

THE LAMB WITH THE 144,000
REVELATION 14:1-5

Well let's turn in our Bibles please to the book of Revelation chapter 14. We're going to be reading together verses 1 through 5.

“¹ And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. 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: 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. 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. ⁵ And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

We are studying the fourth parallel section in the book of Revelation, as we study together chapters 12 through 14. So chapter 12, 13, and 14 make up this fourth parallel section of the book. Now this fourth parallel section has as its theme the subject of Satan and his helpers.

We saw in the last half of chapter 12 the work of Satan himself, in persecuting the church with both physical persecutions, and also with a flood of false teachings. But in chapter 13, we were introduced to three of Satan's helpers. The first was the beast out of the sea, who represented the whole succession of antiChristian civil governments that have extended between the first and the second coming of Christ. These antiChristian civil governments are marked by blasphemy against God in their laws and in their policies and in their conduct. This beast of antiChristian civil governments persecutes believers throughout this age, and in its final manifestation at the end of this age, will ultimately overcome them and remove their visible and verbal testimony from the face of the earth.

Satan's second helper, we saw in chapter 13, is the beast out of the earth, which represents antiChristian false religion, whatever form it may take. This beast out of the earth, also called the false prophet in the remainder of this book, speaks Satan's lies and deceptions into this world. False religions turn people away from Christ and cause them through their deceptions to look to the civil government as the ultimate source of authority, and as the ultimate object of trust and of worship. These antiChristian false religions have always taught people to serve and worship the civil authority as the god that determines right and wrong, good and evil, and truth and falsehood. By this means, false religions compel their followers to receive the mark of the beast, which is to share in the character of the beast, the blasphemy of the beast, and the work of the beast in persecuting believers.

We saw that this mark of the beast is not some physical mark on the hand or the forehead, but rather, it is the character of the beast guiding the thinking and guiding the actions of all of those

who are loyal to him and look to him as their ultimate source of authority. So to have the mark of the beast is to share in the character of the beast, it is to express the blasphemy of the beast, and it is to do the work of the beast in persecuting believers. Those who do those things have his mark on their thinking, and they have his mark on their actions. And of course, people have been bearing the mark of the beast the whole time between the first and second coming of Christ, because everyone has a mark. You either have the seal of God, or you have the mark of the beast. Humanity is divided into two categories of people—the saved and the lost. Each of them is marked by manifesting the character of the one with whom they identify and worship. We saw, then, that the third helper of the beast are those who have this mark of the beast, and who thereby participate *with* the beast in his rebellion against Christ and His people, and in his persecution of them.

So we saw in chapter 13 that Satan has three helpers. He has antiChristian civil government—the beast out of the sea; he has antiChristian religion—the beast out of the earth; and he has an antiChristian populace, those who have the mark of the beast, to assist Satan in his evil work here on this earth. And the believers in Christ, who do not worship at the footstool of antiChristian government, and who do not follow the teachings of antiChristian religion, and who do not fit in with the values and practices of the antiChristian populace, will suffer greatly for refusing to do so. They always have and they always will.

The believers in Christ who refuse to take the mark of the beast—that is, they refuse to embrace and practice the blasphemy of the beast—find themselves economically oppressed, and they find themselves persecuted to the point of death. This economic oppression and this persecution to the point of death will become greatly intensified and will reach its fullest expression at the end of this age, under the oneworld government of the Antichrist. But we're experiencing it to a significant degree even now, and always have been through the centuries.

Now as we look at the last half of chapter 12, and all of chapter 13, we see the work of Satan and his helpers. We see how powerful they are, we see how popular they are, and we see how successful they are. All of this could be very discouraging to contemplate and to experience as we live in the midst of antiChristian government, promoted by antiChristian religion, and surrounded by an antiChristian population. But in order to combat that discouragement, God gives us chapter 14, where we see the blessed outcome of those who refuse to receive the mark of the beast; that is, who refuse to share in the character and the conduct and the thinking of the beast.

