

Called, Chosen, and Faithful

“These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”

—*Revelation 17:14,*
New American
Standard Bible

THE SYMBOLIC BEASTS

mentioned in various parts of the Bible represent the powers of evil which through the ages have been aligned against God’s plan centered in Christ Jesus, the “Lamb,” and those associated with him. Prior to the 17th chapter of Revelation these unholy beasts, each representing some aspect of Satan’s effort to destroy the promised seed, are usually shown to be victorious over the people of God. In the Book of Daniel, for example, it is said that one of these evil forms of government shall “wear out the saints of the most High.” (Dan. 7:25) See also Revelation 6:9,10; 11:7; 13:1-7.

However, beginning in the 17th chapter of Revelation the scene changes. Here, while certain of these evil forces “wage war against the Lamb,” as

noted in our opening text, the Lamb overcomes them, because he is “Lord of lords and King of kings.” The verse concludes by saying that those with the Lamb are “the called and chosen and faithful.” In other words, in this prophecy both the Lamb and his true followers who are with him are victorious over these beastly forces of evil.

It is significant to note that when the time comes for the saints to be able to fully overcome the forces of evil that endeavor to destroy them, and to be completely successful in this effort, they are with the Lamb. The Lamb overcomes those who wage war against him, and those who are with him share in that triumph over Satan’s evil forces. They are with the Lamb because they had been called of God, chosen of God, and faithful to the terms of their calling and choosing.

A similar sequence of statements is presented to us by the Apostle Peter. He urges Christians to be faithful and zealous in adding to their faith moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. (II Pet. 1:5-7, *NASB*) To this the apostle adds, “For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—vs. 8, *NASB*

Peter then reveals the ultimate goal of this effort toward righteousness in a Christian’s life when he says, “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” (vs. 10) The “calling” referred to here is the same as the calling spoken of in our theme Scripture. Likewise, Peter’s use of the word “election” is taken from the same root Greek word as the word

“chosen” recorded by John the Revelator. Our text concludes with the word “faithful”—thus the three requirements of Christians, to be called, chosen, and faithful. Peter suggests the same thought when he urges the brethren to “give diligence.” If we are giving full diligence, it means we are being faithful, and the great objective is to make our calling and election [choosing] sure, and to be among the called and chosen and faithful.

THE CALLING

What is this calling to which the Scriptures give such great emphasis? Paul states in Philippians 3:14, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” In Hebrews 3:1 the apostle speaks of the footstep followers of Christ as “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.”

From the above verses, we see that this calling referred to by Paul is “high” because it is a “heavenly” one. It is a calling which, if faithfully carried out, involves a transformation from earthly aims and ambitions, and an earthly home, to heavenly hopes and goals, and a promised heavenly home. It is a high calling also because those who attain to it will enjoy not only a heavenly home but also “glory and honor and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) They will be “joint-heirs” with Christ in his kingdom, which will be God’s instrument for blessing all the families of the earth.—Rom. 8:17; Gen. 12:3; 22:18

HOW CALLED

How does this high calling reach those for whom it is designed by God? How can they be sure that they are indeed called? Certainly, it is not a trumpet sounding in the sky, but rather, it reaches those for

whom it is intended through the Word of Truth—the Bible. The Bible, of course, is circulated throughout the earth. Yet, millions who read it do not understand this high calling. The reason is that their hearts are not attuned to the message of Truth which the Scriptures contain. On the other hand, those who are looking for God's leading in their lives, and are studying the Scriptures to ascertain what place the Heavenly Father has for them in his great design, are prepared to respond to the invitation involved in this high calling.

The hearts of these are willing to accept the conditions attached to the calling, of which Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1) Another condition of our high calling is that we are to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. The Master said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16:24) The way of the cross leads to death. It is a "narrow" way, a difficult way, one that tests the determination of all who undertake to walk in it. (Matt. 7:14) Its present reward includes suffering and trials. It is only at the end, upon being "faithful unto death," that this calling leads to the fruition of the Christian's hope of heavenly glory and joint heirship with Christ.—Rev. 2:10

CHOSEN

It is only after demonstrating to the Lord that we are willing to adhere to the terms of the high calling that we can be "chosen" for a position in this

lofty aspect of his great plan. The Apostle Peter wrote that such followers of Jesus are “elect [Greek: selected or chosen] according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience.” (I Pet. 1:2) Peter is not here supporting the theory of the arbitrary selection of some to be saved and all others of mankind to be eternally lost. He is, rather, writing from the same standpoint as Paul’s explanation found in Romans 8:28,29. We quote: “We know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them who are called according to his purpose. For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”—*American Standard Version*

Thus we see that when Peter speaks of being “elect according to the foreknowledge of God,” he is referring to the fact that God foreordained that all who would be chosen for exaltation in the kingdom of Christ must be conformed to the character image of his Son. That is why Peter emphasizes that if we are giving diligence to make our calling sure, we will be adding to our faith moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. As noted, it is only if we are diligent in this that we can truly make our election, or choosing, sure and become a part of the “little flock” to whom the Lord will give the kingdom.—Luke 12:32

FAITHFUL—THEN TO BLESS OTHERS

The Lord’s called, chosen, and faithful people not only participate with him in certain aspects of his

work in this life, but they are also to be with him in the kingdom work of blessing all the families of the earth. These are the ones referred to in Revelation 20:6, in which we see them living and reigning with Christ as priests and as kings. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: ... they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." This is the same resurrection as referred to by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 15:42-53. The purpose of that thousand-year reign is to uplift mankind from sin and death. (Isa. 35:5-10; Mic. 4:1-4; Rev. 21:1-5) What a glorious privilege this is to which all who are following the Lamb can look forward! We read concerning this rich blessing from our Father, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; ... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—Rev. 2:10

One of the basic promises concerning the work of blessing to be accomplished through the reign of Christ and his faithful church is the one made to Abraham that through his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. Paul said that Christ is the promised seed. (Gal. 3:16) To this the apostle adds, concerning faithful Christians, "If ye be Christ's [that is, belong to him], then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (vs. 29) What a wonderful heirship this is! Those called, chosen, and faithful will be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ in the outworking of the divine purpose to uplift humanity from sin and death, and to pour out blessings of peace, health, and life upon all who will receive them!

This great joy was set before Jesus, and it enabled him to endure the cross and despise the shame, and he is now “set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:2) It is a joy which will also enable us to endure the hardships and trials of the narrow way, that we too, called and chosen and faithful, may be exalted to glory, honor, and immortality, and live and reign with him for the blessing of all mankind. ■