

A sandcastle stands on a sandy beach under a clear blue sky. The sandcastle has a crenelated top. Five colorful spheres (red, yellow, green, blue, and pink) are placed on the top edge of the sandcastle. Two black gloves with a black and white checkered pattern are attached to the sides of the sandcastle, each holding a sphere (blue and pink).

The Tower
of sand

DOUG MASON

The Tower of sand

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“The Tower of sand” **Version 2.0**

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Appearances of the terms “144,000” and “anointed Christians” in *The Watchtower* magazines from 2000 to March 2015 are available at:

http://www.jwstudies.com/WT_magazines_from_2000_to_2015_on_144000_and_the_anointed.pdf

Extracts from a Bible commentary relevant to the “144,000” and the “Great Crowd” are available at:

http://www.jwstudies.com/Extracts_sorted_Word_Commentary_Rev_6_and_7.pdf

Except where stated, Scripture references are from: *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures Rendered From the Original Languages* by the New World Bible Translation Committee, Revised 2013, Publishers Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc. Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A.

Underlining in quotations is provided for the purpose of emphasis.

THE TOWER



The handful of men who manage *The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society* [WTS] offer protection, and this claim must therefore be subjected to the full glare of open, objective, and rigorous examination. Are *Jehovah's Witnesses* [JW] protected by a solid construction or do the claims made by the *Governing Body* [GB] for itself crumble under the withering strength of rigorous examination?

JWs accept—indeed they are compelled to accept—that whatever is currently proclaimed by the GB *is* Truth, in the full knowledge that for the WTS, Truth is subject to change, like dunes in the desert. What was true becomes untrue, what was previously unacceptable becomes Truth. Even key signature foundations, such as the understanding of *Faithful and Discreet Slave* and the significance assigned to 1914, 1918, 1919, and 1975 are subject to amendments.

But there *is* one constant: *the demand for absolute loyalty to the GB and to its current edicts*. The GB constantly reminds JWs of that obligation.

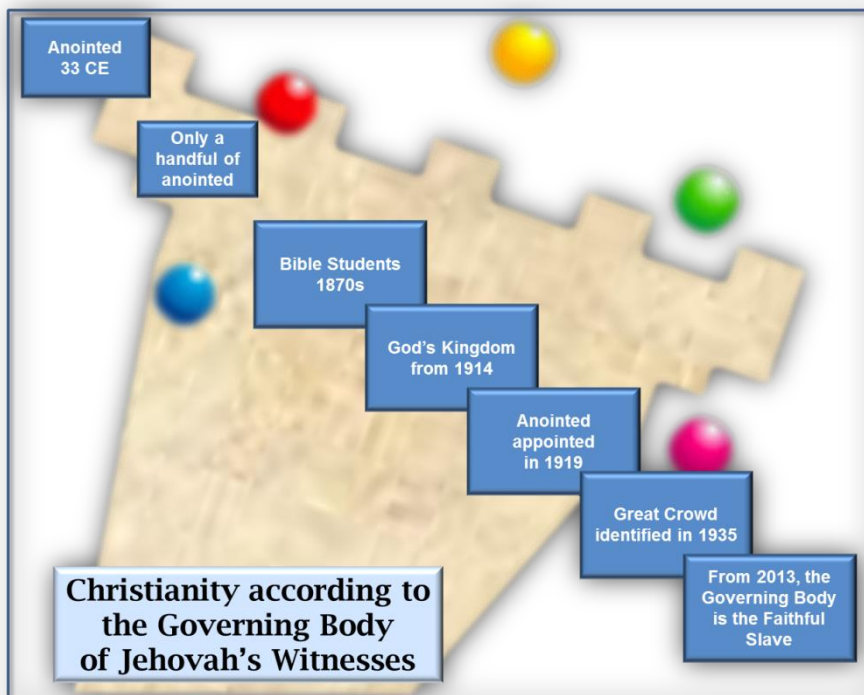
Since key features are subject to change, this means truth keeps changing yet it remains truth. The GB claims that these changes are provided through guidance coming directly to them from Jehovah God and his Kingdom Government in heaven. This Government is made up of Jesus Christ and 144,000 Spirit-anointed, most of whom are already in heaven, with only a few still on earth. The earthly Spirit-anointed, who number less than one per cent of the JW population, await their heavenward transformation.

The few Spirit-anointed men that make up the GB are the only ones who have a voice and authority. The pillars that create and support the Governing Body are made up of *144,000 Spirit-Anointed* persons and the millions of adherents known as the *Great Crowd* and as the *Other Sheep*. This Study focuses on these pillars that support the Governing Body.

THE FOUNDATION PILLARS



Pillars of faith created by the Governing Body for itself

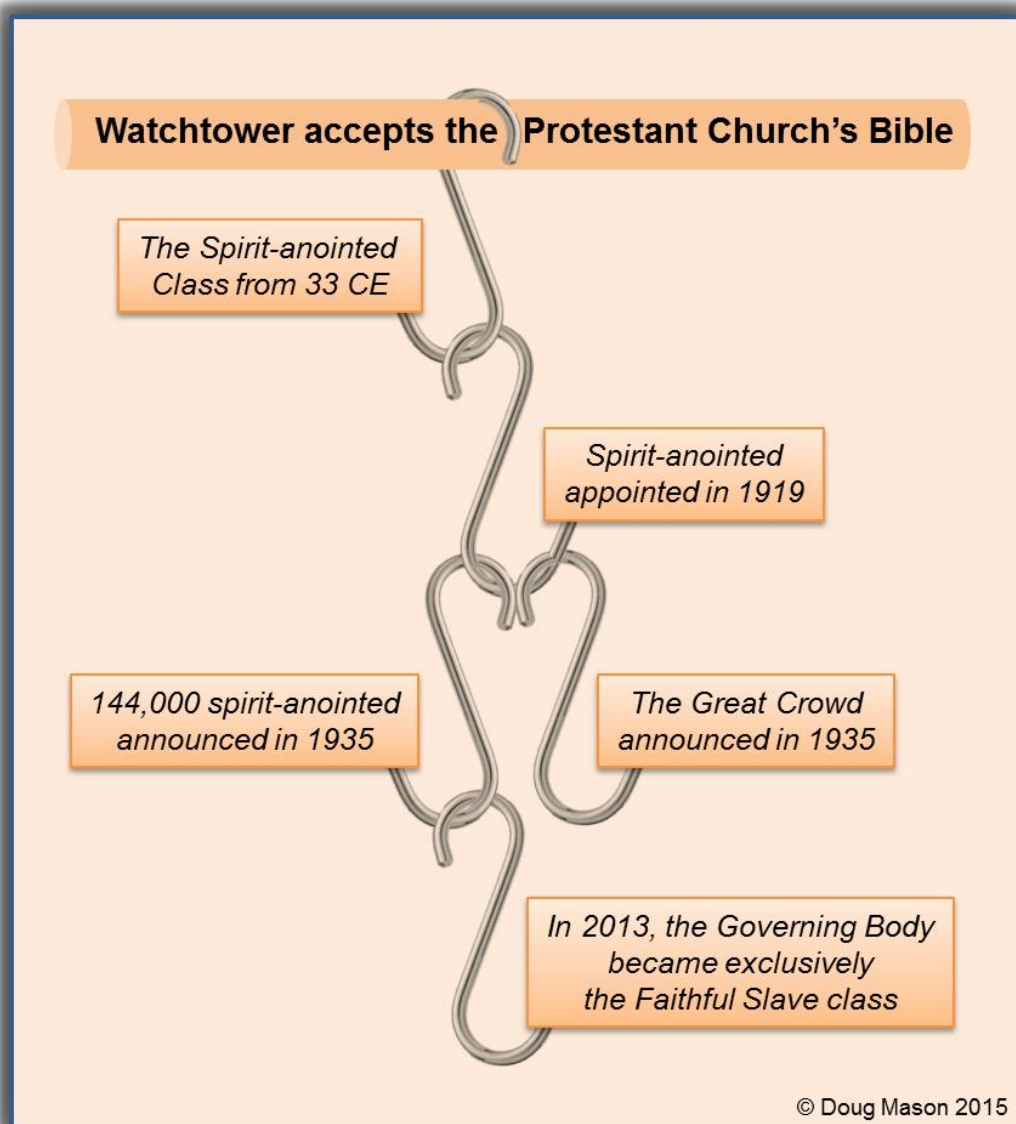


THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE “144,000”

The interpretation of the “144,000” is critical to the existence of the *Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses* [GB] and its *Watchtower Society* [WTS]. For this reason, the explanation it provides has to be rock solid, firm, immovable, and provable.

The WTS’s teaching on the 144,000 is a foundation of its message. The WTS relies on its idea that there is a heavenly government that has appointed the GB to be its channel of communication. This government comprises Jesus and his 144,000 spirit-anointed brothers.

Removing the 144,000 from the WTS would remove its anointed class and eliminate its Governing Body. This would also get rid of its ideas of the “great crowd”. Without the 144,000, the WTS would vanish. Its ideas would not hang together.



The WTS’s concepts hang from their idea of 144,000 spirit-anointed

The Biblical contexts that define the “144,000”

A group of 144,000 people are mentioned in Christianity’s Scriptures in the contexts of the *sixth Seal* and of the *Mark of the Beast*. It is probable that these groups of 144,000 are the same people. They are not explicitly mentioned or described anywhere else in Scripture or in contemporary literature.

People who are marked in their foreheads are mentioned in the *attack by locusts* and in the *New Jerusalem*, which Revelation says will be located on earth. It is a possibility that these are the same group as the 144,000.

The Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses mounts its structure and authority on this slim foundation.



The contexts that underpin the Watchtower’s pillar of “144,000”

THE “144,000” AT REVELATION 7

Scriptural context of the 144,000 at Revelation 7

Context is everything. Wrong impressions are created when the context is ignored or evaded. The following is the context of the sealing of the 144,000 provided in the *New World Translation* [NWT].

A REVELATION	
TO JOHN	
OUTLINE OF CONTENTS	
6	<u>The Lamb opens the first six seals</u> (1-17) Conqueror on the white horse (1, 2) Rider of fiery-colored horse to take away peace (3, 4) Rider of black horse to bring famine (5, 6) Rider of pale horse is named Death (7, 8) Slaughtered ones under the altar (9-11) A great earthquake (12-17)
7	Four angels <u>holding back</u> destructive winds (1-3) The <u>144,000 sealed</u> (4-8) A <u>great crowd</u> in white robes (9-17)
8	The <u>seventh seal opened</u> (1-6) Sounding the first four trumpets (7-12) Three woes announced (13)

The context of the 144,000 at Revelation 7

The seventh chapter of Revelation, where the 144,000 and the Great Crowd appear, lies within the context of the opening of seals that bind the scroll in God’s hand.¹ When each of the first four seals is opened, the writer sees a coloured horse and its rider.²

The opening of the first four seals sends out four horsemen (imagery adapted from Zech 1:8-11; 6:1-8), each inflicting a particular kind of judgment on humanity: irresistible conquest, war and bloodshed, famine, disease, and death.³

With the opening of the fifth seal, the souls of the martyred call out for their blood to be avenged. At this stage, they are given their white robes and they are told to wait as more are yet to be killed.