Here in chapter 14, not only do we see the blessed outcome of those who refuse to receive the mark of the beast, we also see the misery and the ruin of those who do take that mark; that is, those who do share in the character of the beast and the thinking of the beast and the conduct of the beast. So in chapter 14, we have a chapter of great encouragement. In verses 1 to 5 of chapter 14, we see the blessedness of the redeemed. We'll be talking about that today. In verses 6 to 11, we see the misery of the reprobate, when the three angels go forth and pronounce God's judgment on them. In verses 12 to 13, we see the encouragement of the suffering

—“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.” And then in verses 14 to 20, we see the second coming of Christ and separation of the righteous from the wicked, and then the wrath of God that’s poured out on the wicked.

So the whole point of this section of chapter 14 is to strengthen the saints in their spiritual warfare on this earth by seeing and remembering what the eternal outcome and what the eternal destiny of the two sides are *after* this life is over. In this life, it seems very plain that the wicked are winning and we are losing. But that’s an illusion. It’s a temporary situation, and chapter 14 is designed to take us behind time, into eternity, and show us the ultimate outcome, and there we see that Satan and his helpers are utterly defeated and destroyed, and Christ and those who serve Him are vindicated and eternally blessed.

And so in this life, it appears that Satan and the two beasts and those who have the mark of the beast win. That’s the message of chapter 13. But in the life to come, it is clear that Christ and His people win, and that their victory is eternal, while Satan and his helpers are forever condemned to eternal wrath and suffering. And it is this understanding and this perspective that encourages the saint to persevere in his faithfulness to Christ, even in the midst of severe economic and physical and social persecution.

So we go from a chapter that was pretty discouraging to a chapter that’s tremendously encouraging. Chapter 14 gives a longer range view of how the conflict described in chapters 12 and 13 will play out, and in that longer range view is our encouragement and motivation to keep on being faithful and keep on being patient. Notice chapter 14, verse 12: “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” And this little verse tells us what chapter 14 is all about and what it’s designed to produce in the hearts of God’s people.

Now today, we will consider together the blessedness of the redeemed in verses 1 to 5 as we start our study of this chapter of encouragement. There in verses 1 to 5, we will see the outcome of the saved in the end, and we will see that that outcome of the saved in the end is something that is incredibly, incredibly wonderful.

So in the first place then this morning, let’s consider together the vision of heaven. The vision of heaven is verse 1:

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.” John now sees a new vision in verse 1, when he says, “And I *looked*.” And what follows that statement is the description of what John saw in his vision. The first thing that John saw was a Lamb standing on Mount Zion.

Whenever the book of Revelation speaks of someone being “a” lamb, or being “the” lamb, it always and without exception is a reference to Jesus Christ Himself. We first see this in chapter 5, in the vision of the Lamb before the throne of God, who is undeniably Jesus Christ

Himself. Twentyfive times in this book, the word “lamb” is used to describe Jesus. John also uses this term to describe Jesus in John’s gospel, when he said of Jesus in John, chapter 1 and verse 29, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Now the reason why this title is given to the Lord Jesus is rooted in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, a lamb was the substitutionary sacrifice made on behalf of the sinner to atone for his sins, thereby averting the wrath of God against him. But of course, no animal is the moral equivalent of a human, and therefore, animal sacrifices were wholly inadequate to be a suitable substitute for a human. The Old Testament sacrificial lamb was only meant to be an illustration and a foreshadow of the perfect sacrifice that would actually take away the sin of the world.

Jesus was that perfect sacrifice who was able to fully and truly and finally atone for the sins of God’s people. Jesus was the true Lamb of God who bore the just wrath of God in Himself that was due to us for our sins. By taking on Himself the punishment that was due to us for our sins, Jesus satisfied the demands of divine justice on our behalf, so that God could freely forgive us, because the just punishment that was due to our sins was fully paid by Jesus Christ through His death on the cross. As it says in First Peter 1, verses 18 and 19, we were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, who was like a lamb without any blemish and without any spot.

So whenever Jesus is portrayed as the Lamb in the book of Revelation, it is designed to remind us of His self sacrifice for sinners; it is designed to remind us of His substitutionary atonement on our behalf; and it is designed to remind us of His saving work in delivering us from the wrath to come. When the name “lamb” comes before your mind, all of these concepts should arise in your thoughts—He sacrificed Himself for me! He was my substitute who died in my place, and through His saving work, He delivered me from the wrath to come. All of those ideas are wrapped up in this title, “Lamb.”

