating prophetic beacon of hope had previously been given Daniel:

- The last two Hebrew words in Daniel 8:14 are *qodesh nisdaq* – “holiness vindicated” (adjudicated).
- Vindicated (*nisdaq*) is passive – something **else** brings in that holiness.
- It is a committed people whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life, initially described in Daniel 9 (with details in verse 24).

At or after the end of the 2300 years a holy people (morally pure) would be recognized. Who are they? Ezekiel 9 tells us that a group will be sealed who “sigh and cry for the sins” that exist within God’s church. Who might that be? “I heard the number that were sealed: and they that were sealed were” 144,000 (Revelation 7:4).

“The sealing is a pledge from God of perfect security to His chosen ones (Ex. 31:13-17). Sealing indicates you are God's chosen. He has appropriated you to Himself. As the sealed of God we are Christ's purchased possession, and no one shall pluck us out of His hands. The

⁴ *Ibid.*

seal given in the forehead is God, New Jerusalem. 'I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God' (Rev. 3:12)."⁵

The 144,000 are God's group of kingdom citizens who recover the covenant blessings He originally had given to ancient Israel. Supporting this is this beautiful note: "a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads" (Revelation 14:1). They will eternally be part of that kingdom. In fact, in Revelation the prophetic imagery portrays that they will be part of the "family of heaven." The story of a kingdom switch is foundational to all apocalyptic prophecies.

There are other fascinating allusions to this special group – let's explore that further.

The Priesthood – Moral Representatives of God

The Melchizedek priesthood is a "royal priesthood" or a kingly priesthood. It is an elevated group who serve the risen Christ who became High Priest and King of kings within that order (see *EndTime Issue... #95* – "Called to a Higher Order").

Peter unfolded what Christ's followers will become when he noted: "*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. But ye are a **chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people**; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*" (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

This beautifully parallels John's thoughts that Christ has made us "kings and priests unto God" (Revelation 1:6). The actual Greek rendition is "hath made us to be a kingdom of priests unto God." Dominion rule will become one of the gifts awarded the saints: "*And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him [Christ]*" (Daniel 7:27). All this unequivocally reveals eventual failure of Satan's dominion.

In the royal priesthood of Melchizedek Jesus is the High Priest forever, assigned by God the Father under oath (Hebrews 6:20; 7:17, 21). Since we are a kingdom of royal priests, Jesus functions as our High Priest in that "holy nation." The priestly kingship of Jesus is described by Zechariah: "*And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both*" (Zechariah 6:12-13).

It is those who are members of the Philadelphia church who have God's name written on their foreheads (Revelation 3:19). They are the 144,000 who are standing on Mt. Sion with Jesus the Lamb (Revelation 14:1). This unique group are sealed in their foreheads and are represented as the twelve spiritual tribes of Israel (Revelation 7:4).

⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15, p. 225.

In a previous study, Melchizedek means: *Malki (melek) zedek (tsedeq)* – king of righteousness. Daniel was told that his people (those written in the book of life – 12:1) would bring in everlasting righteousness if they separated from sin (9:24). What is the meaning of that word "righteousness" (*tsedeq*)? The people of God become part of the Melchizedekian kingdom of priests when they come fully under the banner of Jesus. They are without fault (Revelation 14:5). They are identified as the 144,000!

A wonderful link to this end-time prophecy is found in Ezekiel. There is a special room within the courtyard of Ezekiel's temple (God's final pure church). This area faced north (the symbolic direction of God's throne – Psalm 48:2). This was for a high level of priests called Zadok (*tsadowq* – related to *tsedeq* – righteousness)!

The Zadokites were an elevated class of priests tied to Solomon's temple. They were a group loyal to the covenant principles. In an archeological find in 1896, the Zadokite fragments were discovered – now in Cambridge University Library. In those documents (still being analyzed) the Zadoks were noted as the "elect of Israel."⁶

In Ezekiel, these leaders were the only ones who could officiate at the altar, gate and in the temple. *"It shall be for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok; which have kept my charge, which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray"* (Ezekiel 48:11).

The priesthood of Zadok is symbolic of the 144,000. Those will become the firstfruits unto God who are translated. They will eternally be represented as an "elect" group to God forever.

"Why were they [the 144,000] so specially singled out? Because they had to stand with a wonderful truth right before the whole world, and receive their opposition. And while receiving this opposition they were to remember that they were sons and daughters of God, that they must have Christ formed within them, the hope of glory. They were ever keeping in view the great and blessed hope that is before them. What is it? It is an eternal weight of glory. Nothing could surpass it."⁷

Unlike the Levitical priesthood, no one belongs to this royal order by right of birth. Membership depends on qualification and loyalty to God's constitution.

The "Remnant" – The Part that is Saved

"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17).

The "remnant" are the final, converted group of people who are also called saints (Revelation 14:12). Those "living saints" are the 144,000.⁸

⁶ Tenney, Merrill C.; *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5, p. 1029 (Zondervan; Grand Rapids, MI), 1937.

⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 1, pp. 72-73.

⁸ White, Ellen G.; *A Word to the Little Flock*, p. 14.

“As the people of God afflict their souls before Him, pleading for purity of heart, the command is given, ‘Take away the filthy garments’ from them, and the encouraging words are spoken, ‘Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment’ (Zech. 3:4). The spotless robe of Christ's righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, yet faithful children of God. The despised **remnant** are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world. Their names are retained in the Lamb's book of life, enrolled among the faithful of all ages. They have resisted the wiles of the deceiver; they have not been turned from their loyalty by the dragon's roar. Now they are eternally secure from the tempter's devices. Their sins are transferred to the originator of sin. And the **remnant** are not only pardoned and accepted, but honored. ‘A fair miter’ is set upon their heads. They are to be as kings and priests unto God. While Satan was urging his accusations and seeking to destroy this company, holy angels, unseen, were passing to and fro, placing upon them the seal of the living God.”⁹

“Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved” (Romans 9:27; cf. Isaiah 10:22).

These “remnant” are the ones who will be among the great multitude around the throne.

“And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14).

Spiritual Israel – Metaphor for the “Israel” that Succeeds

God’s corporate body comes from both Jews and Gentiles. They are not identified by ethnic, parental or geographical differences. The 144,000 are a vast spiritual assembly tied symbolically to the twelve tribes of Israel. They are spiritual Israel.

“And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29). James gave one of the most convincing Scriptures proving that the apostles viewed those tribes in a spiritual sense. *“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greetings”* (James 1:1). The content of James’ letter is clearly addressed to Christians, and yet he plainly refers to them as spiritual Jews from the twelve tribes.

The 144,000 are made up of *“all the tribes of the children of Israel”* (Revelation 7:4). This group is so deeply committed to Jesus that the Bible says they *“follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth”* (Revelation 14:4).

“The Lord has a people on the earth, who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. He has His thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Such will stand with Him on Mount Zion. But they must stand on this earth, girded with the whole armor, ready to engage in the work of saving those who are ready to perish.”¹⁰

This leads us to another beautiful illustration of the 144,000:

⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Lift Him Up*, p. 377, 1908 (emphasis added).

¹⁰ White, Ellen G.; *In Heavenly Places*, p. 298.

A White Horse – A People Who are Righteous

In the Seven Seals of Revelation, the first four are accompanied by invitations to John to “come and see.” This comes from each of the four living creatures. Their symbolic heads (Revelation 4:7) represent the banners of the **lead** tribes of Israel. In turn, this end-time prophecy reveals that those creatures and the accompanying four horses represent the four key “tribal” players in the final conflict in earth’s history.

When the first Seal is broken the creature with the lion’s face says: “Come and see.” That tribe heads the list of the 144,000. Its leader is the “Lion of the Tribe of Judah.” Then John sees a white horse (Revelation 6:2).

- White is purity (Psalm 51:7), perfect righteousness of Christ (Revelation 7:14), victory (Isaiah 1:18), holiness (Revelation 7:13).
- The horse symbolizes people, especially ready for battle (Song of Solomon 1:9, Isaiah 63:13, Zechariah 10:3).
- “The appearance of them *is* as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run” (Joel 2:4).
- This creature represents the 144,000 – the first key player to arrive formally ready to engage wrong.

There’s more:

- They are going forth “conquering and to conquer.”
- That’s battle language (Job 39:19-25, Psalm 76:5-6).
- That draws on the aggressive imagery of the two witnesses (Revelation 11:5-6).

Jesus is the rider and He holds a crown of victory.

- The mission **will** end in victory.
- The task **will** be finished.

The end-time scenes reveal that as the sides in the conflict draw to a close, God will have a people – pure, representing Him and who, when the battle is over, become kings and priests of the kingdom of God. That group of saints is the 144,000! God calls them priests and kings because they know and follow His “royal law.”

144,000 Prophetic Representation		
Royal Priesthood		
Melchizedek Priesthood		
Zadok Priesthood		
White Horse		
Philadelphia church		
The Remnant Saints	}	with the great multitude

At the very end, Satan's final charges will be refuted. How? By a people who fully represent the righteousness of Christ, the impeccable character of the Father. The revenge of Satan's hatred will become more desperate in his final months; yet, he will fail. The court of the universe will acquit God of all charges. Satan will be found guilty of sedition.

The testimony of the 144,000 will bring to the court the concluding arguments. No wonder they will be of the high order of Melchizedek!

The Final Wait

"Of the Spirit Jesus said, 'He shall glorify Me.' The Saviour came to glorify the Father by the demonstration of His love; so the Spirit was to glorify Christ by revealing His grace to the world. The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people."¹¹

"In every true believer the character of Christ is to be reproduced."¹²

"Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. **When** the character of the Saviour shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim His own."¹³ We pray that you will be of that priestly "order."

God's kingdom of love will soon triumph. Passionately strive to be one of its citizens.

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¹¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

¹² White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, September 25, 1894.

¹³ White, Ellen G.; *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 324.