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those slaughtered because of the word of God and because of the witness they had given. They shouted with a loud voice, saying: “Until when, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, are you refraining from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”

¹ Rev. 5:1

² Rev. 6:1-8

³ *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 52B: Revelation 6-16*, pages 424, David E. Aune, Thomas Nelson, 1998

The “144,000” at Revelation 7

And a white robe was given to each of them, and they were told to rest a little while longer, until the number was filled of their fellow slaves and their brothers who were about to be killed as they had been.⁴

The opening of the sixth seal releases cataclysmic events on earth that cause the great men to call out in fear, “Who will be able to survive these terrors?”

And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and a great earthquake occurred; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the entire moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell to the earth as when a figtree shaken by a high wind drops its unripe figs.

And the heaven departed as a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and every island was removed from its place.⁵

In light of these shattering events taking place on the earth, people fear how anyone could survive, describe them as *the wrath of God and the Lamb*.

Then the kings of the earth, the high officials, the military commanders, the rich, the strong, every slave, and every free person hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. And they keep saying to the mountains and to the rocks: “Fall over us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”⁶

The opening of the sixth seal is followed by a series of cosmic disturbances. ... These terrible catastrophes ... move the powerful people of the world to fear the judgment of God and the Lamb. For, they say, “Who can stand before the day of his wrath?” (v 17). This question is answered in Rev 7.⁷ ... “No one except those protected by God.”⁸

The description of the 144,000 at Rev. 7 provides the answer. That group of 144,000 will be sealed to protect them from the catastrophes on the earth when the sixth seal is removed from the scroll. The group of 144,000 is sealed because they are on earth.

Their protective sealing, which action is not described, occurs prior to the opening of the Sixth Seal. Although, according to the powerful people, this is the “*Day of Wrath*”, it is not the Day of Judgment nor the Parousia.

The literary context of Rev 7 is provided by the narrative framework of the opening of the sixth seal in Rev 6:12-17, the effects of which are not actual judgments but rather a series of cosmic signs of impending disaster that throw fear and consternation into the hearts of people everywhere.⁹

To enable the 144,000 to receive the seal, the cataclysmic events of the sixth seal upon the earth are held back.

And I saw another angel ascending from the sunrise, having a seal of the living God; and he called with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying: “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until after we have sealed the slaves of our God in their foreheads.”¹⁰

The pause enables the seal that protects 144,000 earthly inhabitants to be applied, making them safe during the cataclysmic events when the sixth seal is opened.

⁴ Rev 6:9-11

⁵ Rev. 6:12-14

⁶ Rev. 6:15-17

⁷ Aune, page 424

⁸ Aune, page 439

⁹ Aune, page 439

¹⁰ Rev 7:2-3

The “144,000” at Revelation 7

The seal of God explicitly provides special protection for the wrath of God that is coming upon the world.¹¹

The writer of Revelation hears the list of those who were sealed, but he does not see them.

And I heard the number of those who were sealed, 144,000, sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel.¹²

THE 144,000 OF REVELATION 7

The question posed after the 6th seal opened

When he opened the sixth seal ... they keep saying “The great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (Rev. 6:12, 16, 17)

Slaves sealed before God’s Wrath will be poured out

Four angels ... holding tight the four winds ... so that no wind could blow. (Rev. 7:1)
Another angel ... having a seal of the living God ... called with a loud voice ... “Do not harm ... until after we have sealed the slaves of our God in their foreheads.” (Rev. 7:2, 3)

144,000 sealed

I heard the number of those who were sealed, 144,000. (Rev. 7:4)

Source of the 144,000

Sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel: Out of the tribe of Judah 12,000 sealed; ... of Reuben 12,000; ... of Gad 12,000; ... of Asher 12,000; ... of Naphtali 12,000; ... of Manasseh 12,000; ... of Simeon 12,000; ... of Levi 12,000; ... of Issachar 12,000; ... of Zebulun 12,000; ... of Joseph 12,000; ... of Benjamin 12,000 sealed. (Rev. 7:4-8)

After hearing of the 144,000, John looked

I saw, and look! a great crowd ... standing before the throne and before the Lamb. ... These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ... They are before the throne of God, and they are rendering him sacred service day and night in his temple. ... The Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, will shepherd them and will guide them to springs of waters of life. (Rev. 7:9, 14-15, 17)

The 7th seal opened

He opened the seventh seal ... And there were thunders and voices and flashes of lightning and an earthquake. (Rev. 8:1, 5)

The 144,000 are protected from the cataclysmic events on the earth

When the seventh seal is opened, there is silence in heaven, and angels with seven trumpets prepare.

When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. ... And the seven angels with the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.¹³

¹¹ Aune, page 440

¹² Rev 7:4

¹³ Rev 8:1, 6

THE SEAL OF GOD

*I saw another angel ascending from the sunrise, having a seal of the living God.*¹⁴

A seal conveys the authority of a person or a position. The modern expression “seal of approval” is a statement or a sign that a responsible authority has provided a certification or an approval.

The Greek word for “seal” is *sphragis*. A seal would often be applied with a signet ring, and the Greek word for that is *sphragides*.

The *sphragis* or seal (Lt. *signum*) was the most common device through which Romans simultaneously signaled a text as complete and attested to its author. Such seals were impressions made of clay or wax and employed on letters and personal documents through gemstones or signet rings furnished with unique personal marks. The seal imprinted on a document was thought to endow it with trustworthiness (*fides*), in that it bore witness to its being a faithful representation of its owner’s words and simultaneously prevented the text from being tampered with. Thus signet rings (Gr. *sphragides*) are the subject of a series of epigrams from the *Greek Anthology* which compliment the realism of their design and praise the latter as enhancing the credibility of the seals.¹⁵

The terms *sphragis* and *sphragizein* refer to the impression of a seal in clay or wax; since seals could be attached to people, they can be confused with tattoos or brands. The term *sphragis* refers both to the seal and to the impression made by it; the term also represents the power and authority of its owner. The instruments used in sealing (e.g., cylinders, rings), often made of precious stones, were important as symbols of power. Individuals, temples, and cities frequently had seals. ... Seals in wax or clay were attached to many types of objects to guarantee their authenticity (e.g., weights and measures). The mode of sealing is of interest particularly when it is used in connection with people.¹⁶

The signet of the living God

The signet or seal is not further described [at Rev. 7:2] (though it is assumed that it is an object, like a signet ring or a cylinder seal, that can make an impression on something), nor is that which is sealed on the foreheads of the servants of God explained (v 3).

Not until [Rev.] 14:1 is it made clear that the name of the Lamb and the name of his Father are written (the term “to seal” is not used) on the foreheads of the faithful. The seal is understood, at least in the final revision of Revelation, as the name of the Lamb and of his Father, mentioned explicitly in 14:1 (see 3:12; 22:4).¹⁷

¹⁴ Rev. 7:2

¹⁵ *The Roman Paratext: Frame, Texts, Readers*: Chapter 11: pages , edited by Laura Jansen, Cambridge University Press 2014. Chapter DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139168786.012> (accessed 3 March 2015)

¹⁶ Aune, pages 457

¹⁷ Aune, page 452

Sealing of the 144,000

The situation on earth

He opened the sixth seal ... a great earthquake ... sun became black ... moon became as blood ... stars of heaven fell to the earth ... Heaven departed .. Every mountain and every island was removed. (Rev 6:12-14)

The question

The great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand? (Rev 6:17)

The solution

144,000, sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel. (Rev 7:4)

Protection provided

Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until after we have sealed the slaves of our God in their foreheads. (Rev 7:3)

They were told ... to harm ... only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (Rev. 9:4)

The seal that will protect

The Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who have his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. (Rev 14:1)

His slaves will offer him sacred service; and they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ... They will rule as kings forever and ever. (Rev. 22:3-5)



Paul's imagery of "Seal"

Romans 4:11 (evidence, sign, proof)

[Abraham] received a sign—namely, circumcision—as a seal (*sphragis*) of the righteousness by the faith he had while in his uncircumcised state.¹⁸

1 Corinthians 9:2 (confirmation, evidence)

Even if I am not an apostle to others, I most certainly am to you! For you are the seal (*sphragis*) confirming my apostleship in the Lord.¹⁹

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 (ownership, confirmation)

But the one who guarantees that you and we belong to Christ
and the one who anointed us
is God.

He has also put his seal on us
and has given us the token of what is to come, that is, the spirit, in our hearts.

In this metaphorical use of sealing in 2 Cor 1:21-22, it is God who does the sealing ("God, who also seals us"). There are at least two ways of understanding the metaphor of sealing in this passage:

- (a) as a mark of ownership or
- (b) as confirmation of something with a seal.

Ephesians 4:30 (guarantee for release)

Do not be grieving God's holy spirit, with which you have been sealed (*esphragisthēte*) for a day of releasing by ransom.²⁰

2 Timothy 2:19 (solid foundation of God's ownership; response to it)

The solid foundation of God remains standing, having this seal (*sphragida*), "Jehovah knows those who belong to him", and "Let everyone calling on the name of Jehovah renounce unrighteousness".²¹

Seals in the Hebrew Scriptures

Seals were part of life many centuries before the WTS's start date of 33 CE!

"In that day", declares Jehovah of armies, "I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel", declares Jehovah, "and I will make you like a seal ring, because you are the one whom I have chosen", declares Jehovah of armies."²²

Ancient kings used signet rings to designate authority, honor, or ownership. A signet contained an emblem unique to the king. Official documents were sealed with a dollop of soft wax impressed with the king's signet, usually kept on a ring on his finger. Such a seal certified the document as genuine, much like a notary public's stamp today. In 1 Kings 21:8, the evil Queen Jezebel took King Ahab's signet ring and "wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal." The ring's stamp gave her letters the king's authority. In Daniel 6:17, a signet ring was used to seal a stone covering a lions' den: "A stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel." A royal signet ring is also featured in Genesis 41:41-43 and Esther 8:8.²³

¹⁸ Romans 4:11

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 9:2

²⁰ Ephesians 4:30

²¹ 2 Timothy 2:19

²² Haggai 2:23

²³ <http://www.gotquestions.org/Zerubbabel-signet-ring.html> (accessed 3 March 2015)

The sealed are protected from the locusts of the fifth trumpet

The fifth angel blew his trumpet. And I saw a star that had fallen from heaven to the earth, and the key to the shaft of the abyss was given to him. ... And locusts came out of the smoke onto the earth, and authority was given to them, the same authority that the scorpions of the earth have.

They were told not to harm the vegetation of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.²⁴

Sealing is used as a symbol of *divine protection*, as Rev 9:4 makes clear: the demonic locusts are told to harm “only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads”.²⁵

This sealing is a sign of divine protection, which is explicitly said to protect those sealed from the fifth trumpet plague in 9:4: “But they were instructed not to harm the grass of the earth nor any plant nor any tree, with the exception of people who do not have the seal of God upon their foreheads.”²⁶

That this sealing is for the purpose of protecting the 144,000 is clear from [Rev] 9:4, which explicitly states that only people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads are to be harmed by the plague unleashed by the fifth trumpet.²⁷

The sealed are protected from the anointed Jehovah’s Witnesses

The anointed Christian witnesses of Jehovah who are pictured by the locusts out of the smoke of the abyss give a stinging, burning pain like that inflicted by scorpions. ... The symbolic locusts who were revived in 1919 for God’s service. ... For the brief time interval till Armageddon breaks out, “five months” as it were, the symbolic locusts must use their scorpion-like tails, God’s Word. ... The symbolic locusts must follow their King, Jesus Christ. John says of them: “They have over them a king, the angel of the abyss. In Hebrew his name is Abad’don, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.” The resurrected heavenly Jesus Christ is the “angel of the abyss”. (*The Watchtower* 1961 December 1, pages 717, 719)

The chairman of the program, Stephen Lett of the Governing Body, opened with a talk entitled “*Go Forth With Jehovah’s Figurative Locusts*.” Revelation 9:1-4 compares the small band of anointed Christians who recovered from spiritual inactivity in 1919 to a swarm of locusts that burst into action. The students were reminded that as members of the “other sheep,” they have joined themselves to this figurative swarm of locusts. (*The Watchtower* 2008 August 15, page 30)

Ezekiel 9:4; the marking provided protection and ownership

Ezekiel 9:4 indicates that those sealed were concerned at the pollution within God’s temple.

