

April 4, 2021

The Sunday View

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” — John 12:21

Welcome Visitors!

You are our honored guests and we are pleased that you have chosen to visit us today. Our goal is to do everything according to God's word, including respecting its silence. This is a church of Christ; we are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church and we have no earthly “headquarters.” The six elders oversee this work and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily aimed at our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don't understand something, please do not hesitate to ask one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God's word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

Please fill out a visitor's card and put it in the collection plate at the entrance. Thank You

Schedule

The Lord's Day Assemblies

Two assembly opportunities,
inside the building:

9:30 AM / 10:30 AM

Livestream at 10:30 at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLEmwy2iYxrl7ZUgTiZTVqA>

Speaking today: David Posey
Revelation 7

Young People's Classes Today

High School & Up: 5 PM

Contact David Posey for information at
(530) 558-5057

Middle School: 5 PM

Contact Dan Stegall for information
(818) 209-9810

Weekly Online Classes

Tuesday 10 AM (“Conformed to Christ”)

Check with David Posey at dpaulposey@mac.com
or text @ 530-558-5057

Wednesday 7 PM (Faith: Hebrews 11)

Check with Jack Horak: jshorak98@gmail.com

Saturday AM Men's Breakfast

7 AM, second Saturday of the month
Contact Tyler Wade @ tyler@ppldev.com

Additional Classes

There are some smaller classes in progress.
If you are interested in participating in any of them,
please contact David Posey

Information

Website & Online Presence

Visit our website at www.folsomchurch.com for updates and material on current and past classes, and recorded sermons and classes. You will also find a directory of churches on page one. If you are a member of the church here at Folsom, see one of the deacons or elders to inquire about access to the password -protected members section. Find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/folsomchurch>

Classes & Home Studies (Will resume soon)

We have classes for children from 18 months and up. Please see the map in the hallway or ask any of the members which room is appropriate for you and/or your child. There are several Bible studies in progress on Sunday afternoon and evening. Check with David Posey if you have questions.

Restrooms

There are two sets of restrooms: one off the first hallway to the right of the lobby and another at the end of the first hallway to the left. Ask anyone and they'll be happy to point you in the right direction.

For Small Children

There is a special room for nursing mothers and a separate “cry room” at the rear of the auditorium. You enter them from the first hallway to the right, across from the restrooms.

View & Junior View (Let us know if you don't get a copy)

Be sure to pick up a copy of the View and Junior View; both are sent out weekly to our member list and hard copies are printed on Sundays and available in the foyer.

Prayer Requests & News Items

Send to David Posey at dpaulposey@mac.com
or text at 530-558-5057

Who Are the 144,000?

BY DAVID POSEY

“And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel” (Revelation 7:4). I’m sure you are aware that the “Jehovah’s Witness” religious group (The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society) believes the 144,000 is a literal number. Basically, they teach that only that many get to go to heaven initially. Everyone else dies and is buried until certain things happen then they will be raised to live on “paradise earth” forever. That’s a cursory summary of their belief about the after-life but gives you the general idea. Our aim is to analyze their belief about that number 144,000.

The number is found only in Revelation 7:4 and 14:1, 3. There are no other references to it in the Old Testament or New Testament. Is it meant to be interpreted literally? If so, then are we to assume that 144,000 is the population of heaven (or paradise) right now? There are several reasons to reject this teaching:

1. If the number 144,000 is literal then, to be consistent, we must take the “tribes of the sons of Israel” literally. That would mean that only Jewish Christians are in heaven and only 144,000 at that. However, the list in Revelation 7 does not match up exactly with similar lists in Genesis 29-30 and Numbers 1. In Genesis and Numbers, Reuben, the oldest son, is listed first, as you would expect. In Revelation 7, Judah is first. Dan is missing from the Revelation list and while Joseph and Manasseh are mentioned, Ephraim is not. It’s difficult to determine why the names are listed this way. Homer Hailey says, “no discernible reason is disclosed for the arrangement of the names as they appear in this list” (*Commentary*, p. 205). I think it’s safe to say, however, that Judah is listed first because it is the tribe from which the Christ came. “Israel,” more than likely, refers to the church. Check out these texts: Romans 2:28-29; 9:6; Philippians 3:3. My view is that this list represents those in the church who are still on the earth when John received the Revelation. To sum up, 144,000 is symbolic, representing the total number of the redeemed on earth at any given time. The reference to the tribes is another way of describing “spiritual Israel.” This emphasizes the importance of reading the Old Testament accounts of Israel with an eye to the church, “the Israel of God.” Israel was supposed to be God’s special possession (Deuteronomy 7:6); they were supposed to be a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6, etc.). But they failed, as a nation, to live up to God’s high calling. It is the church that is now “the

Israel of God” (Galatians 6:15-16), doing what Israel didn’t do.

2. Another reason to reject the idea that the 144K is literal is because in 7:9ff. John sees a “great multitude” who are in heaven. So, 7:1-8 depicts those who are “sealed” (protected) while still on the earth (see 7:1-3) while 7:9-17 describes those who are in heaven, who have come out of the “great tribulation” (7:14). We also see a “great multitude” later on, in Revelation 19:1, 6; they are in heaven as well. There are more than 144,000 in heaven; you can be sure of that.
3. The Holy Spirit uses numbers in the Revelation figuratively rather than literally, almost always. Even in the “literal” section of Revelation 2 & 3, it’s likely that “seven” represents timeless messages to the churches throughout the ages, not just those seven churches. Of course, the number 12 figures prominently in the Bible (12 apostles, 12 tribes, etc.). 144,000 is 12 x 12,000. It probably means a large but limited number or something along that line.