This Lamb of God is the great manifestation of the love of God. God’s love is shown in the giving of His Son to be the Lamb of God to redeem sinners, when He sacrificed His own Son for us. And Christ’s love is shown in laying down His own life for sinners, when He was willing to endure and undergo the wrath of God on our behalf, because He loved us to that degree, in order to save us from our sins.

And so this selfless Savior, this loving Savior, this wonderful Savior is the one that John saw when he saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion. The Lamb of God was the first thing John saw, when he looked into heaven. The Lamb of God is the central thing that John saw, when he looked into heaven. And the Lamb of God is the best thing that John saw, when he looked into heaven.

You know, we have far too low and carnal views of heaven. We talk about, Oh! the streets of gold and the gates of pearl. And you know, none of that means anything. When John sees heaven, what instantly draws his attention—the first thing he sees, the central thing he sees, and the best thing he sees in heaven—is the Lamb of God, and that’s where his focus rests.

Now when it says that the Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, we need to understand that this Mount Zion is heaven itself. It's not some mountain somewhere on the earth, though Mount Zion is a name for the literal pile of dirt that the city of Jerusalem was built on. But as it's used here, it's not talking about the mountain that Jerusalem was built on, but is used as a descriptor, as a name, of heaven itself. Psalm 125 and verse 1 says of Mount Zion that it cannot be removed, but abides forever. Well, that can't be said of any earthly mountain. They're all going to melt with a fervent heat, right? They're going to be moved, and they're not going to abide forever.

So Mount Zion in the Scripture is, to be sure, a literal mount with a literal city, but very often that term is used of the eternal city of God, namely, heaven itself. In Hebrews 12 and verse 22, Mount Zion is also called "the heavenly Jerusalem." And so this Mount Zion that John is seeing is heaven, because in the very next verse, in verse 2, it says, "And I heard a voice from heaven," showing that this whole vision is a vision of heaven itself.

Now as John sees Jesus standing in heaven, Jesus is not standing there alone. With the Lamb, John sees 144,000 with the Father's name written in their foreheads. Notice the last part of verse 1: "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads."

We have run across this 144,000 before in the book of Revelation, as you recall, in Revelation chapter 7. Remember in Revelation chapter 7, we saw that this 144,000 were sealed with a seal of God in their foreheads, and as we studied that passage, we saw that this 144,000 represented and symbolized the whole body of believers who are chosen by God and saved by Christ. All of them have the seal of God, here called "the Father's name," in their foreheads, which symbolized the indwelling Spirit of God, who is declared to *be* the seal of God in Ephesians 1 and verse 13.

Now in Revelation chapter 7, the 144,000 were seen as still living on earth, surrounded by enemies and undergoing great trials. But here they are seen after the final judgment, enjoying the blessedness of heaven, and freed from their enemies and delivered out of all of their trials. And although the dragon and his helpers attacked and assaulted the church on earth, and though Satan did all that he could with his helpers to make the believers unfaithful to Christ, not one of the 144,000 that were sealed on earth are absent in heaven. All those Christ has called and justified here on earth are, without exception, glorified and present in heaven. The dragon, the beast out of the sea, the beast out of the earth, and those who bear the mark of the beast, all failed to pluck even one of Christ's sheep out of His hand. All those Christ saves, He sanctifies and preserves, and He infallibly brings them to heaven, and not one of them is lost. Jesus will never allow Satan the triumph of taking even one of His saints to hell with him.

And what this means to you is that whatever trials and temptations or persecutions are brought to bear on you by the dragon and his helpers, you are eternally secure in the power and the grace of Christ, and you will never be lost by Him. He who keeps you now will keep you to the end. He who saves you now will safely deliver you into heaven, and there will not be one that is lost along the way.

Well, this then is the vision of heaven in verse 1. In the second place then this morning, let's consider together the music of heaven, in verses 2 and 3. Notice verses 2 and 3: "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: 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."

Having seen the inhabitants of heaven in verse 1, which are the Lamb along with His bride, the 144,000, John now hears a glorious anthem. He now hears a glorious anthem being sung—a hymn of praise and thanksgiving and worship and joy. The sound of this song is majestic, it is thunderous, and it is lovely. It is majestic like the sound of many waters—if you've ever been to Niagara Falls and heard the roar of the falling waters, this is what it sounds like. And it is thunderous—if you've ever been in a lightning storm and heard the thunder just clap and roll, shaking your very body this is what it sounds like. And then it is lovely. There is no more melodious instrument than a harp, when it is wellplayed.