[Rev 7:3] alludes to LXX Ezek 9:4, where those who mourned the pollution of the temple are marked on the forehead to protect them from the angels about to destroy Jerusalem: “Place a sign on the foreheads of the men.” The significance of this marking is that it indicates both divine protection and divine ownership.²⁸

²⁴ Rev. 9:1-4

²⁵ Aune, page 452

²⁶ Aune, page 455

²⁷ Aune, page 456

²⁸ Aune, page 455

Where are the Governing Body's anointed women?

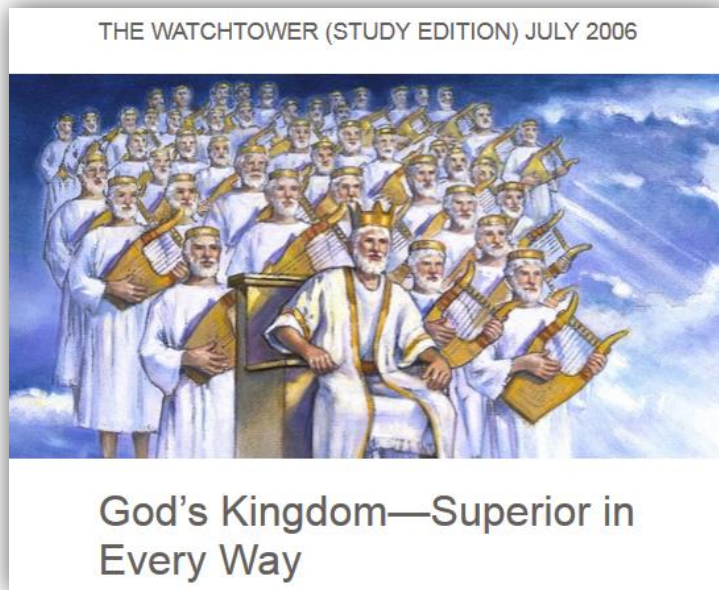
The WTS constantly refers to the “anointed” as Jesus’ “brothers”. Further, in Israel, only men were permitted to be a priest and the term “king” is the designation of a man.

In ancient Israel, the priestly office was restricted to men from the tribe of Levi. No female priests are attested, but there are several references to the daughter of a priest (*bat kōhēn*).²⁹

The WTS does not permit anointed women to teach.

Among the anointed are humble sisters, who would never try to assume the role of teachers in the congregation.³⁰

Every one of the 144,000 in the WTS’s illustration has a beard.



The “Kings and priests” are shown as men³¹

²⁹ <http://www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com/resource/priests.xhtml> (accessed 15 February 2015)

³⁰ *The Watchtower* 2013 July 15, page 22, “Who Really Is the Faithful and Discreet Slave?” Presumably, they are holding a “David’s Harp”.

³¹ Illustration is from *The Watchtower* 2006 July 15, page 4

(<http://www.jw.org/en/publications/magazines/w20060715/gods-kingdom-is-superior/>) (accessed 16 Feb. 2015)

THE “144,000” AT REVELATION 14

The 144,000 at Revelation 14 appear in the context of the Mark of the Beast. In contrast, these have *God's Mark* on their foreheads. At Revelation 7, the earth is subject to the wrath of God whereas Revelation 14 culminates in the final harvest.

THE 144,000 OF REVELATION 14

The dragon and the wild beast worshipped

I saw a wild beast ascending out of the sea, ... and all the earth followed the wild beast with admiration. And they worshipped the dragon because it gave the authority to the wild beast, and they worshipped the wild beast. (Rev. 13:1, 3-4)

The wild beast authorised to conquer the holy ones

It was permitted to wage war with the holy ones and conquer them, and it was given authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all those who dwell on the earth will worship it. (Rev. 13:7-8)

All people to be marked on hand or on their forehead

It puts under compulsion all people—the small and the great, the rich and the poor, the free and the slaves—that these should be marked on their right hand or on their forehead, ... the name of the wild beast or the number of its name. (Rev. 13:16-17)

144,000 marked on their foreheads

Then I saw, and look! the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who have his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. (Rev. 14:1)

144,000 sing before the throne

They are singing what seems to be a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders, and no one was able to master that song except the 144,000, who have been bought from the earth. (Rev. 14:3)

144,000 male virgin firstfruits are without deceit and blemish

These are the ones who did not defile themselves with women; in fact, they are virgins. These are the ones who keep following the Lamb no matter where he goes. These were bought from among mankind as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb, and no deceit was found in their mouths; they are without blemish. (Rev. 14:4-5)

Warning against receiving the wild beast's mark

Another angel ... saying in a loud voice: “If anyone worships the wild beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he will also drink of the wine of the anger of God that is poured out undiluted into the cup of His wrath, (Rev. 14:9-10)

Fate of those who receive the wild beast's mark and name

The smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever, and day and night they have no rest, those who worship the wild beast and its image and whoever receives the mark of its name. (Rev. 14:11)

Reap, for the harvest is fully ripe

Another angel emerged from the temple sanctuary, calling with a loud voice to the one seated on the cloud: “Put your sickle in and reap, because the hour has come to reap, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.” (Rev. 14:15)

The 144,000 appear when the wild beast demands all people receive his mark

A REVELATION	
TO JOHN	
OUTLINE OF CONTENTS	
13	<u>Seven-headed wild beast</u> from the sea (1-10) <u>Two-horned beast</u> from the earth (11-13) <u>Image of the seven-headed beast</u> (14, 15) <u>Mark and number</u> of the wild beast (16-18)
14	The <u>Lamb and the 144,000</u> (1-5) Messages from <u>three angels</u> (6-12) Angel in midheaven with <u>good news</u> (6, 7) Happy are those who die in union with Christ (13) Two <u>harvests of the earth</u> (14-20)

The context of the 144,000 at Revelation 14 as provided in the NWT of 2013

Comparisons and contrasts between the two descriptions of 144,000 people

Since the group of 144,000 is mentioned only three times in Revelation, in 7:4 and 14:1, 3, it is important to determine whether 7:4-8 and 14:1-5 refer to the *same group* or to *two different groups*. A comparison and contrast between the two passages is in order:

- (1) In both passages groups of 144,000 are mentioned (7:4; 14:1, 3).
- (2) In both passages the members of the group of 144,000 are marked on their foreheads; in 7:3, the term "to seal," is used, but what this seal looks like is not mentioned; in 14:1 the term "seal" is not used, but the 144,000 are said to bear the name of the Lamb and his Father's name on their foreheads.
- (3) The 144,000 sealed in 7:1-8 are drawn from a larger group, i.e., from Israelite tribes, and those in 14:1-5 have been redeemed from humankind as first fruits.
- (4) The scene in 7:1-8 is placed before the 144,000 are subjected to any opposition while that in 14:1-5 is a proleptic eschatological scene that depicts the 144,000 as either already victorious in the eschatological battle mentioned in 17:14, or else preparing for the gathering of nations that precedes the final battle.
- (5) In 7:1-8, nothing is mentioned that is distinctively Christian while in 14:1-5 the 144,000 are described as followers of the Lamb (14:4), bearing the name of the Lamb and of his Father on their foreheads (14:1), and so are clearly Christians.
- (6) In 14:1-5, in contrast to 7:1-8, there is no mention of Israelite tribes,
- (7) In 14:1-5, the 144,000 have several characteristics that are not mentioned in 7:1-8:
 - a. they are virgins (i.e., celibate)
 - b. they follow the Lamb wherever he goes (discipleship language),
 - c. they have been redeemed from humankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, implying that others will be redeemed later (i.e., while 14:1-5 is a proleptic scene, it does not present the eschaton as fully present), and
 - d. the moral character of the 144,000 is stressed: they do not lie for they are blameless.

Despite the differences between the two passages, and despite the fact that the mention of the 144,000 does not have the anaphoric definite article referring back to 7:4, it appears that the author intends to equate the 144,000 in 7:4-8 and 14:1-5.³²

Does this provide a solid foundation to build on with absolute confidence?

144,000 male virgins

Not only are the 144,000 described as virgins, meaning celibate not mere sexual abstinence, but they are described as *male* virgins since they have not defiled themselves with women. This harks back to Genesis 6:1-4 where heavenly beings *did* do so. The emphasis in the statement should perhaps be on the word “not”, as follows:

Who did *not* defile themselves with women.³³

³² Aune, page 448

³³ For a detailed examination, see: *"Those Who Have Not Defiled Themselves with Women": Revelation 14:4 and the Book of Enoch*, by Daniel C. Olson, *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 59, 1997, pages 492-510.

THE “LITTLE FLOCK”

A man in the crowd called out to Jesus, asking him to compel his brother to provide him with his share of their inheritance. After brushing the man’s demand aside, Jesus spoke to the crowd about the worthlessness of earthly possessions and of the need to be rich towards God.

Someone in the crowd said to [Jesus]: “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

He said to him: “Man, who appointed me judge or arbitrator between you two?” Then he said to [the crowd]: “Keep your eyes open and guard against every sort of greed, because even when a person has an abundance, his life does not result from the things he possesses.”

With that he told them [the crowd] an illustration, saying: “The land of a rich man produced well. So he began reasoning within himself, ‘What should I do now that I have nowhere to gather my crops?’ Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my storehouses and build bigger ones, and there I will gather all my grain and all my goods, and I will say to myself: “You have many good things stored up for many years; take it easy, eat, drink, enjoy yourself.”’

“But God said to him, ‘Unreasonable one, this night they are demanding your life from you. Who, then, is to have the things you stored up?’

So it goes with the man who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God.”³⁴

Jesus then turned his attention away from the crowd to his small band of companions. They were not drawn from the rich and powerful, but they were of humble origin with meagre possessions. Jesus told them to stop “being anxious” as God would provide for their essential needs.

Then he said to his disciples: “That is why I say to you, stop being anxious about your lives as to what you will eat or about your bodies as to what you will wear. For the life is worth more than food and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: They neither sow seed nor reap; they have neither barn nor storehouse; yet God feeds them.

Are you not worth much more than birds? Who of you by being anxious can add a cubit to his life span? If, therefore, you cannot do such a small thing, why be anxious about the remaining things?

Consider how the lilies grow: They neither toil nor spin; but I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these.

Now if this is how God clothes the vegetation in the field that today exists and tomorrow is cast into an oven, how much more will he clothe you, you with little faith!

So stop seeking what you will eat and what you will drink, and stop being in anxious suspense; for all these are the things the nations of the world are eagerly pursuing, but your Father knows you need these things.³⁵

In the same way that he had instructed the rich to be rich towards God, Jesus instructed his poor followers to keep their focus on God’s kingdom. This was something they could attain to at that time, not something to wait for in the distant future. And as they sought God’s kingdom, he would ensure that their needs would be met.

