

THE LAMB AND THE 144,000

Revelation 14:1-5

Revelation chapters 12 & 13 reveal the darkest time in human history. Satan (the dragon) cast down to earth will vent his rage against Israel through the Antichrist (beast out of the sea) and the False Prophet (beast out of the earth). Rising to world power, the Antichrist will crush mankind under the heel of his totalitarian regime. Freedom of conscience and freedom of religion will be persecuted under the False Prophet's campaign to replace all religions with the worship of the Antichrist. Dissent will not be tolerated. Those refusing to worship the image of the Antichrist will be executed. Those refusing to take the mark of the Antichrist will be denied access to basic necessities. Millions the world over will die. It will be the darkest, most brutal period in human history.

Against the dark backdrop of Revelation 13, Revelation chapter 14 shines a ray of hope. All will not be lost. The unholy trinity will not win. The Lamb will stand on Mt. Zion with His redeemed!

The vision given the Apostle John in Revelation 14:1-5 was given as a direct contrast to Revelation 13. The vision is of the future. It is a vision of the Millennial Kingdom. The purpose of this vision is to encourage believers that as terrible as the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation will be it will not last; Jesus and His saints will triumph.

As we read Revelation 14:1-5 keep in mind the dark days of the Antichrist's regime revealed in chapter 13.

Revelation 14:1-5 (ESV)

¹ Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. ² And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, ³ and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. ⁴ It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, ⁵ and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.

We were first introduced to this special group of Jewish men in Revelation 7 where it is revealed that at the beginning of the Tribulation, God will seal and send these Messianic Jews on a worldwide evangelistic campaign.

Revelation 7:1-4 (ESV)

¹ After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. ² Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, ³ saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." ⁴ And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

Myriads of people the world over will place their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation in response to the preaching of the 144,000.

Revelation 7:9-10, 14 (ESV)

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

¹⁴ ... "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Though the Tribulation will be the time of the world's greatest suffering it will also be the time of the world's greatest revival.

STANDING IN TRIUMPH (14:1)

Revelation 14:1 (ESV)

¹ *Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.*

John sees these 144,000 Jewish evangelists *standing* with Christ on Mount Zion. But where is this Mount Zion? There is a heavenly Mount Zion referred to in Hebrews 12:22-24 and there is the earthly Mount Zion which is the Temple Mount. Some scholars believe Christ and the 144,000 are standing on the heavenly Mount Zion, but I believe it is the earthly Mount Zion. Notice in verse 2 that John hears a sound “from heaven” (lit. “out of”) indicating that he, Jesus and the 144,000 are not *in* heaven. Second, this vision “fast forwards” from the scene described in Revelation 13 to this scene in the Millennial Kingdom. Because they are sealed by God, the 144,000 will live through the Tribulation and enter the Millennial Kingdom. Their presence with Jesus in the Millennial Kingdom standing on Mount Zion testifies to the Antichrist’s ultimate failure.

The Antichrist will fail to destroy the Jews. 144,000 *Jewish* men standing with Christ on Mount Zion in Jerusalem testifies to the Antichrist’s failure. Additionally, as *firstfruits* (v.4) the 144,000 are not the sum total of Jews who will survive the Tribulation. The Jewish Remnant provided for in the wilderness (12:6,14) will come to faith in Jesus as Messiah, survive the Tribulation and enter the Millennial Kingdom (Zech. 12:10-13:1; Rom. 11:26-27).

The Antichrist will fail to destroy the followers of Jesus. The 144,000 are Messianic Jews; they are the ones *who follow the Lamb wherever he goes* (v. 4). Through the evangelistic work of the 144,000 many Jews and Gentiles will be saved during the Tribulation. As *firstfruits* the 144,000 may also represent the many Gentile believers who will survive the Tribulation to enter the Millennial Kingdom (the sheep of the *Sheep & Goats Judgment*, Matt. 25:31-46).

The Antichrist will fail to dethrone the Lord Jesus Christ. For 3 ½ years (1290 days to be exact) an image of the Antichrist will stand on Mount Zion worshipped by those bearing the Antichrist’s mark. But in the end it will be Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God and those bearing His mark who will stand on Mount Zion; not for 3 ½ years, but for a thousand. To bear the mark of Antichrist is death; to bear the mark of Christ is life.

