

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #32
4/04/2007

The Judgment of God, The Great Tribulation, The Great Day of God's Wrath
Chapter Fourteen - An Interlude

1. The Lamb on Mt. Zion With the 144,000 Saints
2. The Everlasting Gospel
3. Pronouncement of Judgment on Babylon and Those Who Receive the Mark of the Beast
4. Praise for Those Who Die In the Lord
5. Preview of Armageddon

In Chapter thirteen, we saw the horrible things that happen on this earth when Satan and Anti-Christ are allowed to have their way. However, whatever victories they may have enjoyed are temporary as we shall see in Chapter fourteen. After describing the horrific events in that chapter, God hastily moves to a more glorious and happy scene.

As Chapter fourteen opens before us, we realize that God's purpose here is to give us hope and an expectation of victory after describing the awful scenes of the previous Chapter. **He describes five events picturing the end of the Tribulation Period and immediately thereafter that provide a great deal of encouragement for God's children.**

Revelation 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

In the first event God moves past the Tribulation Period to the Millennial Kingdom and shows us the Lamb standing on Mount Zion accompanied by His 144,000 servants.

These were the servants God had **sealed, sphragizo** (4972), in the first days of the **Tribulation Period** (Rev. 7:3-8). They had been **sealed in their foreheads**, given this mark of God's ownership and protection, **which was His Father's name**, so that they would be set apart from the rest of mankind and protected from Satan's efforts to kill them. These servants would survive the horrible seven years of the **Tribulation Period**, entering the **Millennial Kingdom** in their natural bodies. They would thus form a population base for inhabiting the Millennial Kingdom here on earth.

Since God had placed this seal in their foreheads, it seems that God may now be contrasting these 144,000 with those **who received the mark of the beast in their right hands or in their foreheads** (13:16-17), and what a contrast it is! The people who received the mark of the beast temporarily avoided inconvenience and perhaps starvation by worshipping and serving Satan. That was the only benefit they would receive from being so marked for their mark would also make them the recipients of God's judgment, as we shall see in this Chapter. Those who received God's mark may have suffered greatly, but they survive to enter God's Kingdom on earth.

Some Bible scholars interpret this scene as being in heaven, but they are wrong for two reasons. **First**, there is no mention to these 144,000 being killed because Satan could not kill them. Therefore, they are still in their earthly bodies.

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Second, the expression, "**Mount Zion**," "**God's holy hill of Zion**" in Jerusalem (Psalm 2:6), "**the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem**" (Hebrews 12:22) is consistently used to refer to the city of Jerusalem here on the earth, and not to heaven. These 144,000, victorious over all of the attacks of the enemy during the Tribulation Period, are now seen by John with their Lord, standing on the holy hill Zion in the new Jerusalem in the Millennial Kingdom here on the earth.

Having described what he saw as a spectator, John next hears an awesome sound from heaven which God added to the scene on the earth.

Revelation 14:2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

What John experiences has never taken place before and is almost beyond his and our ability to comprehend. Added to the glorious sight before his eyes is **a voice** or sound from heaven.

This "**voice**," **phone** (5456), is frequently associated with trumpets and is always an overwhelming sound, often accompanied with lightnings, thunderings, earthquakes and hail. The first time we encountered this **voice** was when John heard "**the voice of the Lord Jesus**" in 1:10 and described it as "**the sound of thunder**." Then, in 1:15 he described it as "**the sound of many waters**." At the praise service (19:6) which will follow God's judgment upon Babylon John once again will describe this same "**voice**" as "**the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth**."

Such a sound always denotes the "**voice of God**" with characteristics unlike any other "**voice**." This time "**the voice**" sounds like **great thunder** and is joined by "**the voice of harpers harping with their harps**."

Revelation 14:3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

In conjunction with "**the voices from heaven**" John also hears "**a new song**" being sung by the victorious 144,000 on the earth. Never before has such a thing taken place where voices from the earth, joined with voices from heaven, serenaded praises before the throne of God in heaven. Remember that this is a picture of the Millennial Kingdom of God here on earth. All things will be different then and things more glorious than can be imagined here will be the norm there.

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The **“new song”** being sung by the 144,000 had never been heard before nor could it have been. Only this group of **“one hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth”** could sing the words of this song because it tells of their experience with God during the terrible **Tribulation Period**. God emphasized this when He chose the word for **“learn,”** which specifically means *“to learn the meaning of something fully by experience.”* Having personally experienced the amazing protection of the Lord during the frantic efforts by Satan during the **Tribulation Period** to persecute and destroy them, only they could comprehend and express the appropriate words of appreciation and praise to God.