Instead, keep seeking his Kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

³⁴ Luke 12:13-21

³⁵ Luke 12:22-30

The “Little Flock”

Continuing to focus on his small band of immediate followers and ignoring the large group surrounding them, Jesus comforted them with the assurance that their “Father” is “giving” them the “Kingdom”. Since this is a gift, it is not something they had earned or worked for. A gift is a gift.

“Have no fear, little flock, for your Father has approved of giving you the Kingdom. Sell your belongings and give gifts of mercy. Make money pouches that do not wear out, a never-failing treasure in the heavens, where no thief gets near and no moth consumes.

For where your treasure is, there your hearts will be also.³⁶

The word “*approved*” in the NWT masks the intent of the Greek word εὐδόκησεν (*eudokēsen*). The Bible translations shown at <http://biblehub.com/luke/12-32.htm>³⁷ convey its meaning of *pleasure*; *great happiness*; and *delight*. It is a gift that is given with delight by their *Father*.

The Kingdom Interlinear Translation [KIT] published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society shows that the meaning of the Greek word *eudokēsen* is “*thought well of*”.

The same Greek word appears at 1 Corinthians 1:21 and at Galatians 1:15. The KIT once again shows the Greek as meaning, “*thought well*” but this time the English translates the word to mean “God saw good” and as “thought good”.

It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom; not only the Gospel, and the knowledge of the mysteries of it; nor the Gospel church state, and a right to all its ordinances; nor only the kingdom of grace, which cannot be moved; but the kingdom of glory: and which is a gift unto them, not obtained by any deserts or works of theirs; nor is their right unto, and enjoyment of it depending upon any such thing: and it is their Father’s gift, who is so by adopting grace, and through Christ Jesus their Lord; and which he gives according to his sovereign will and pleasure, and with a good will, delighting in them, and rejoicing over them to do them good, both here and hereafter: so that they may depend upon every good thing needful for them both in this world, and in the world to come; nor should they indulge anxious cares, or slavish fears.³⁸

=====

Do not be afraid, for I am with you.
Do not be anxious, for I am your God.
I will fortify you,
yes, I will help you,
I will really hold on to you
with my right hand of righteousness.³⁹

=====

Jehovah is on my side;
I will not be afraid.
What can man do to me?⁴⁰

The text on the following page comes from several translations, not from the NWT.

No Scriptural link

The WTS equates the term “Little Flock” to the 144,000 at Revelation. However, no statement in Scripture calls the 144,000 the “little flock.” There is no linkage that provides the GB with a foundation.

³⁶ Luke 12:32-34

³⁷ Accessed 5 March 2015

³⁸ <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/gill/luke/12.htm> (accessed 6 March 2015)

³⁹ Isa 41:10

⁴⁰ Psalm 118:6

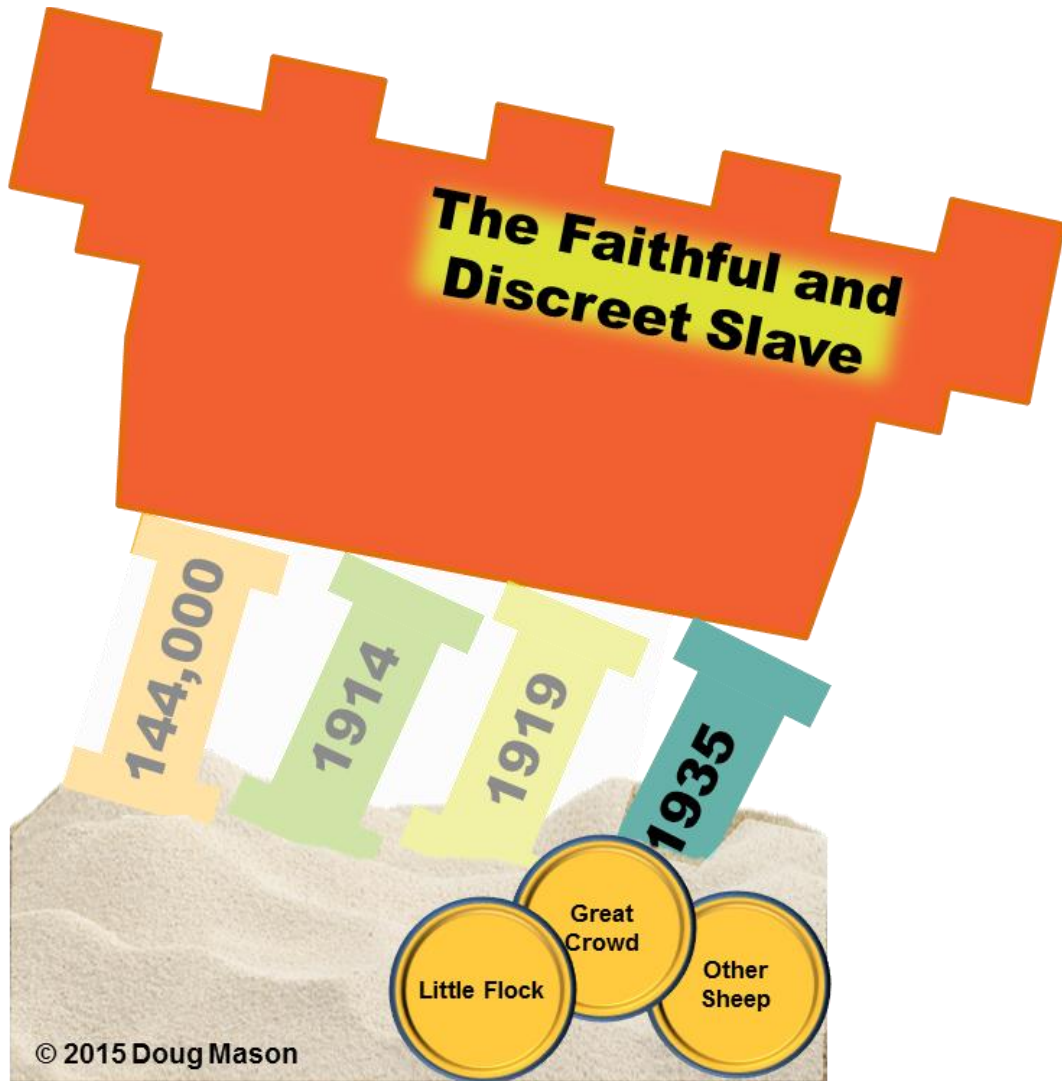
The "Little Flock"

*Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's
good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

Luke 12:32



THE BULK OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES



THE “GREAT CROWD”

The WTS relies for its existence on its teachings of the “Great Crowd”, which the WTS says represents about 99%, of JW’s. The expression appears just three times in the NWT Bible—Rev. 7:9; 19:1, 6.

Context of the sealing

- (1) After this I saw, and look! a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues.⁴¹

Context of the Mark of the Beast

- (2) I heard what seemed to be a loud voice of a great crowd in heaven.⁴²
- (3) I heard what sounded like a voice of a great crowd and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of heavy thunders.⁴³

These provide a slender foundation to build a structure on.

The throne is in heaven

The throne and altar are located in heaven.

I saw, and look! an opened door in heaven, ... and look! a throne was in its position in heaven.⁴⁴

Great Crowd in front of the throne

The Great Crowd is standing in front of the throne of God, which is located in heaven.

I saw, and look! a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes.⁴⁵

They are before the throne of God, and they are rendering him sacred service day and night in his temple.⁴⁶

I heard what seemed to be a loud voice of a great crowd in heaven.⁴⁷

Angels, elders and living creatures are also “before the throne”

The angels, 24 elders and 4 living creatures are *also* described as being “*before the throne*”.

All the angels were standing around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell facedown before the throne and worshipped God.⁴⁸

[The voice of a great crowd in heaven] said: “Praise Jah! And the smoke from her goes on ascending forever and ever.” And the 24 elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who sits on the throne and said: “Amen! Praise Jah!”

Also, a voice came from the throne and said: “Be praising our God, all you his slaves, who fear him, the small ones and the great.”⁴⁹

⁴¹ Rev. 7:9

⁴² Rev. 19:1

⁴³ Rev. 19:6

⁴⁴ Rev. 4:1, 2

⁴⁵ Rev 7:9

⁴⁶ Rev. 7:15

⁴⁷ Rev. 19:1

⁴⁸ Rev. 7:11

⁴⁹ Rev. 19:3-5

The Great Crowd were slaughtered and martyred

Unlike the 144,000, who were protected Israelites, the members of the Great Crowd, who came from many nations, were slaughtered and martyred.

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those slaughtered because of the word of God and because of the witness they had given. They shouted with a loud voice, saying: “Until when, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, are you refraining from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”

And a white robe was given to each of them, and they were told to rest a little while longer, until the number was filled of their fellow slaves and their brothers who were about to be killed as they had been.⁵⁰

The members of the Great Crowd, finally victorious and their blood avenged, serve in the heavenly temple.

“These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. That is why they are before the throne of God, and they are rendering him sacred service day and night in his temple.”⁵¹

Great Crowd saved by Jesus’ blood (death)

When the writer does look, he sees an innumerable crowd. These had been given white robes when the fifth seal was opened. The 144,000 were to be protected, but these with the white robes had given their lives as martyrs during the great tribulation.

And look! a great crowd ... dressed in white robes; and there were palm branches in their hands. And they keep shouting with a loud voice, saying: “Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb.”⁵² “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”⁵³

People of many tribes become kingdom of priests ruling the earth

The 24 elders identify the group made up of many nations (as against the 144,000, who had a single nationality), saying that as a kingdom and priests, they would rule.

And [the 24 elders] sing a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, for you were slaughtered and with your blood you bought people for God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and you made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth.”⁵⁴

Revelation 7 shows that the 144,000 Israelites were protected against the physical catastrophes upon the earth, and that these were distinct from the unnumbered group of executed who came from every tribe and nation. When the latter group is revealed at the opening of the fifth seal, they are promised that they will become priests ruling as kings over the earth.

