

## News & Notes

**Sunday, April 16, 2006**

**Remember in Prayer:** M. B. Anthony; Sandra Albertson; Michelle Bennett; Carrol Cherry; Diane Cox; Sally Etta Crawford; Lawrence Dawson; Tommy Dawson; Flora Estes; Marilyn Hubbard; Carolyn Jordan; Christine Judge; Dot Ketchum; James Luna; Deliah Mann; Linda Matheny; Diane Mize; Howard Moody; Janet Rooker; Freddie Shaw; Lillie Mae Shelby; Jayme and Trucilla Spence; Wayne Tapp; Calvin and Ollie Ursery; Alvie Williford;

**Pantry item** for the month of April is cleaning supplies.

There will be a **ladies' day** at the Estes Church of Christ this coming Saturday (April 22). Details are on the bulletin board.

There will be a **ladies' Bible class** on Monday, April 24, 2006 hosted by the Beech Hill congregation. Rannie Butler will be speaking. Dinner will be served.

Next week is our annual **Homecoming**. Lanis Lindsey will be the speaker. There will be a dinner and early afternoon service.

### Sermon In Preview:

AM: Faith

PM: Qualifications of Deacons (1Timothy 3:8-13)

### For the Record (April 9, 2005):

Attendance: 78    Contribution: \$1191.00    Budget: \$1352.00

### *The Ashland Church of Christ*

P. O. Box 25

Ashland, MS 38603-0025

[www.ashlandcoc.org](http://www.ashlandcoc.org)

[acoc@ashlandcoc.org](mailto:acoc@ashlandcoc.org)

#### Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM

Worship 10:30 AM

Worship 6:00 PM

#### Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 PM

#### Shepherds:

Barney King

Carrol Street



# ASHLAND ANNOUNCER

"I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14)

## Destructible Doctrines: Only 144,000 Saved

Jeremy Northrop

Some of our friends in the denominations like to advocate the idea that only 144,000 people are going to Heaven. There are even some books put out by some that state it is God's will that only 144,000 people will be saved in the day of judgment. There are two passages in the book of Revelation from which this idea is taken. The first is Revelation 7:4 where the Bible says, "And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed." The second is Revelation 14:1 which says, "Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads."

At first glance, these verses seem to indicate exactly such an idea. However, some verses in the Bible are hard to understand (1Peter 3:16). Some verses require a degree of study and reflection in order to properly comprehend them. A few principles need to be considered to help one understand these verses in Revelation. First, the Bible is divided into 66 different books from many genres of literature and must be interpreted differently based on the different forms of genre. A poem is not to be understood like a book of history. A close second to this idea is that any person approaching the Bible must be consistent in his or her interpretation of it. If part of one verse is literal, then most likely all of it is literal. If part is figurative, then unless there is overwhelming evidence to show otherwise, most likely all of it is figurative. Finally, any one verse

of the Bible must be consistent with any and all other verses of the Bible. When one attempts to show that only 144,000 people are going to Heaven and then turns to Revelation 7:4 and 14:1 to prove such, these three principles of biblical interpretation are being violated.

In Proverbs 26:4-5, the Bible says, “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes.” Many have turned to this passage attempting to show the Bible to be inconsistent. The bottom line is that to do such is to abuse and misuse the Bible in a way that it was never intended to be understood. When one looks to the book of Proverbs, he or she needs to understand that it is just that — proverbs. A proverb is a general rule not an infallible fact. Judgment must be exercised in any given situation. One can easily see that there would be time when it is indeed appropriate to answer a fool according to his folly. There are other times when it would not be appropriate to answer a fool according to his folly. The poetic genre must be considered in order to properly understand the passage. The book of Acts is not to be interpreted like the Song of Solomon.

Another example is found in Song of Solomon 6:5 where the Bible says, “Turn your eyes away from me, For they have overcome me. Your hair is like a flock of goats Going down from Gilead.” One in the current U. S. culture might not be too flattered to be told that her hair is like goats. Yet, the context of the Song of Solomon clearly shows this to be complementary. The point is that the Bible needs to be understood in its immediate context and overall context. Revelation is no different.

The book of Revelation is apocryphal or prophetic literature. John is revealing things which he sees in visions. For example, in Revelation 1:10, John says he was in the Spirit. He says the same thing in Revelation 4:2. Dreams and visions in the Bible are to be interpreted figuratively. In Genesis 31, Jacob was able to rise to a position of power because he was able to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams. He took the symbols of his dreams and told what they meant. Revelation is a book of symbols. Obviously, a symbol cannot represent itself, else it would not be a symbol. Thus, the various symbols of Revelation, including the symbolic number of 144,000, should not be taken literally.

Interestingly, those who advocate the idea that only 144,000 people will be saved based on Revelation 7:4 and 14:1 do not want to look at the rest of the verse literally. They do not want to say that this 144,000 saved individuals will come from “all the tribes of the children of Israel” as the verse also says. The reason they do not want to do this is because it would exclude anyone living this side of the cross. Also, they do not want to say that the 144,000 will be standing on a literal mountain called Zion or even by a literal lamb. The word ‘Lamb’ is used throughout the book of Revelation and refers to Jesus (Revelations 5:6, 7:9, 15:3). It is to be understood literally. Either Revelation 7:4 and 14:1 are to be taken entirely literally or they are to be taken entirely figuratively. One cannot not justifiably take part of the verses as literal and part of them as figurative and interpret them correctly.

Finally, the Bible in other places does not put salvation into a specific number or group. It places salvation upon obedience to the will of God. Jesus said,

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:18-20).

John said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Paul said God “...desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1Timothy 2:4). The key to going to Heaven is not becoming a part of a group like the 144,000 but rather by obeying the will of God.

Then what does John mean when he speaks of the 144,000 in the book of Revelation? Because of the context of the chapters the two verses are found in, and the nature of the book of Revelation being figurative and not literal, then it most likely refers to the saved of God. This would include those who were saved under the old law and under the New Testament. Both have been saved by the blood of Christ. Today, anyone can be saved by obedience to the will of God. This means that anyone living today can become part of that number.