

# REVELATION REVISITED

## The 144,000 Servants

In Revelation 7, John watches while 4 angels hold back the winds of strife until the 144,000 servants of God are sealed. Much debate has centered around the identity of the 144,000 over the years. Some churches have even stated that you had to belong to their church in order to be one of the 144,000.

In the Bible the 144,000 are defined as God's servants. Going along with our principle that the Bible provide its own meaning, we find the Bible defines the servants of God in two different ways:

- A. The Specific Case: A prophet chosen by God.
- B. The General Case: Anyone who will serve God.

One verse in the Bible actually uses both meanings of the word: "And you shall strike the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of My **servants the prophets**, and the blood of all the **servants** of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel." 2 Kings 9:7

When God needs a special message conveyed to His people, he often picks a person to convey that message for Him. We call these people prophets. God calls them His servants. The following is a printout of 24 texts in which the prophets are specifically referred to as "My servants" or "His (God's) servants". Interestingly, these texts are spread throughout the Bible, in both the Old and New Testament. (Quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible.)

And all Israel buried him and mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through His **servant** Ahijah the **prophet**. 1 Ki 14:18

Then it came about at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the **prophet** came near and said, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy **servant**, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. 1 Ki 18:36

'And you shall strike the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of My **servants the prophets**, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel. 2 Ki 9:7

He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His **servant** Jonah the son of Amittai, the **prophet**, who was of Gath-hepher. 2 Ki 14:25

Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah, through all His **prophets** and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My **servants** the **prophets**." 2 Ki 17:13

...until the LORD removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His **servants** the **prophets**. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day. 2 Ki 17:23

Now the LORD spoke through His **servants** the **prophets**, saying... 2 Ki 21:10

And the LORD sent against him bands of Chaldeans, bands of Arameans, bands of Moabites, and bands of Ammonites. So He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which He had spoken through His **servants** the **prophets**. 2 Ki 24:2

...which Thou hast commanded by Thy **servants** the **prophets**, saying, 'The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from end to end and with their impurity.' Ezra 9:11

"Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent you all My **servants** the **prophets**, daily rising early and sending them." Jer 7:25

"And the LORD has sent to you all His **servants** the **prophets** again and again, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear," Jer 25:4

"...to listen to the words of My **servants** the **prophets**, whom I have been sending to you again and again, but you have not listened;" Jer 26:5

'...because they have not listened to My words,' declares the LORD, 'which I sent to them again and again by My **servants** the **prophets**; but you did not listen,' declares the LORD. Jer 29:19

"Also I have sent to you all My **servants** the **prophets**, sending them again and again, saying: 'Turn now every man from his evil way, and amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to worship them, then you shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your forefathers; but you have not inclined your ear or listened to Me. Jer 35:15

"Yet I sent you all My **servants** the **prophets**, again and again, saying, "Oh, do not do this abominable thing which I hate." Jer 44:4

"Thus says the Lord GOD, "Are you the one of whom I spoke in former days through My **servants** the **prophets** of Israel, who prophesied in those days for many years that I would bring you against them? Ezek 38:17

"Moreover, we have not listened to Thy **servants** the **prophets**, who spoke in Thy name to our kings, our princes, our fathers, and all the people of the land." Dan 9:6

"...nor have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His **servants** the **prophets**." Dan 9:10

Surely the Lord GOD does nothing Unless He reveals His secret counsel To His **servants** the **prophets**. Amos 3:7

"But did not My words and My statutes, which I commanded My **servants** the **prophets**, overtake your fathers? Then they repented and said, 'As the LORD of hosts purposed to do to us in accordance with our ways and our deeds, so He has dealt with us.'" Zec1:6

...but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His **servants** the **prophets**. Rev 10:7

"And the nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy **bond-servants** the **prophets** and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth." Rev 11:18

And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the **prophets**, sent His angel to show to His **bond-servants** the things which must shortly take place. Rev 22:6

And he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow **servant** of yours and of your brethren the **prophets** and of those who heed the words of this book; worship God." Rev 22:9

In light of the above quotes, the following texts take on additional meaning:

Titus 1:1 "Paul, a **bond-servant** of God..."

James 1:1 "James, a **bond-servant** of God..."

2 Pet 1:1 "Simon Peter, a **bond-servant** and apostle of Jesus Christ..."

Jude 1:1 "Jude, a **bond-servant** of Jesus Christ..."

Rev 1:1 "The Revelation of Jesus Christ... to His **bond-servant** John."

Certainly these men had received a special prophetic calling by the Holy Spirit. No doubt they wore the title of "bond-servant" with honor.

In order to answer the question as to whether the 144,000 are prophets (the specific case) or are simply those who are willing to do God's will (the general case), we need to look at how the word is defined within the context of Revelation's story. Throughout the book, two groups of the righteous are mentioned - the servants and the saints, both groups being introduced in Chapter 7. That Revelation identifies the servants as prophets in four places, seems to resolve the question.

Another fact that supports the idea that the 144,000 are indeed prophets, is that the coming of the Messiah is always spoken of as being preceded by a prophet. The Old Testament

prophecies that stated this principle were clearly understood by the Jews of Jesus' time, who wanted to know if John the Baptist was Elijah (fulfilling Malachi 4:3) or "the Prophet" (fulfilling Deuteronomy 18:15). That John the Baptist was only a partial fulfillment of these prophecies is reflected in Jesus' statement in Matthew 17, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already." Here he pointed both to John the Baptist and to a future application, which I believe we will see fulfilled in our time in the ministry of the 144,000.

The **prophet** came before **Christ** at the first advent, and will at the second. It should not surprise us then to see that the **false prophet** comes before the **false Christ**, as well.