“You were slaughtered and with your blood you bought people for God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and you made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth.”⁵⁵

I saw thrones, and those who sat on them were given authority to judge. Yes, I saw

⁵⁰ Rev. 6:9-11

⁵¹ Rev. 7:14-15

⁵² Rev. 7:9-10

⁵³ Rev. 7:14

⁵⁴ Rev. 5:9-10

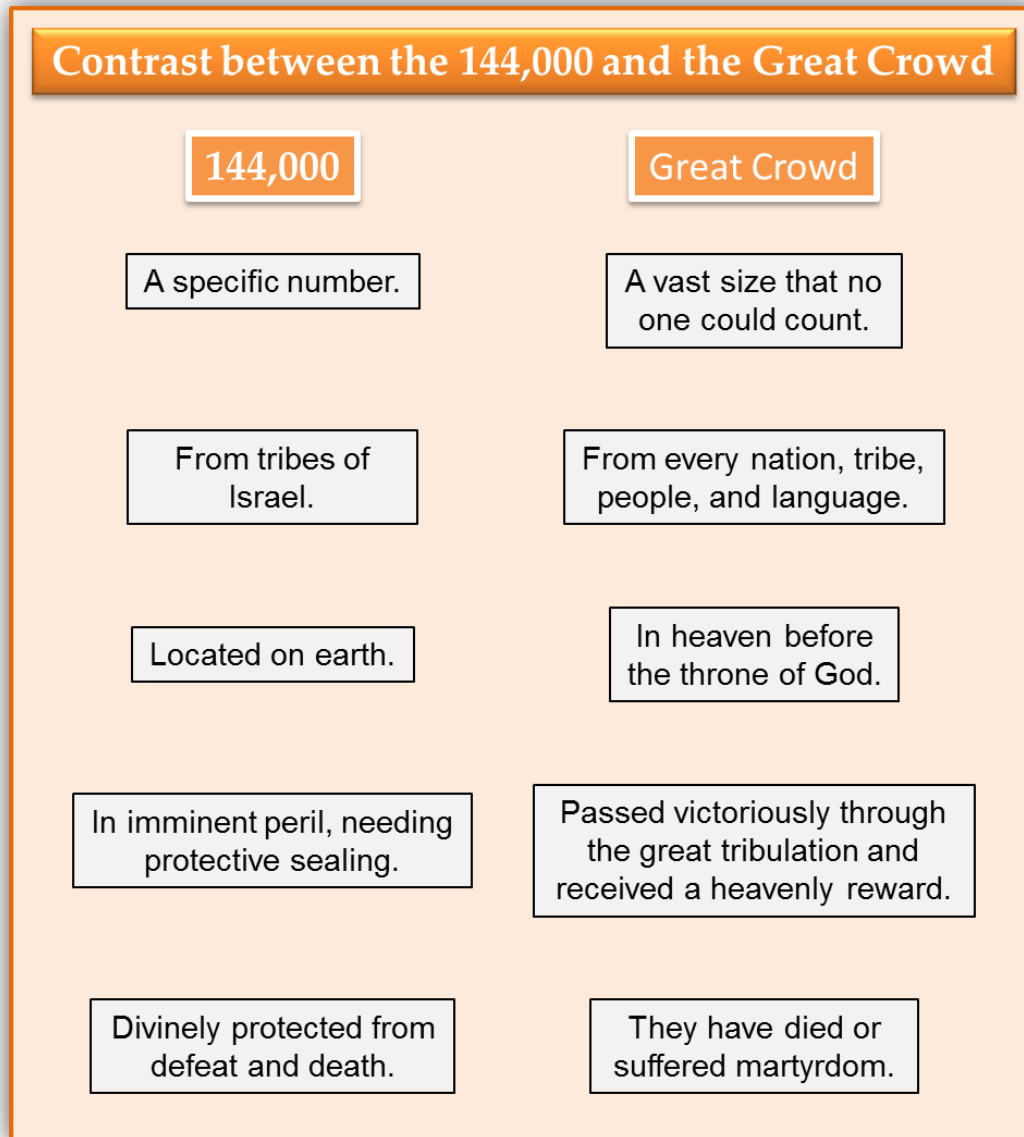
⁵⁵ Rev. 5:9-10

The "Great Crowd"

the souls of those executed for the witness they gave about Jesus and for speaking about God, and those who had not worshipped the wild beast or its image and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand.

And they came to life and ruled as kings with the Christ for 1,000 years. ... They will be priests of God and of the Christ, and they will rule as kings with him for the 1,000 years.⁵⁶

It could be argued that the above verse suggests that the 144,000 who were sealed against the cataclysmic events is different to the group of 144,000 who did not worship the beast or its image.



The promise to the great multitude

They will hunger no more nor thirst anymore, neither will the sun beat down on them nor any scorching heat, because the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, will shepherd them and will guide them to springs of waters of life. And God will wipe out every tear.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Rev. 20:2, 4-6

⁵⁷ Rev. 7:16-17



I saw a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. (Rev. 7:9)

They are before the throne of God, and they are rendering him sacred service day and night in his temple. (Rev. 7:15)

All the angels were standing around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures. (Rev. 7:11)

The great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand? (Rev. 6:17)

“Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until after we have sealed the slaves of our God in their foreheads.” (Rev. 7:3)


I heard the number of those who were sealed, 144,000, sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel. (Rev. 7:4)

They were told not to harm the vegetation of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (Rev. 9:4)

The Biblical Model

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Great Crowd
Angels
Elders
Living Beasts
The Throne of
God and the
Lamb



144,000 protected
from cataclysmic
events on earth



God's heavenly Kingdom made up of Christ Jesus and his 144,000 corulers. (*The Watchtower* 2005 May 1, page 11)

[Jesus] turned his attention to the gathering of the remaining prospective members of his Kingdom government so as to complete the number of 144,000. (*The Watchtower* 2008 January 15, pages 22-23)

The Kingdom covenant is made with the 144,000 anointed Christians. This is the covenant that forms a legal basis for them to rule with Jesus in heaven. (*The Watchtower* 2014 October 15, pages 16-17)

Jesus foretold that he would appoint a channel to give out spiritual "food at the proper time". (*The Watchtower* 2013 July 15, page 19)

Starting in 1919, it was time to begin gathering the wheat. Was it finally the time for Christ to appoint one organized channel to dispense spiritual food? Yes, indeed! (*The Watchtower* 2013 July 15, page 19)

A small group of anointed brothers who are directly involved in preparing and dispensing spiritual food. ... These anointed brothers make up the Governing Body. (*The Watchtower* 2013 July 15, page 22)

After 1935 the thrust of the preaching work turned to the gathering of "a great crowd".. (*The Watchtower* 2008 January 15, page 23)

The "great crowd" ... with the prospect of living forever on a paradise earth. (*The Watchtower* 2002 February 1, page 21)

The Watchtower's Model

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THE “OTHER SHEEP”

ACCORDING TO JOHN	
OUTLINE OF CONTENTS	
9	Jesus heals a man born <u>blind</u> (1-12) Healed man questioned by the Pharisees (13-34) <u>Blindness of the Pharisees</u> (35-41)
10	The shepherd and the sheepfolds (1-21) <u>Jesus is the fine shepherd</u> (11-15) <u>“I have other sheep”</u> (16) Jews encounter Jesus at the Festival of Dedication (22-39) Many Jews refuse to believe (24-26) <u>“My sheep listen to my voice”</u> (27) The Son is in union with the Father (30, 38) <u>Many across the Jordan</u> believe (40-42)

New World Translation (2013), pages 1424-1425

The Watchtower Society (WTS) arbitrarily contrasts Jesus’ statement of the “*other* sheep” at John 10:16 with its “anointed” class at Revelation. Bible commentators commonly assume that the term “other sheep” refers to Gentiles in contrast to the Jews. Did the writers of John’s Gospel intend either explanation?

The context of the expression “other sheep” starts at the beginning of the previous chapter (John 9:1). Jesus had left the temple⁵⁸ when he encountered a man who had been blind from birth. A vigorous debate between Jesus and the Pharisees takes place after Jesus had cured the man’s blindness. The discussion concludes when the man’s physical blindness is likened to the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees.

Those of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things, and they said to him: “We are not blind also, are we?” Jesus said to them: “If you were blind, you would have no sin. But now you say, ‘We see.’ Your sin remains.”⁵⁹

The narrative continues on.

The Good Shepherd Discourse of [John] 10:1-21 follows chapter 9 (which concludes with Jesus’ indictment of the Pharisees’ spiritual blindness in 9:39-41) without transition (note that the double *amen* never begins a discourse in John; see also the *inclusio* in 10:21), which suggests that the audience remains the same.⁶⁰

Jesus then makes the startling assertion that it is he who is the true gateway; he is the true shepherd; that the sheep know *his* voice; and that these sheep belong to *him*. All others, he states, and quite pointedly the Pharisees who are hearing him, are thieves and robbers, trying to steal his sheep, as they attempt to reach them without going through him.

⁵⁸ The action carries symbolic significance.

⁵⁹ John 9:40-41

⁶⁰ *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, pages 461-414, G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson editors, Baker Academic, 2007

The “Other Sheep”

So Jesus said again: “Most truly I say to you, I am the door for the sheep.

All those who have come in place of me are thieves and plunderers; but the sheep have not listened to them.

I am the door; whoever enters through me will be saved, and that one will go in and out and find pasturage.

The thief does not come unless it is to steal and slay and destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance.⁶¹

I [Jesus] am the fine shepherd; the fine shepherd surrenders his life in behalf of the sheep.⁶²

I am the fine shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I surrender my life in behalf of the sheep.⁶³

Not only do these sheep belong to him, he has other sheep that also belong to him.

And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; those too I must bring in, and they will listen to my voice, and they will become one flock, one shepherd.⁶⁴

Jesus’ words and the sentiments come from the words of Jeremiah and of Ezekiel, who expressed their concern at the dispersion of God’s people. This resulted from the actions of the Assyrian and Babylonian regimes, but the fundamental blame lay with those charged with the responsibility of shepherding God’s chosen people, his sheep. As a result, they were spread far and wide.

The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel ... speak against the leaders of Israel as shepherds who have not cared for the flock. Jeremiah says that the shepherds have led the people astray, and that the people are lost sheep (50:6; cf. 23:1-4). Ezekiel says that the shepherds have not cared for the sheep. Among other things, he declares: “the strayed you have not brought back, and the lost you have not sought” (34:4, LXX). Therefore the Lord himself will search (future tense!) for his sheep (34:11). There can be no doubt that the passage from Ezekiel provided imagery for the Parable of the Lost Sheep and the discourse at John 10:11-18 where Jesus himself is the Good Shepherd who seeks his sheep.⁶⁵

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My people have become a flock of lost sheep. Their own shepherds caused them to stray. They led them away onto the mountains, roaming from mountain to hill. They have forgotten their resting-place.⁶⁶

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“Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!” declares Jehovah.

Therefore this is what Jehovah the God of Israel says against the shepherds who are shepherding my people: “You have scattered my sheep; you kept dispersing them, and you have not turned your attention to them. So I will turn my attention to you because of your evil deeds,” declares Jehovah.

“Then I will gather together the remnant of my sheep from all the lands to which I have dispersed them, and I will bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and become many. And I will raise up over them shepherds who will really

⁶¹ John 10:7-10

⁶² John 10:11

⁶³ John 10:14-15

⁶⁴ John 10:16

⁶⁵ *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary*, page 53, Arland J. Hultgren, Eerdmans 2002

⁶⁶ Jer. 50:6

The “Other Sheep”

shepherd them. They will no longer be afraid or be terrified, and none will be missing,” declares Jehovah.⁶⁷

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This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel, who have been feeding themselves! Is it not the flock that the shepherds should feed? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, and you slaughter the fattest animal, but you do not feed the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bandaged the injured or brought back the strays or looked for the lost; rather, you have ruled them with harshness and tyranny.

“So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; they were scattered and became food for every wild beast of the field. My sheep were straying on all the mountains and on every high hill; my sheep were scattered over all the surface of the earth, with no one searching for them or seeking to find them.”

Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of Jehovah: “As surely as I am alive”, declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, “because my sheep have become prey, food for every wild beast of the field, for there was no shepherd, and my shepherds did not search for my sheep; rather, they kept feeding themselves and did not feed my sheep”. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of Jehovah.

This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: ‘I am against the shepherds, and I will demand an accounting of them for my sheep, and I will dismiss them from feeding my sheep, and the shepherds will no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouth, and they will no longer be food for them.’”

For this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “Here I am, and I myself will search for my sheep, and I will care for them. I will care for my sheep like a shepherd who has found his scattered sheep and is feeding them. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered in the day of clouds and thick gloom. I will bring them out from the peoples and collect them together from the lands and bring them into their land and feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams and by all the dwelling places of the land. In a good pasture I will feed them, and the land where they graze will be on Israel’s high mountains. They will lie down there in a good grazing land, and they will feed on choice pastures on the mountains of Israel.”⁶⁸

The area covered by Jesus’ ministry was restricted to a small region around northern Galilee; he made only rare visits to Jerusalem. After saying that he was seeking to bring his own “other sheep” into the fold that he already owned, Jesus travelled to the other side of the Jordan River where indeed many others placed their faith in him. The context of the “other sheep” and of its meaning relates to the Jews of the Diaspora. Whether this can be extended to the Apostle Paul, who was one of the Jewish Diaspora, is beyond the scope of this Study.