So we see in verse 2 that this song is like the voice of many waters, and the voice of a great thunder, and the voice of harpers harping on their harps. The sound of this song is majestic and thunderous and lovely. There is nothing quiet about this song, and there is nothing trivial in this song, and there is nothing defective in this song. It has the power of a mighty waterfall. It has the voice of a tremendous thunder. It has the beauty of a melodious harp. It is a perfectly sung hymn of praise for a perfect salvation that has been provided in a perfect way by a perfect God. This song is full of grandeur and beauty and excellence and spiritual purity. It is music fit for heaven, and it is the kind of music we should be striving to sing here on earth.

This song that is sung is said to be a "new song." Notice verse 3: "and they sung as it were a new song." It's a new song because it expresses a new experience for those who are singing it. The 144,000, it says, had been redeemed from the earth and are now all glorified together in heaven. They're in a new place. They're in a new condition. They have a new understanding of the wonder of their salvation, the happiness of their future and the blessedness of their Savior. Heaven is a new experience for them, and it requires a new song out of them to express the new understanding they have, the new condition they are in, and the new experience they are having.

We are to grow in our Christian experience, and as we grow in our Christian experience, and as we grow in our Christian understanding, we also have to grow as Christians in our acquisition of new songs so that we can express new dimensions of worship and praise to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, for the new experiences and the new understandings we have as Christians on this earth as we grow.

You know, as a church, we're always going to be learning new songs as long as we are gaining new understanding of all that God has done for us. And so, if a new song is introduced in church, embrace it as a new opportunity to offer new worship to God, and not say, Ahh, that's a

hard tune. I'm not going to sing along. It's too difficult. Instead say, Wow, here's a new song! It expresses a new dimension of truth that maybe I've never known before or expressed in this fashion. Let's *learn* it! Let's sing it, and let's offer God one more brick in the palace of praise that he deserves for the glory of His name and the work He has accomplished in our behalf.

Now notice the audience to whom this hymn of praise is sung, verse 3. It says, "and they sung as it were a new song"—here's the audience—"before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders." It says that this new song is sung before the throne, that is, before God; it's sung before the four beasts, which you recall are the seraphim; and then, before the twenty four elders, which is the entire church in heaven. Heaven loves to hear the praises of God, and God loves to hear His people's praise as they sing to Him and as they sing before Him. It is a glorious anthem and a glorious audience, and the sound of praise is that which saturates the whole atmosphere of heaven. Singing has always been a central part of the praise of the people of God here on earth, and it will forever be a central part of the praise of the people of God in heaven. Christians are intrinsically and inherently and at their core a musical people.

So those of you who don't view yourselves as musically gifted, work at it. It's your occupation now, it will be your occupation forever. Embrace music, embrace singing. And of course, you'll do better when you get to heaven, but do your best now and engage it, and embrace it, and sing out as an expression of your love to God, and as a testimony to His angels, and as a declaration and witness before the whole church of what God has done for your soul, and who God is to you in your heart.

But the music of praise is the music of experience, and that's why it says in verse 3 that only the 144,000 sing this particular song, because they alone understand what it means to experience redemption from the earth. Look at verse 3 again: "and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders:"—now here it is—"and no man could learn that song [except] the hundred and forty and four thousand,"—now's here the qualification they have for singing this song—"which were redeemed from the earth." This music of praise is the music of experience, and that is why only the 144,000 sing this particular song, because they alone understand what it means to experience redemption from the earth. Angels have not experienced such a thing, and therefore angels cannot join in singing about something they have never known and experienced themselves.

Notice it says of these 144,000 that they are redeemed, not from sin, as we would expect it to say, but rather it says that they are redeemed "from the earth." Now to be sure, redemption is primarily about redemption from sin, and the Bible is full of statements about redemption from sin. But that's not the emphasis here. Here, the emphasis is on their deliverance out of a persecuting and fallen world that was ruled and run by Satan and his helpers. What's the context? What is going on in chapter 13? What's going on there? The dragon, the beast out of the earth, the beast out of the sea, and those who take the mark of the beast are crushing the people of God. What does deliverance look like? Being take *out* of a world like that.