Revelation 14:1-5 is an “anticipatory vision” jumping ahead to the Millennial Kingdom. It is given to encourage the saints that the Antichrist’s brutal reign will end in failure.

Not only did John see the 144,000 standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion, he heard them singing.

SINGING IN PRAISE (14:2-3)

Revelation 14:2-3 (ESV)

² *And I heard a ~~voice~~ sound from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The ~~voice~~ sound I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.* ³ *And they (the 144,000) were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.*

Not only are the 144,000 standing, but they are also *singing*. John hears a sound from heaven and tries to describe it; it sounds like roaring water, like loud thunder and finally like harpists playing their harps. The unfortunate translation of verse 3 in the ESV makes it appear that the “harpists” are the ones singing. Actually a new sentence begins at verse 3 and *they* refers back to the 144,000. Because of the experiences they had evangelizing and persevering persecution, during the Tribulation, they have a new song to sing that others cannot share. It is reserved for these who have come through and triumphed with the Lamb. The 144,000 will be accompanied by the music of heaven as they lift their song of praise and worship to the throne room of God the Father. The sorrow and grief of the Tribulation will be transformed to glorious singing in the Millennium.

In some small way we can relate to the new song of the 144,000. There are songs that can only be sung heartfelt by the redeemed. Songs about the cross and the blood of Christ and His love for us mean so much to born again Christians but mean nothing to unbelievers. True believers never tire of singing

songs of praise and thanksgiving to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ. May we always sing with heartfelt praise and worship to our God and our Savior!

The 144,000 were able to sing a new song because they had been saved and separated out in service to the Christ.

SEPARATED FOR SERVICE (14:4-5)

Revelation 14:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ *It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb,⁵ and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.*

The 144,000 did not belong to the earth because they had been redeemed *out of* the earth. The term *redeemed* means to be bought. Jesus paid the penalty of our sin when He died in our place on the cross. 1 Corinthians 6:20 reminds us

1 Corinthians 6:20 (ESV)

²⁰ *for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

We have purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ; our lives are no longer our own. Like the 144,000 we should not be living for the things of this world; we should be living to serve Christ – following Him wherever He leads us. Yes, we live *in* the world, but we need not live *for* the world.

1 John 2:15-17 (ESV)

¹⁵ *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* ¹⁶ *For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.* ¹⁷ *And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

Verse 4 describes these men as having *not defiled themselves with women*. This phrase does not imply that sex within marriage is evil, because it is not (Heb. 13:4). It merely indicates that these 144,000 Jewish men were unmarried. This is further emphasized by the fact that they are *virgins*. These men remain celibate during the Tribulation in order to dedicate themselves wholly to the Lord and to the work of evangelism. The Apostle Paul encouraged Christians with the gift of celibacy to remain unmarried so that they could dedicate their lives single minded to serving the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:32-34 (ESV)

³² *I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord.* ³³ *But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife,* ³⁴ *and his interests are divided.*

Celibacy is a spiritual gift bestowed by the Holy Spirit. Undoubtedly there are men and women in our congregation who have the gift of celibacy, that is, they have never been married and are content to live unmarried and to serve the Lord. We should celebrate our brothers and sisters who have this gift and support them in their desire to serve the Lord.

Finally, the 144,000 are described as those who do not lie, but are blameless. What a contrast this is to the Antichrist, the False Prophet and those who follow them. The entire regime of the Antichrist will be built on lies and deception. But God's servants do not need to resort to lies and deception to accomplish God's work; the ministry of God's servants is accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit working through the human servant.

Like the 144,000 we should be a people who do not lie in an attempt to accomplish the work of God. Lying belies a lack of faith; it is an attempt to accomplish something in our own strength rather than relying upon the power of the Spirit. Lying dishonors Christ; great damage is done to the credibility of Christianity when professing Christians are found guilty of lying. Let us not give way to any temptation to lie, but rather let us be found blameless in our service to Christ.

In the midst of revealing the darkest days of the Antichrist, God encourages us with a glimpse of the future – a bright future in the Kingdom of the Lamb where the Antichrist will be no more.