Some see the following from Isaiah as relative to the gathering of Gentiles into the fold of Israel.

The Sovereign Lord Jehovah, who is gathering the dispersed ones of Israel, declares: “I will gather to him others besides those already gathered.”⁶⁹

“My sheep listen to my voice”

The Jews surrounded [Jesus] and began to say to him: “How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them: “I told you, and yet you do not believe. ... You do not believe, because you are not my

⁶⁷ Jer. 23:1-4

⁶⁸ Ezekiel 24:2-14

⁶⁹ Isaiah 56:8

The “Other Sheep”

sheep. My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them everlasting life, and they will by no means ever be destroyed, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ...

[Jesus] went away again across the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and he stayed there. ... And many put faith in him there.⁷⁰

Jesus came only to minister to Israel

[Jesus] answered: “I was not sent to anyone except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”⁷¹

The “other sheep”, the “lost sheep”, were of the house of Israel.

⁷⁰ John 10:24-25, 26-28, 40, 42

⁷¹ Matt 15:24

The “Other Sheep”

Some of the Pharisees then began to say: “This is not a man from God” ... Others said: “How can a man who is a sinner perform signs of that sort?” So there was a division among them. (John 9:16, NWT 2103)

[Pharisees] said to him: “We know that this man is a sinner.” (John 9:24)

[Pharisees] scornfully told him: “We are disciples of Moses. ... As for this man, we do not know where he is from.” (John 9:28-29)

[Jesus said to the blind man that he had cured]: “Are you putting faith in the Son of man?”

The man answered: “And who is he, sir, so that I may put faith in him?”

Jesus said to him: “You have seen him, and in fact, he is the one speaking with you.” (John 9:35-37)

So Jesus said again: “Most truly I say to you, I am the door for the sheep.

All those who have come in place of me are thieves and plunderers; but the sheep have not listened to them.

I am the door; whoever enters through me will be saved, and that one will go in and out and find pasturage.

The thief does not come unless it is to steal and slay and destroy.

I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance. (John 10:7-10)

I am the fine shepherd; the fine shepherd surrenders his life in behalf of the sheep.

The hired man, who is not a shepherd and to whom the sheep do not belong, sees the wolf coming and abandons the sheep and flees—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them—

because he is a hired man and does not care for the sheep.

I am the fine shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me. (John 10:11-14)

Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I surrender my life in behalf of the sheep.

And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold;

those too I must bring in, and they will listen to my voice,

and they will become one flock, one shepherd.

This is why the Father loves me, because I surrender my life. (John 10:15-17)

A division again resulted among the Jews because of these words.

Many of them were saying: “He has a demon and is out of his mind. Why do you listen to him?”

Others said: “These are not the sayings of a demonized man. A demon cannot open blind people’s eyes, can it?” (John 10:19-21)

The context of “I have other sheep” at John 10:16

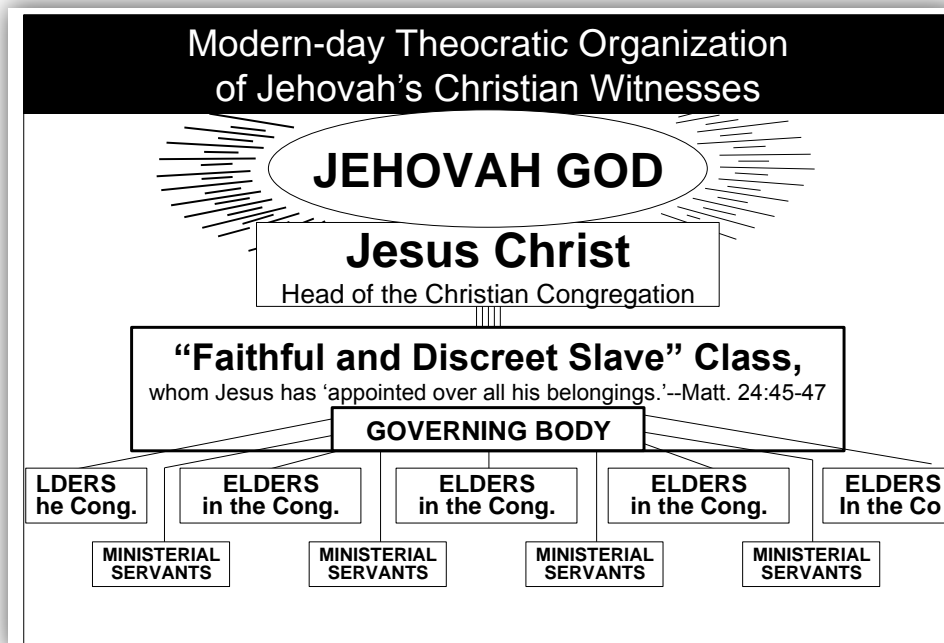
THE PILLARS KEEP BEING MOVED

The recent major change

The Watchtower of July 15, 2013 announced that the Governing Body [GB] alone was the “Faithful and Discreet” Slave [FDS] Class.

Who, then, is the faithful and discreet slave? ... That slave is made up of a *small group of anointed brothers who are directly involved in preparing and dispensing spiritual food during Christ’s presence.* Throughout the last days, the anointed brothers who make up the faithful slave have served together at headquarters. In recent decades, that slave has been closely identified with the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses. (article: “*Who Really Is the Faithful and Discreet Slave?*”)⁷²

Before that announcement, *all* of the anointed 144,000 were the FDS, with the Governing Body being its *representative.* During the days leading to the disastrous 1975 expectations, *The Watchtower* showed that the Governing Body was part of the Faithful and Discreet Slave.



The Watchtower December 15, 1971, page 749

Thus, prior to the 2013 announcement, *The Watchtower* consistently spoke of the Governing Body being part of the FDS class.

God’s visible earthly channel, “the faithful and discreet slave” and its Governing Body. ⁷³

Today a limited number of anointed men have the responsibility of representing the slave class. ..., not all individuals of the slave class have the same responsibilities or work assignments. (article: “*The Faithful Steward and Its Governing Body*”)⁷⁴

Detailed analyses of the changes made in the July 15, 2013 issue of *The Watchtower* are available at:

http://www.jwstudies.com/The_Truth_Changes.pdf

http://www.jwstudies.com/Adjustments_to_the_July_15_2013_Watchtower.pdf

⁷² *The Watchtower* 2013 July 15, page 22

⁷³ *The Watchtower* 2001 January 15, page 16

⁷⁴ *The Watchtower* 2009 June 15, page 24

The WTS's Ingathering of the "Anointed"

"Completed by 1935" (*The Watchtower* 2000 January 15)

It seems that by the year 1935, the general ingathering of the anointed was complete.⁷⁵

"Completion date not known" (*The Watchtower* 2007 May 1)

With this article *The Watchtower* makes a major change in doctrine. Up to this time the teaching was that in 1935 the door to heavenly life was closed. But now they do a complete turn around and start to teach that anointed ones continue to be chosen for an indefinite period of time after the supposed 1935 cut off. An interesting comment in this article is that the anointed don't have any "special" insights.⁷⁶

When does the calling of Christians to a heavenly hope cease?

The Bible does not reveal a precise answer to that question. We do know that the anointing of Jesus' disciples with a view to their heavenly inheritance began in 33 C.E. We also know that after the death of the apostles, genuine anointed Christian "wheat" came to "grow together" with counterfeit Christians, "weeds."

Then, starting in the late 1800's, anointed Christians were again prominently active. In 1919 "the harvest of the earth", including the gathering of the final ones of the anointed, began to be reaped.

From the late 1800's until 1931, the main thrust of the preaching work was the gathering of the remaining members of the body of Christ. In 1931 the Bible Students took the Bible-based name Jehovah's Witnesses, and in the November 15, 1933, issue of *The Watchtower*, the thought was expressed that this unique name was the "denarius" referred to in Jesus' parable recorded at Matthew 20:1-16. The 12 hours mentioned in the parable were thought to correspond to the 12 years from 1919 to 1931.

For many years after that, it was believed that the call to the heavenly Kingdom had ended in 1931 and that those called to be joint heirs with Christ in 1930 and 1931 were "the last" called. However, in 1966 an adjusted understanding of that parable was presented, and it became clear that it had nothing to do with the end of the calling of the anointed.

In 1935 the "great crowd" of Revelation 7:9-15 was understood to be made up of "other sheep," Christians with an earthly hope, who would appear on the world scene in "the last days" and who as a group would survive Armageddon. ...

Especially after 1966 it was believed that the heavenly call ceased in 1935. This seemed to be confirmed when almost all who were baptized after 1935 felt that they had the earthly hope. Thereafter, any called to the heavenly hope [after 1935] were believed to be replacements for anointed Christians who had proved unfaithful. ...

Some Christians baptized after 1935 have had witness borne to them that they have the heavenly hope. Thus, it appears that we cannot set a specific date for when the calling of Christians to the heavenly hope ends. ...

Genuine anointed Christians do not demand special attention. They do not believe that their being of the anointed gives them special "insights" beyond what even some experienced members of the great crowd may have. They do not believe that they necessarily have more holy spirit than their companions of the other sheep have. ...

Nor do they expect special treatment or claim that their partaking of the emblems places them above the appointed elders in the congregation. ... Some anointed men in

⁷⁵ *The Watchtower*, 2000 January 15, pages 16-17, "Desirable Things" Are Filling Jehovah's House"

⁷⁶ Comment provided by Sue Fointein, personal email, 13 February 2015

the first century did not qualify to serve as elders or ministerial servants. ... Some anointed Christians [in the first century] were even spiritually weak.

And sisters, although anointed, did not teach in the congregation.⁷⁷

“Resurrection began before 1935” (*The Watchtower* 2009 January 15)

The 24 elders represent the 144,000 in their heavenly glory, where they serve not only as kings but also as priests. They were pictured by the priests in ancient Israel, whom King David organized in 24 divisions. One of the elders reveals to John the identity of the great crowd. Therefore, the resurrection of anointed Christians must have begun sometime before 1935. Why? Because in that year the correct identity of the great crowd was made known to God’s anointed servants on earth.⁷⁸

“Resurrected ones Communicate divine truths to God’s anointed servants on earth” (*The Watchtower* 2007 January 1)

This is the first instance where *The Watchtower* makes this blatant assertion that the resurrected anointed have the power to communicate to those on the earth. No different than the Catholic Church that feels their saints can be of aid to the faithful.⁷⁹

¹¹ What, then, can we deduce from the fact that one of the 24 elders identifies the great crowd to John? It seems that resurrected ones of the 24-elders group may be involved in the communicating of divine truths today. Why is that important? Because the correct identity of the great crowd was revealed to God’s anointed servants on earth in 1935. If one of the 24 elders was used to convey that important truth, he would have had to be resurrected to heaven by 1935 at the latest. That would indicate that the first resurrection began sometime between 1914 and 1935. Can we be more precise?⁸⁰

⁷⁷ *The Watchtower*, 2007 May 1, pages 30-31, “Questions From Readers: When does the calling of Christians to a heavenly hope cease?”