This is further reinforced in verse 4b. Notice it says: “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”—here it is—“These were redeemed from”—where?—“among men.” So it says in verse 3 that they are redeemed out of the earth, and in verse 4 it says they are redeemed from among *men*, and clearly the emphasis here is that we were in the world, and now we’re out of the world. One of the great promises and benefits of Christ’s saving work is declared in Galatians chapter 1, verses 3 to 5, when it says, “³ grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins,”—now here it is—“that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: ⁵ to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” And so Jesus didn’t just come to save us from our sins, He also came to save us from this present evil world.

Now this present evil world, as I said, has just been described in Revelation chapter 12 and Revelation chapter 13, the two previous chapters. This present evil world is one that is run by Satan and ruled by Satan, who uses antiChristian government and antiChristian religion and an antiChristian populace to abuse and persecute and kill us Christians. This world is a physically, morally, and spiritually fallen cesspool of evil, in which we are strangers and sojourners and pilgrims. This present evil world is dominated by those who hate God and by those who hate us. Therefore, we have an aversion to this world, and a desire to be delivered from this world and to depart from it and be with Christ, which is far better! And the good news is that Christ *shall* deliver us from this present evil world. In heaven we will be freed from its corruption, we will be freed from its oppression, and we will be freed from its persecution. And we will sing praise to God that we no longer have to live under an evil government, alongside an evil people, who are driven by evil religious beliefs.

Now angels, who never had to live in this world like we do, will never personally know what it is like to be delivered out of it. So they will listen to our song of praise for our deliverance, but they will never be able to sing it themselves, because they have never experienced it. And the good news, people, is all that we do not like about this old world will be gone forever, as we inhabit the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

You’ve probably seen in your lifetime images or stories of people who were delivered out of horribly oppressive regimes—China, Russia, East Germany—and somehow they make it to America. You’ve seen pictures of them, when they get off the plane, they get down and kiss the ground, and they rejoice in the fact that they’re now in the land of freedom, and they were delivered from the tyranny. Well that’s just a picture of how we’re going to feel when we get delivered out of this world and brought into the free world of heaven.

You know, I hear people moan and groan and complain and gripe about the government, and the laws, and the injustice, and the corruption. And you know what? It’s all there. It’s true. And I say to them, Wouldn’t you like to live in a country where there were no corrupt politicians, where there were perfectly just laws, where there is economic opportunity and equality and a high standard of living for everybody, and where each person had the freedom to do what they wanted to do without interference. You describe the perfect government, and they say, Yeah—

where's a country like that? It's up there. It's in heaven. Do you want to come along? It's a perfect King, it's a perfect world, it's a perfect set of laws, it's a perfect population with perfect institutions and perfect freedom and perfect happiness. No pain, no sorrow, no sickness, no sadness, no death. It's the perfect government. Nah, I don't want anything to do with that—I'd rather have Obama run my life than Christ. And you see the stupidity of people who will not flee from this cesspool of oppression into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, because they will not be ruled by Jesus Christ.

Well that brings us to our third point this morning. Having seen the vision of heaven in verse 1; having seen the music of heaven in verses 2 and 3; notice thirdly, the purity of heaven in verses 4 to 5. Verse 4 says, regarding the 144,000: "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. ⁵ And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God."

Now verses 4 and 5 describe the purity of those who are in heaven, and it describes that purity with a series of statements. The first statement that is made is that "these are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins." Now we have to understand that this a symbolic statement, not a literal statement. There is nothing morally defiling about women, and there is nothing morally defiling about sexual relations within the covenant of marriage. There is no virtue in remaining a virgin throughout one's life here on this earth, as opposed to becoming married and through marriage thereby losing one's virginity. All of this is made very clear from the creation narrative itself, in which God created man and created woman, with all of their sexual functions. God performed the first marriage between them and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, and that when they engaged in that activity, God looked on it, and He said, It's all very good.

After the Fall as well, Hebrews 13:4 says that marriage is honorable in all, and the bed is undefiled. And so as far as physical virginity, and as far as sexual activity with women, these things are neither virtues nor are they defilements. They are simply normal activities that humans engage in, and conditions they are in according to the commandments of God. What Revelation 13 and verse 4 is talking about, is *spiritual unfaithfulness to the Savior*, to whom the bride of Christ is betrothed in this world.