Their **“new song”** is a wonderful personal testimony to God's sovereign grace. Perhaps one of the reasons God did not allow John to write any of the words was that God did not want its meaning diluted by being sung by people who had no personal experiential knowledge of its message. This has surely been the case with the beloved hymn **“Amazing Grace.”** John Newton could write those words with great understanding, but many today have diluted the rich meaning of the words because they have made it a part of pop culture rather than a personal testimony of the work of God's grace in their lives. For the song to be presented by those who know nothing of the saving grace of God must surely strip the words of their meaning. Obviously that will not happen with this **“new song.”**

Revelation 14:4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

Revelation 14:5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

God then presented five distinguishing marks of their character which apparently set them apart from the rest of mankind.

The first distinguishing mark — “These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.” Various scholars have held different views as to the meaning of these words. As Dr. J. Vernon McGee points out, this phrase can be interpreted either figuratively or literally.

If interpreted figuratively, the statement would mean that these had not committed adultery in the spiritual sense. From a Jewish viewpoint this was a common way God described the unfaithfulness of His people in the Old Testament. Such references saturate the Book of Jeremiah. Ezekiel devotes

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the entire sixteenth Chapter to this theme. Thus, it would not be strange if this should be the meaning of this statement. This would emphasize the faithfulness to Jehovah God in spite of the many seductions and compromises offered by Satan and his culture.

There is also a strong argument for understanding this expression in a literal sense. As we approach the end times, we are already seeing that sex saturates almost everything. It is used in the commercial world of advertising to entice people to buy a wide range of products. Sexual sin, the compromise of the sanctity of marriage, and the acceptance of adultery as a way of life has become "the accepted norm in our society" rather than the exception. The "**allure of sex**" is even used by some churches to attract people to their meetings. All of this is a result of the acceptance of Satan's standards in the place of those set forth by God. Such conditions will surely intensify and worsen during the **Tribulation Period** when the restraining influence of the true followers of Christ is no longer felt in the world (2 Thessalonians 2:7). It will be the most sexually dominated time in the history of the world.

In addition to this, we know that during certain times of perversion and almost total degradation that God forbade some of His servants not to marry and have children. Jeremiah is a good example of this. In Jeremiah 16:2-4 God told Jeremiah not to marry and have children. There were two reasons. **First**, Jeremiah's role as God's spokesman during this time of sin and judgment would have made it impossible for him to have a normal family life. **Second**, sons and daughters born during this time would "*die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth... .*"

While interpreting this in the figurative sense does have some support in the Scripture, it appears that the case for interpreting this in the literal sense is stronger. As bad as it was in Jeremiah's day, the time during which these 144,000 servants of God live will be many times worse. All the sordid conditions of sin that were present at the time of Jeremiah will be present during the Tribulation Period, in addition to many more. Therefore, it is best to interpret this statement in the literal sense.

The second distinguishing mark — "**These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth**" expresses a very important truth that was vital to their witness, their effectiveness, and their survival during their ministry. The Greek word God chose for "**follow,**" **akoloutho** (190), is rich in both its meaning and usage.

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To **“follow”** Jesus means to have an exclusive relationship with Him that takes priority over everything else (Matthew 4:20; 8:19-22; 19:21,27). It means to **“die to self and take up one's cross and follow Jesus”** (Matthew 16:24). It means such a total submission to the Lordship of Jesus that His character is reproduced in the disciple to the extent that the world persecutes the disciple as it had his Lord (John 15:18-20). Therefore, the sufferings of the Lord reproduced in the disciple are considered to be normal and expected (Colossians 1:24-25; 1Peter 4:12-13). **Such a life would have starkly contrasted each of these 144,000 with the others living during the Tribulation Period who lived to serve Satan and Anti-Christ.**

The third distinguishing mark — “These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.” This mark has a unique reference to the nation of Israel which will occupy a very special role in the Millennial Kingdom. In Romans 11:15-16 we read **“For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.”** **“Firstfruits”** is a term God frequently used in the Old Testament to refer to the descendants of Jacob. These 144,000 Jews will be the **“firstfruits”** of those descendants to enter the Millennial Kingdom. When The Lamb, Jesus Christ, the Jews' Messiah, died on the cross He redeemed them from the ownership of Satan, purchasing them for Himself. Paul applied this truth in a beautiful and clear statement when he wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:20 **“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”** These 144,000 exemplified and applied that truth under the most trying of circumstances.

The fourth distinguishing mark — “And in their mouth was found no guile” certainly sets them apart from the deceitful practices and atmosphere imposed upon all men during the Tribulation Period. They didn't participate nor fall for any of the big lies perpetrated by Satan. They were not vulnerable to the deceitful seductions of Satan because **“no guile,”** no deceit could be found in them (James 1:14).

The fifth distinguishing mark — “for they are without fault before the throne of God.” Their Lord has imparted His nature into them and they reflect His purity and are clothed in His righteousness (1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 Corinthians 6:11). Like all other sinners saved by grace, their own **“righteousnesses would be as filthy rags”** (Isaiah 64:6) and not qualify them to be before the throne of God