Revelation 7 is a great chapter. It’s an interlude, a pause to help us catch our breath and brace ourselves for the wild ride to follow in chapters 8-19. Before the judgments set in, some of which will cause collateral damage to saints on earth, God strengthens his saints with two separate revelations: one is the assurance to the living that God cares about us and is protecting us, even if we are killed for our faith. The key for the living is to “be faithful unto death” (2:10) and not love our lives so much that we are afraid to die for Christ (12:11). God then lets us, through John, peek into heaven itself where there is all kinds of cool stuff going on and absolutely no reason for anxiety or sadness nor will we find ourselves ever desiring something we can’t have. It’s all right there, in heaven waiting for us. This will be the emphasis in sermon on Sunday.

Notes, Quotes & Anecdotes

A Word About “Easter”

Every Sunday — 52 weeks of the year — we gather to honor and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master. We appreciate that much of the world is celebrating that too, at least one day in each year. But, while I’m not averse to doing a sermon on the resurrection when this day rolls around, I won’t be doing that on this Sunday. I’m in the middle of a series on the book of Revelation and I’ll be preaching from it on Sunday. But there’s a connection.

In Revelation the resurrection is taken for granted but the emphasis is on the Lamb — Christ who died for us. Revelation uses “Lamb” to refer to Jesus far more than any other term. John sees a “Lamb as if it were slain” (5:6, 12). This is *Jesus* he is seeing and, clearly, he is not still slain — he’s alive, “the firstborn from the dead” (1:5). Later, we read of the blood of the Lamb (7:14; 12:11) and, again, the “Lamb that was slain” (13:8). While the resurrection takes center stage in much of the preaching of the gospel (I Corinthians 15:3-4 — and the entire chapter!) it is the death of Christ that is highlighted in the book of Revelation. Had the Lamb not been slain, there would have been no resurrection. In Revelation, it is the slain Lamb who “receives power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing” (5:12).

We don’t observe holidays (“holy days”) as such since they are not mentioned nor mandated in scripture. There is no biblical authority for them. But even some who *do* observe them say that Christmas and Easter get so much attention because they are “feel good” holidays whereas “Good Friday” is a dark day that no one wants to think about very much. “Babies and new life? *Yês!!*” “Death of an innocent man for the sins of the world? *Good, very glad he did it, but let’s move on.*” But Paul disagrees; he said in I Corinthians 2:2, “*For I have decided to know nothing among you except Jesus and him crucified.*” And this is specifically what we observe each first day of the week, “resurrection day,” we we take the Lord’s Supper.

Two Services

We are getting closer to “normal” (if we even know what that is anymore) as move from three services to two today. This is something we’ve wanted to do for awhile now and there are various reasons the elders feel we can do it now. One of those involves a reevaluation of the capacity restrictions in light of other factors in the guidelines. We noticed, in the latest edition, that there is quite a bit of language distinguishing “congregants” (those who sit in the pews during an assembly) and “staff” (those who have some part in the service: ushering, serving on security, engaging in some public duty, etc.). This is true for every business that is allowed to open, regardless of the capacity percentage. For example, grocery stores can open at 100% capacity but that does count employees — checkers, managers,

stock people, butchers, etc. This changes how we calculate the number of attendees in a given service. Even at two services, we are at, or very close, to the red tier capacity allowances when considering our average attendance and staff. We also expect to be in the orange very soon, if present trends continue.

Something to think on, debate or just go “hmmm...”

“Found Out”

THERE ARE TWO DIFFERENT WAYS of describing how you came to know something. One way is to say you *found it out*. The other way is to say *it occurred to you*. Reason is involved in both. To say you *found out* that so-and-so was the best friend you had suggests that you reasoned your way to such a conclusion. To say *it occurred to you* suggests that, although the conclusion was not reached by reason, it was not incompatible with it.

It occurred to you as distinct from *you found out* suggests knowledge given as distinct from knowledge earned. It suggests inner meaning as distinct from outer semblance. For example, I *found out* that Francis of Assisi gave all his money to the poor, called the sun his brother, and preached sermons to birds. But *it occurred to me* that he must be a saint. Or an idiot.

Revelation means knowledge as grace. Nobody has ever managed to *find out* much if anything about God.

Classic Buddhism is reasonable, *found out*, and doesn’t claim to be otherwise. In the Four Noble Truths, Buddha puts it in a nutshell. Like the family doctor, he diagnoses our ailment and prescribes a cure. He says (1) that the name of our ailment is life, which causes great pain because we know that it always falls to pieces in the end. He says (2) that if we didn’t like life so much, we wouldn’t mind having it fall to pieces in the end. Therefore, he says, (3) the way to get cured of the ailment is to stop clinging to life as though it were a prize instead of a fatal disease. Finally (4) he outlines eight steps for getting out of life and into Nirvana.

Christianity, on the other hand, is not primarily reasonable or something we have *found out* or worked out for ourselves. Christ came. He healed people. He forgave people their sins and said to love everybody including your enemy. He died in a peculiarly unpleasant way, forgiving his executioners. Christianity was born when *it occurred* to some of the ones who had known him that his kind of life was the only kind worth living, and that in some invisible way Christ was still around to help them live it.

Nobody figured Christianity out. It happened. That is what it means to call it a *revealed* religion — not incompatible with reason, if you give it some thought, but not arrived at primarily by reason either.

—Fred Buechner, originally published in *Wishful Thinking* and later in *Beyond Words*