In Ephesians chapter 5, the church is called the bride of Christ. We are spiritually betrothed to Christ, and we will consummate that final spiritual union with Him when He returns in the marriage supper of the Lamb. Paul says to the Corinthian church in Second Corinthians 11 and verse 2: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ." And so for the church to lose her spiritual virginity would be for her to give herself to another god beside Jesus Christ. It would be for her to commit spiritual fornication.

You remember what James said to the believers in James chapter 4 and verse 4? He said to the people of God, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” And so we lose our spiritual virginity and we become spiritual adulterers when we go out after another god and serve and worship it, in the place of Jesus Christ. So when it says here in Revelation 14:4 that “these are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins,” for the believer to be defiled, for the believer to lose their virginity, would be for them to worship the beast and to take his mark, and for them to follow the false prophet, and for them to embrace his teaching.

The point is, those who wind up in heaven are those who were faithful to Christ here on earth, and they did not go out after the beast out of the sea, or the beast out of the earth, or those who took the mark of the beast. Those who wind up in heaven are those who were faithful to Christ here on earth. Once they embraced Christ as their Lord and Savior, they never left Him to go after another god. They did not have spiritual communion and spiritual intercourse with the false gods and the false religions of this world. They were, as the sixth beatitude says, pure in heart, and therefore, they see God. And so apostates don’t make it into heaven. Those who follow Christ for a while and then follow the world and forget about Christ—they are not among God’s elect.

And you see, the emphasis in the book of Revelation is the same as the emphasis in the book of Hebrews, and it is this: We know you are suffering for following Christ. Stay faithful to the end. Don’t go back to the world to get relief from the persecution of the world. Don’t go back to the world to get the pleasures of the world. Don’t go back to the world to get the approval world. You just stay strong. You suffer, even to the point of death, and Jesus will reward you with everlasting life for having been faithful to Him.

That’s why the saints all through the centuries would rather die than deny Christ, because they recognized that to deny Him is to gain a little time here, and to lose Him forever. But to stay true to Him, no matter what the pressure is, though causing us now to have “light affliction which is but for a moment”, is going to work a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory in the end.

The second thing it says about those that are in heaven is not only are they spiritual virgins, but it also says of them—notice verse 4—that they follow the Lamb wheresoever He goeth. That is, these are they who recognized, and who still recognize, Jesus Christ as Lord. You know, when you follow someone, they’re in charge and you’re not. They’re in control, and you’re not. His will is their will, and where He leads, you follow.

The disposition of those in heaven was and is that of: Not my will, but thine be done. They have no desire to go anywhere or do anything except that which the Lamb directs them to do. His will is the only will that they have, and so like Saul, lying on his back on the road to Damascus with Christ standing over him, they say: Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the whole rest of his life was him doing what the Lord would have him to do.

So it is with believers. Who are those in heaven? They are those who followed the Lamb wherever He led. Wherever the hand of Scripture led them, that's where they went, no matter how foolish those beliefs seemed to be to the world, and even to other professing Christians who have more concern for what strokes the ego of man than for what accomplishes and expresses the will of God. On earth, these strove to observe all things whatsoever He commanded, and in heaven, His command drives all of their conduct. Their wills are fully surrendered to His.

The third thing that is said of those that are in heaven is that they have been redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. Now under Old Testament law, the firstfruits were that part of the crop that was dedicated to God and that belonged to God. You know when you have a garden, not everything gets ripe at the same moment, right? You have some produce that comes ripe first. Well under Old Testament law, you were to pick all of those things that came ripe first, put them in a basket, take them to the temple, and give them to God. All that became ripe later belonged to the farmer, who could do with it as he wished. God did not lay claim to anything other than the firstfruits as belonging to Him.

In the same way, God's elect people, the whole number of the redeemed out of the earth, are the part of humanity that belongs to God, symbolically represented as these 144,000. They, the firstfruits out of the earth, belong entirely to God. The remainder of humanity that is left behind belongs to the Devil, who can do with them as he wishes. God does not lay claim to the remainder of humanity as belonging to Him. All He lays claim to is the firstfruits. So when you look at the whole crop that the farmer produces, part of it belongs to God, and part of it belongs to the farmer. And God said, The firstfruits—that's mine; the rest I don't care about. It's yours. And what is being said here is that all of God's elect belong to Him, and the rest He leaves to Satan to do with as he wills, and to bear his mark and to carry out his purposes.