⁷⁸ *The Watchtower* 2009 January 15, page 31, “Jehovah’s Word Is Alive: Highlights From the Book of Revelation—I”

⁷⁹ Comment provided by Sue Fointein, personal email, 13 February 2015

⁸⁰ *The Watchtower*, 2007 January 1, page 28, “‘The First Resurrection’—Now Under Way!”



Image: *The Watchtower*, 2006 July 15, page 4

For many years after [1931], it was believed that the call to the heavenly Kingdom had ended in 1931. ... After 1966 it was believed that the heavenly call ceased in 1935.

The Watchtower, 2007 May 1, page 30

It seems that by the year 1935, the general ingathering of the anointed was complete.

The Watchtower, 2000, January 15, page 15



Image: *The Watchtower*, 2006 July 15, page 4

When does the calling of Christians to a heavenly hope cease? The Bible does not reveal a precise answer

It appears that we cannot set a specific date for when the calling of Christians to the heavenly hope ends.

The Watchtower, 2007 May 1, pages 30-31

Recent explanations in *The Watchtower* of the “heavenly calling”

The WTS's position on their "Great Crowd"

In 1935, in Washington, D.C., Brother Rutherford identified the "great crowd," described in Revelation as "standing before the throne and before the Lamb".⁸¹

In [1935] the correct identity of the great crowd was **made known** to God's anointed servants on earth.⁸²

In 1935 the "great crowd" of Revelation 7:9-15 was understood to be made up of "other sheep", Christians with an earthly hope, who would appear on the world scene in "the last days" and who as a group would survive Armageddon.⁸³

The "Great Crowd"—Where Are They Going?

For a time Jehovah's servants believed that the great multitude (or, great crowd) of Revelation 7:9, 10 was different from the other sheep of John 10:16 and the sheep of Matthew 25:33. Because the Bible says that they are "standing before the throne," it was thought that they would be in heaven, not on thrones, ruling as joint heirs with Christ, but in a secondary place in front of the throne. They were viewed as less faithful Christians, ones who did not show a spirit of true self-sacrifice. In 1935 that view was corrected. ...

It was pointed out that God does not have two standards of faithfulness. All who would have his approval must maintain integrity to him.—Matthew 22:37, 38; Luke 16:10.

For many years Jehovah's people had talked about God's promises regarding the earth. Because of what they expected to occur back in the 1920's, they proclaimed that "Millions Now Living Will Never Die." ... Especially after 1935, however, a marked change took place.⁸⁴

⁸¹ *The Watchtower* 2012 September 15, page 29, "Jehovah Congregates His Joyful People"

⁸² *The Watchtower* 2009 January 15, page 31, "Jehovah's Word Is Alive: Highlights From the Book of Revelation—I"

⁸³ *The Watchtower* 2007 May 1, page 30, "Questions From Readers: When does the calling of Christians to a heavenly hope cease?"

⁸⁴ *The Watchtower* 1995 February 1, pages 13-14, "A Great Crowd of True Worshipers—From Where Have They Come?"

These recent explanations are inadequate

These recent explanations present only the WTS's most recent explanations. They omit the reality that the organisation's prominent President Charles Taze Russell taught an eschatology in which the "high calling" finished in 1881:

The "harvest" or end of this age was due to begin in October, 1874, and ... seven years later—in October, 1881—the "high calling" ceased.⁸⁵

Call to mind that the Scriptures showed us that the full end of Gentile power in the world, and of the time of trouble which brings its overthrow, will be in the end of A. D. 1914, and that some time before that date the last members of the Church of Christ will have been "changed," glorified. Remember, too, that the Scriptures proved to us in various ways—by the Jubilee Cycles, the 1335 days of Daniel, the Parallel Dispensations, etc.—that the "harvest" or end of this age was due to begin in October, 1874, and that the Great Reaper was then due to be present; that seven years later—in October, 1881—the "high calling" ceased, though some will be admitted to the same favors afterward, without a general call being made, to fill the places of some of the called ones who, on being tested, will be found unworthy.

Millennial Dawn, Volume III: Thy Kingdom Come, page 362 (1891)

⁸⁵ *Millennial Dawn, Volume III: Thy Kingdom Come, page 362 (1891)*

Russell held to this position:

We recognize A.D. 1881 as marking the close of the special favor to Gentiles—the close of the “high calling,” or invitation to the blessings peculiar to this age—to become joint-heirs with Christ and partakers of the divine nature.⁸⁶

of reaping the Jewish harvest. The Spring of A. D. 1878 (three and a half years after) corresponds to the date at which our Lord assumed the office of King, rode on the ass, cleansed the temple of its money-changers, and wept over and gave up to desolation that nominal church or kingdom; and it marks the date when the nominal church systems were “spewed out” (Rev. 3:16), and from which time (A. D. 1878) they are not the mouth-pieces of God, nor in any degree recognized by him. And the three and a half years following the Spring of A. D. 1878, which ended October, A. D. 1881, correspond to the three and a half years of continued favor to individual Jews in the last half of their seventieth week of favor. As in the type that date—three and a half years after the death of Christ—marked the end of all special favor to the Jew and the beginning of favor to the Gentiles, so we recognize A. D. 1881 as marking the close of the special favor to Gentiles—the close of the “high calling,” or invitation to the blessings peculiar to this age—to become joint-heirs with Christ and partakers of the divine nature. And, as we have seen, this marks a great movement among the Jewish people toward Christianity, known as the “Kishenev Movement.” And now trouble is impending over nominal Christendom, but the storm is stayed until the wheat is garnered, until God’s messengers seal his servants in their foreheads (intellects) with the truth.—Rev. 7:3.

Studies in the Scriptures, Series II: The Time is at Hand, page 235 (1911 and 1927 editions)

⁸⁶ *Studies in the Scriptures, Series II: The Time is at Hand, page 235 (1911 and 1927 editions)*

The pillars keep being moved

Later, the WTS moved the event to 1931:

God having a fixed time for every purpose (Ecclesiastes 3:1), his time to give creatures on earth the opportunity to get in line for a heavenly reward has been from A.D. 29 until, chiefly, 1931, called the “day of salvation”.⁸⁷

¹¹ God having a fixed time for every purpose (Ecclesiastes 3:1), his time to give creatures on earth the opportunity to get in line for a heavenly reward has been from A.D. 29 until, chiefly, 1931, called the “day of salvation”. (2 Corinthians 6:2) It began with Jesus at Jordan and is now rapidly passing away. During this time the heavenly hope was made known to all who consecrated themselves to God. But, since “flesh and blood cannot inherit

Let God be True, 1946 edition, page 298

When *Let God be True* was re-released 6 years later, the reference to “1931” was papered over, while “day of salvation” became “day for salvation”.

¹¹ God having fixed a time for every purpose, his time to give creatures on earth the opportunity to get in line for a heavenly reward has been from A.D. 29 onward and has been called the “day for salvation”. (2 Corinthians 6:2, NW) It began with Jesus at Jordan and is now rapidly nearing its end. During this time the heavenly hope was made known to those who dedicated themselves to God.

Let God be True, 1952 edition, page 298

However, the 1959 publication *Jehovah's Witnesses In The Divine Purpose*, again mentioned 1931:

Although Jehovah had come to his temple in 1918 and had begun judgment of this anointed class, still others must be brought in, because some were found unworthy and they must be replaced. The evidences show that this continued until especially 1931, when there began a work of gathering those recognized as “other sheep” of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ *Let God be True*, 1946 edition, page 298

⁸⁸ *Jehovah's Witnesses In The Divine Purpose*, page 139 (published 1959)

Meanwhile, another aspect of the preaching commission was developing. We have already discussed in some detail the service from 1874 to 1914 when a work of gathering Jehovah's anointed ones was under way. During the "sackcloth" period of witnessing, from 1914 to 1918, this work continued though with diminishing results. Then, when true worship was restored in 1919 and the New World society came into existence, the call still continued to those who would make up the Kingdom company of joint heirs with Christ. Although Jehovah had come to his temple in 1918 and had begun judgment of this anointed class, still others must be brought in, because some were found unworthy and they must be replaced. The evidences show that this continued until especially 1931, when there began a work of gathering those recognized as "other sheep" of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jehovah's Witnesses In The Divine Purpose, page 139 (published 1959)

Does this Tower have a solid foundation or is it built on soft shifting sand? Is it surprising that the trend continues?

The WTS's Bride of Christ

In the March 15, 2015 issue of *The Watchtower* magazine, the Parable of the Ten Virgins is said to refer to the “anointed followers”:

“Clearly, Jesus intended the parable recorded at Matthew 25:1-13 as counsel and a warning to his anointed followers. ... [Jesus] gave this parable to admonish all his anointed followers in the last days to ‘keep on the watch’.”⁸⁹

However, in the February 15, 2014 issue of the magazine, the “virgin companions” (source of the term not disclosed) of the “bride” are the millions of JW’s who are the “other sheep” class:

Since 1935, millions of people have allowed the remnant to ‘bring them to righteousness.’ These loyal companions of the anointed Christians have purified their lives, becoming spiritual virgins. These “virgin companions” of the bride have dedicated themselves to Jehovah and have proved themselves to be faithful subjects of the Bridegroom-King. The remnant of the bride class have been particularly grateful to these “virgin companions” for their zealous help in preaching.⁹⁰

Their “bride” is their 144,000, their “anointed followers”. In the 2015 article, the warning about the virgins is to the “anointed” (even though the anointed are the “bride”). But in the 2014 article, the “millions of JW’s” are the spiritual virgin companions of the bride.

The word “bride” appears 41 times in the article: **Rejoice Over the Marriage of the Lamb!**⁹¹

Read Psalm 45:10, 11. We have identified the Bridegroom, but who is his bride? She is a composite bride made up of the members of the congregation headed by Jesus Christ. (**Read Ephesians 5:23, 24.**) They will become a part of Christ’s Messianic Kingdom. (Luke 12:32) These 144,000 spirit-anointed Christians “keep following the Lamb no matter where he goes.” (Rev. 14:1-4) They become “the Lamb’s wife” and reside with him in his heavenly abode.—Rev. 21:9; John 14:2, 3.⁹²

At Revelation 21:2, the bride is compared to a city, New Jerusalem.⁹³

⁸⁹ *The Watchtower*, March 15, 2015, page 13

⁹⁰ *The Watchtower*, February 15, 2014, pages 11-12

⁹¹ *The Watchtower*, February 15, 2014

⁹² *The Watchtower*, February 15, 2014, page 9

⁹³ *The Watchtower*, February 15, 2014, page 9

SUMMARY

Marked in the forehead

The Sixth Seal is opened but 144,000 Israelites are protected from the wrath of God upon the earth because they have God's seal on their foreheads. (Rev. 5-7)

When the fifth angel blows his trumpet, locusts come out and authority is given to them to harm the people on earth who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (Rev. 9)

People on earth receive the Mark of the Wild Beast apart from 144,000 on Mount Zion who have the names of the Lamb and his Father marked on their foreheads. They are followers of the Lamb; male virgins; first fruits of all mankind; without deceit or blemish. This leads to the Final Judgment. (Rev. 13, 14)

The holy city, the New Jerusalem, descends to earth with the throne of God and the Lamb. The sea, sun, moon and night have gone and there is no need for a temple. God's slaves have his name on their foreheads. These words are faithful and true. (Rev. 21-22)

Before the throne of God



All the angels, the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures are before the throne. (Rev. 7:11)

John sees a great crowd that no one could number. Standing before the throne of God and the Lamb, they are dressed in white robes. They come from all nations, tribes, people and tongues, and they render sacred service day and night in God's temple. (Rev 7:9, 15, 19:1,6)

Dressed in white robes and with palm branches in their hands, they shout: "We owe our salvation to our God and to the Lamb." (Rev. 7:9-10)

These have come out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:14)

Seal: protects and authorises



Sealing symbolises divine protection. It protects 144,000 inhabitants from the wrath of God on earth; it protects people from the locusts on earth; it protects when the Beast's Mark is being enforced. (Rev. 6:17-7:4; 9:1-4; 13:16-17; 14:1, 9-11)

The terms sphragis and sphragizein refer to the impression of a seal in clay or wax. Seals could be attached to people. The term also represents the power and authority of its owner.

