

THE ANGEL AND THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

14 Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred *and* forty-four thousand, having^[b] His Father's name written on their foreheads. ²And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. ³They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred *and* forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. ⁴These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed^[c] from *among* men, *being* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. ⁵And in their mouth was found no deceit,^[d] for they are without fault before the throne of God.^[e]

⁶Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people— ⁷saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

⁸And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon^[f] is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

⁹Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

¹²Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those^[g] who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

¹³Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed *are* the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'"

"Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

As we begin this weeks on our survey of the Book of Revelation I want to mention a couple of things from our last message and bring us up to speed.

There was a question asked during the Q&A afterward. The question had to do verse 15 of chapter 13 which reads:

He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

This verse has led to no end of prophetic speculation by many of our "end times prognosticators." Again, I think the key to understanding many of the so called difficult passages in the text is using the Bible to interpret the Bible. The text speaks of this "false prophet" giving breath to the image of the beast. This should take us back to Genesis, where God makes man in His image and he breathes the breath of life into him. Here, the beast, which is in the immediate context of this text represented by Rome has the leadership of the Jews giving it authority that only properly belongs to God.

Where she was to properly speak on behalf of God, she is now speaking on behalf of her true master which is Rome. Again I point to their words, "We have no king but Caesar." Israel had often asked to be like other nations, and now, they have become just like them.

Chapter 13 of the Book ends on a somewhat negative note. We see the beast empowered, in large part by the very people who should of known better, and we see the beast exerting its influence over all of the people of the land. But in Chapter 14 John looks and he sees "the Lamb."

I pointed this out two weeks ago and I believe it bears repeating. One of the biggest problems with the modern end times madness is that it takes our focus away from the victorious gospel and

instead focuses it on supposed, shadowy and sinister figures that somehow cause us to take our focus off of the key figure in this Book. The conquering and overcoming Lord. The Lamb who we saw earlier on the throne and here He stands atop Mt. Zion. Ask 100 Christians what the Book of Revelation is about and 95 will probably jump into near hysterics about, the anti-Christ, the beast, and of course they will try to throw in the black helicopters and the New World Order as well.

Never forget this Book is the Revelation of Jesus Christ. It is not about "the anti-Christ." It is not about "the mark of the beast." The Book is not about all these things that distract us, it is about the victorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The lamb is seen and He is standing upon Mt. Zion. Mountains in the Bible are a very important Biblical image. The reference to Mt. Zion is speaking of a very specific mountain but let me speak about generally mountain imagery for a minute.

God's Holy mountain sanctuary is first mentioned in the very first chapters of the Bible. The Great River of Eden fed the four great rivers of the Edenic World. Eden sat on the top of a mountain. Ezekiel 28:13-14 a passage that most believe is speaking about Lucifer we read:

You were in Eden, the garden of God;
Every precious stone *was* your covering:
The sardius, topaz, and diamond,
Beryl, onyx, and jasper,
Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold.
The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes
Was prepared for you on the day you were created.

¹⁴"You *were* the anointed cherub who covers;
I established you;

You were on the holy mountain of God;

You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.

Many of the redemptive acts in the Old Testament were "coincidentally" upon Mountain Tops. There is the offering of Isaac at Moriah, there is of course Mount Sinai. There are many others that we do not have the time to go into, but I would also like to point out the prophecy from the book of Daniel 2 which I have often referenced in this series that mentions the stone formed without hands that smashes the great image representing all of the reigning kingdoms of the world. The stone then becomes a great mountain that overcomes the entire world. Jesus preached his famous sermon on the mount, and then there is the Olivet discourse which took place on the Mount of Olives, and then of course it was on a mountain that our Lord was crucified. And he finally ascended to heaven from a mountain.

But and this is very interesting this mountain that the Lamb is standing on is a very specific mountain. Mount Zion is mentioned Seven times in the New Testament. Mount Zion to my understanding is really nothing much more than a hill, its total elevation is only just a little more over 2500 feet. It's actual height is listed as being lower in elevation than the City of Jerusalem. The physical location of Zion is just outside the walls of the Old City. The mountain is one of the most well known mountains in the world, but not because of its height or because of its danger, but because of its significance. It is also known as the temple mount but it is also often used as a reference to the entire land of Israel.

One of the things we need to know though is that Zion is something that we should gain our understanding about from the Bible. Zion is mentioned seven times in the New Testament and from looking at the references to this mountain we see that it is specifically a symbol of God's special presence with His people. In this reference here in Revelation 14 we see the lamb standing atop the mountain signifying his conquest of all of his prior enemies, but the lamb is not alone. The ones who are with him are the One Hundred Forty-Four Thousand.

We spoke about these all the way back in Chapter 7. At that time we discussed that the 144,000 were the first fruits of the great harvest. They are the remnant of Israel that is spoken of in Revelation chapter 11 where we read *"Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace."*

Who the 144,000 are is a topic that is very often discussed and I would argue discussed poorly. There are many groups who spend a lot of time trying to identify exactly who they are. One group that claims to be Christian even has written down the names of who these individuals are. Not coincidentally they tended to be people who had contributed financially and in other ways to that group.

But who they are is not something that is meant to be entirely mysterious. They are meant to be viewed as the opposite of those mentioned in the previous chapter who are marked on their hands and foreheads by the "Beast," and this is emphasized by their description as those who have the *"name of the lamb and His Father written on their forehead."*

Our text today describes more about who these are later in the passage. I am going to tell you in advance that they are "Church of Jesus Christ."

These 144,000 are protected by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ from the wrath that is being poured out upon the land. Let me point something out that is important, the number 144,000 is not meant to be an exact literal number. Reading it that way has led many people over the years to view this number as a comparatively small number, but this number is meant to represent the completion of the election of God. They are 12, representing the tribes of Israel, 12 Squared, and this number is multiplied by 1,000 indicating the extent of the number. One Thousand is a number that is often used in the Bible to indicate a

vast number. Trust me, this is important because we are going to run into the number 1,000 a few more times.

As we mentioned in Revelation 7, Israel is being prepared to be utterly destroyed, and yet we have these 144,000 who are going to be sealed and protected by God. IN the first verse there are four mighty angels who are holding back the Four winds of the earth. IN the second verse there is another mighty angel who commands the four, and HE is described as rising from the East. More literally He is rising with the son, and HE is the one who is in charge. The mighty angel tells them not to harm anyone until God has sealed these 144,000 who are His.

We are now seeing the ones who are sealed and they are standing with the lamb.

And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. ³ They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred *and* forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

The victorious and conquering lamb and those who are with Him have been taught a new song. What is this song? Well, you who are here, who participate in the worship of the lamb of God, the members of the Church of Jesus Christ participate in the singing of this song whenever we participate in the Christian liturgical worship. Those who are sealed by Christ are given a special privilege of Worship and their worship is a combination of thanksgiving, praise, and communion with Christ.

The next section of the Book introduces a "Great Angel." Before the chapter ends we will be introduced to two more angels. Each of these angels has a specific message they are going to deliver.

It begins:

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—⁷ saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

This angel carries the everlasting or the eternal gospel. This Angel carries Good News. This Angel carries peace. And one of the great glories of this message is that it is good news to all people. Now, I have just said that this message was a message of peace to all people, but the text does not word it quite the same way. The text uses a specific way to mention this.

to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.

This is a phrase that we repeat, sometimes in a modified form, every Lord's day. We usually do this during our time of absolution immediately after the confession of sin.

It reads something like this:

And not only that, you are now in Christ and in Him you are in the heavenly places, in the very midst of the blessed Trinity with the Saints of all the ages, from every tongue, tribe and nation prepared to worship in the beauty of holiness. Come, let us worship the Lord!

When I was a boy I would attend Church every Sunday. As you all know, I grew up in a Pastor's home. But you see, I also had a grandpa, and a great grandpa that were pastor's as well. Going further, I had uncles, and cousins, who also were pastors of churches. It was almost like it was the family business. Some have even said it is. But from a young age there was something that I noticed that we did in every service we ever had. As the service ended, and the service always ended in those days with the sermon, the music would start playing and Dad, Grandpa, or whoever else was preaching would give an altar call.

Many of you know the drill I am talking about. In that moment, every head had to be bowed, and every eye had to be closed, and if you were going to accept Jesus Christ you would raise your hand or you would go forward for prayer. It did not matter what the sermon was about, it seemed that there always had to be this spot in the message. You could almost call it liturgical.

I remember talking to Pastor Stoos a few years ago about this, and I put it this way. "We had an altar call every service." And John looked at me and said, "we do as well, we just put it at the time of confession where it belongs." That conversation has stuck with me. My Great Grandfather, Pappy Dad, that's what I called him, would say you had not had church unless you had an altar call.

This Angel proclaims and carries the proclamation of the eternal Gospel.

What is the Gospel?

One of the discussions that will often cause a fight amongst Christians is the question of "What is the Gospel?"

Was the angel flying around shouting "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.?"

Was he shouting, "Admit you are a sinner, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and Confess your sins..?"

I know I am being a tad bit facetious, but this is one of the most amazing images in the Bible and it is about one of the most important topics in the Bible, and very often it seems many in the church have reduced this important topic down to a couple of brief expressions.

The message of this Angel is this:

"Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

The quote, unquote, Gospel that is proclaimed in most churches today gives absolutely no reason to fear God. Fear hell, maybe, if they believe in that, but Fear of God is virtually vanished.

The reason for this I believe is because we have preached in our churches a sharply truncated Gospel. To truncate means to shorten by chopping off an end. We have tried to write the bestselling Book "The Gospel for Dummies." and in doing so we have nearly forgotten what the Gospel is about.

Part of the glory of the Gospel that the Kingdom has come is found in the very fact that the lamb stands on Mt. Zion and he reigns with his saints. I have heard countless presentations of the Gospel that go something like this.

First: Admit you are a sinner.

Second: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ

Third: Confess your sin to Jesus.

Why should I do this? Because if you don't you will go to hell. How should I live? That's not really important, just be basically good and make sure you tell as many people as you can about Jesus. Because someday, Christ is going to come back, and if you prayed this prayer you will reign with Him.

Yeah I know it is a little exaggeration, but sadly not very much.

I want us to understand something. The reason for the free flow of the Gospel is because Christ is enthroned. The Gospel is not that someday he will be enthroned, it is that He now reigns on high. The Bible tells us about Christ's victory over sin, hell and the grave because he was fighting for something. Part and parcel of the Gospel includes the ascension and the enthronement of the lamb.

With his ascension and enthronement all of his enemies are shattered. They will not be shattered they are. The first enemy defeated is Babylon. We will talk more about that in our next message. Yes there are aspects where we must still deal with

them, but the battle is over and the victory is won. The One HUndred Forty-Four thousand who are on the mountain with God know this. And they know this and they sing a new song. They sing it with rejoicing. We have been included in this number and we will join them in singing. Rejoice the Lord is King.