Paul uses "seal" to represent: evidence, proof, confirmation, guarantee, solid foundation, and God's ownership. (Rom. 4:11; 1 Cor. 9:2; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 4:30; 2 Tim. 2:19)

Jesus' sheep

Little flock

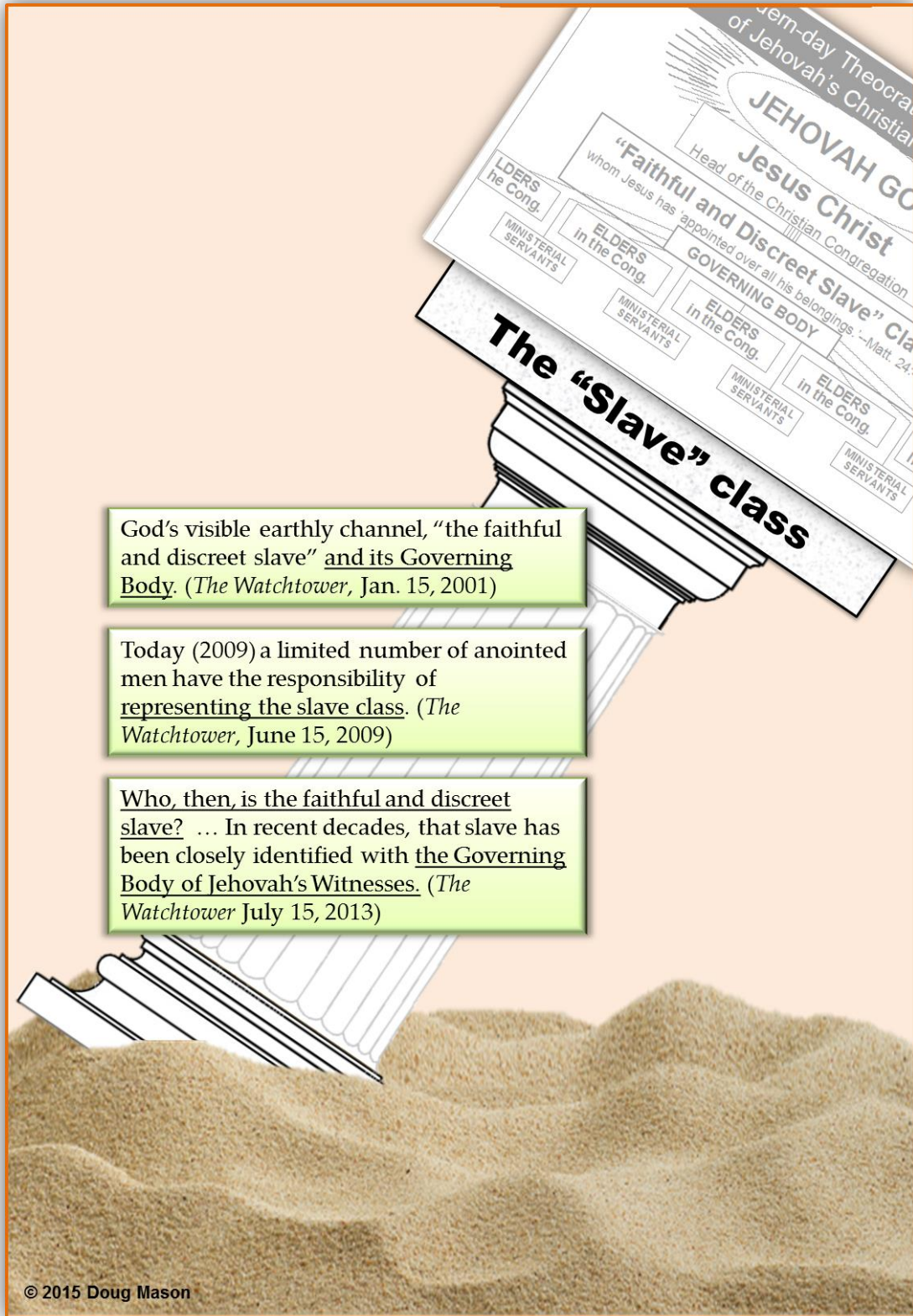
After teaching the crowd of the futility of chasing earthly wealth, Jesus turns to his small band of disciples. They must not be anxious, even though they are poor in terms of earthly possessions. Nature shows God's concern and care.

In contrast to the crowd, these few disciples are his close friends, his "little flock". The Father is delighted to give them the real treasure, the kingdom of God. (Luke 12:13-34)

Other sheep

Jesus is the true gateway and shepherd; the sheep belong to him. There are other sheep that also belong to him and he will create one flock. (John 10: 14-16) These words come from Jeremiah and Ezekiel. (Jer. 50:6, Jer. 23:1-4, Ezekiel 24:2-14)

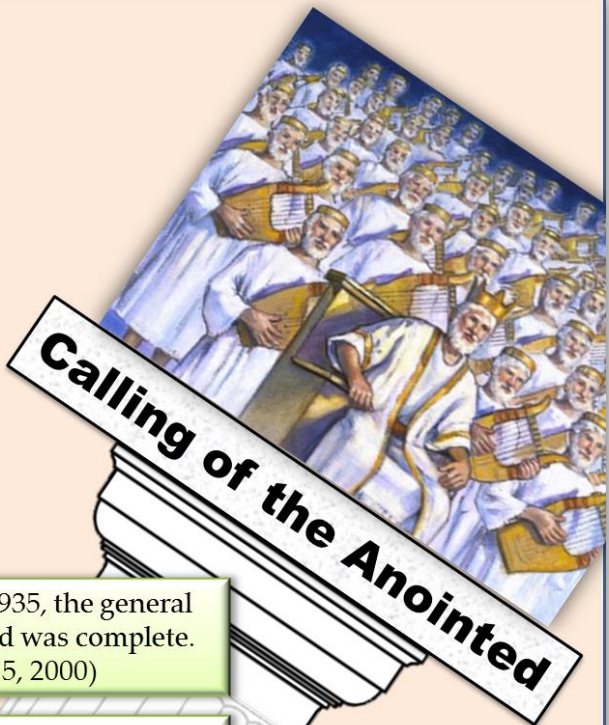
Jesus went across the Jordan where many put their faith in him. (John 10:24-25, 26-28, 40, 42)



God's visible earthly channel, "the faithful and discreet slave" and its Governing Body. (*The Watchtower*, Jan. 15, 2001)

Today (2009) a limited number of anointed men have the responsibility of representing the slave class. (*The Watchtower*, June 15, 2009)

Who, then, is the faithful and discreet slave? ... In recent decades, that slave has been closely identified with the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. (*The Watchtower* July 15, 2013)

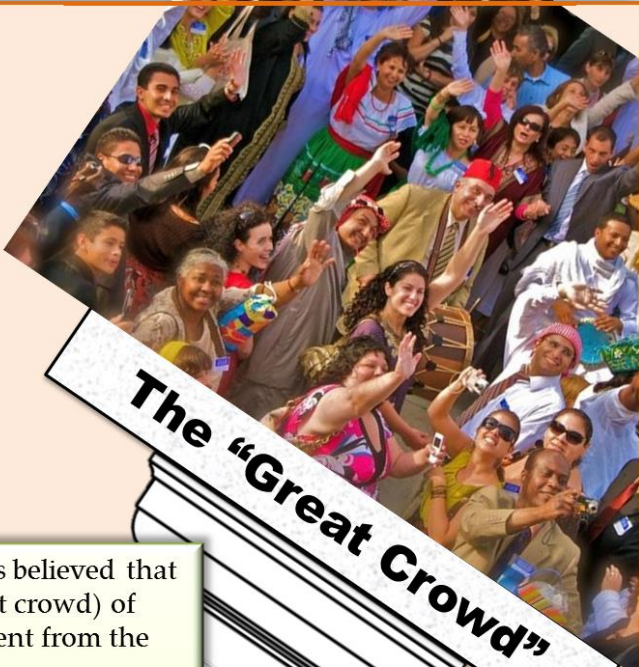


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It appears that we cannot set a specific date for when the calling of Christians to the heavenly hope ends. (*The Watchtower*, May 1, 2007)

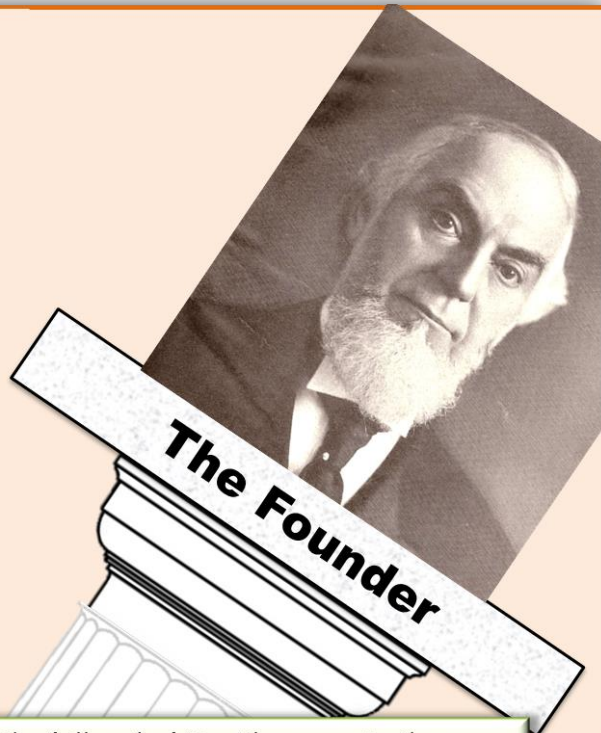


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Because the Bible says that they are "standing before the throne," it was thought that they would be in heaven ... ruling as joint heirs with Christ. ...

For many years Jehovah's people had talked about God's promises regarding the earth. Because of what they expected to occur back in the 1920's, they proclaimed that "Millions Now Living Will Never Die." ... Especially after 1935, however, a marked change took place. (*The Watchtower* February 1, 1995)



The Scriptures showed us that the full end of Gentile power in the world, and of the time of trouble ... will be in the end of A.D. 1914 and that some time before that date the last members of the Church of Christ will have been "changed", glorified. ... The "harvest" or end of this age was due to begin in October 1874, and ... seven years later—in October, 1881—the "high calling ceased". (*Millennial Dawn*, Volume 3, page 362, 1891)

The Spring of A.D. 1878 corresponds to the date at which our Lord assumed the office of King. ... It marks the date when the nominal church systems were "spewed out". ...

We recognize A.D. 1881 as marking the close of the special favor to the Gentiles—the close of the "high calling ... --to become joint-heirs with Christ and partakers of the divine nature. (*Studies in the Scriptures Series 2*, page 235, 1911 and 1927 editions)