The fourth thing that is said about these people that are in heaven is that in their mouth is found no guile. Notice verse 5: "And in their mouth was found no guile." Guile is lying, okay? When you use guile, you're using deceit, you're speaking lies in order to deceive—that's what guile is. It could easily be translated, And in their mouth was found no lies. It's the same idea, okay? Those in heaven are those who were not liars. They were not those who said that Christ is their Lord, when that was not the case at all. The point is, there are no false professors in heaven.

Now how many people have told you that they're Christians, and later on you go, Hah, they're no more Christians than the man in the moon. You saw that they used guile to deceive you into thinking they were fellow believers when they weren't fellow believers at all. None of those people wind up in heaven. Only those who are sincere in their worship and in their profession and in their submission to Christ—only they are in heaven. All in heaven are those who were honest in their worship and their profession. They meant what they said, and they lived what they professed. That doesn't mean they're perfect, but you can look at some Christians and say, There's a genuine one—that's the real deal right there. And then you look at others and ask yourself: I wonder why they say, Lord, Lord, but they do not the things which He commands.

So these are those who did not lie and say they loved Christ with all their heart and soul and mind and strength, when really they actually loved the world and those who served it. These are those who followed Christ with integrity. They didn't just toss the name of Jesus off their tongue to give an aura of spirituality while they lived like hell on earth. They are those who were genuine and sincere in their hearts and in their profession of faith in Christ as Savior and Lord.

Fifthly it says of them in the last part of verse 5, "For they are without fault before the throne of God." And what this means is that Christ has fully cleansed them from all of their sin, and as it says in Jude chapter 1 and verse 24, He—Jesus—has presented them "faultless before the presence of God with exceeding joy." Through the saving work of Christ, their sins have been removed, and their righteousness has been provided, so that when God looks upon them, He finds no fault in them. They are holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight. They are holy and without blame before Him. When God looks on them, there is no spot or wrinkle of any kind, but they are holy and without blemish.

So what Jesus does is He presents His elect faultless before His Father. They're perfect. No sin on their record. Perfect righteousness on their record. God looks upon them and says, Justified. Perfect conformity with my law. No point of criticism, no point of complaint, no point of improvement needed. You are perfect. You are holy as your Father which is in heaven is holy. And that's what Jesus does for us. And that's why we celebrate the Lord's Supper together, because that's what He's done for us—He's presented us faultless before His Father, with exceeding joy. He's made us holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight, and He says to His Father, These are mine.

So as we think about the awful oppression and reign of the dragon, and the beast out of the sea, and of the beast out of the earth, and all those who follow them, keep bright and clear in your mind the outcome that you're going to have, even though you are sorely economically and physically oppressed and persecuted for following Christ in this world. The good news of the gospel is that we will be with the Lamb on Mount Zion. You notice how the passage opens with the Lamb, and how it closes with perfect people? The Lamb is the one who produces those perfect people who stand before the throne.

Well may the Lord use this to encourage us. And anytime you start getting weary of this world and with the struggles you go through, you just read this and say, Well, I just need to persevere. I just need to be faithful to Christ—walk with Him, live for Him, trust Him, believe Him, follow Him, be sincere and genuine. And this is where I'll wind up. This is the song I'll be singing. I will be redeemed *out* of this horrible earth and will be brought into the presence of the angels and the saints, and spend my eternity singing praise to God and enjoying the fellowship of the Lamb of God, who saved me out of my sins and this world, and from the Evil One who wanted to destroy me.

You remember what Jesus said to Peter? Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have thee... But Jesus said, but I'm not going to let him have you. I'm going to pray for you and I'm going to preserve you, and I'm going to bring you to glory. Peter—in that, find comfort. Christ always preserves His people from the evil one. Well, shall we pray together.

Father, we thank you that our Savior keeps every one of us in His hand, and no man is able to pluck us out of His hand. And then we are kept in your hand, and no man can pluck us out of your hand. And so, Lord, we are grateful for our security and our safety. Help us to remain virgins, and not go after the gods of this world.

Father, I pray that when we look at the beast out of the sea, and the beast out of the earth, and all those who follow them, that we would just step away, step back, and step apart, and say, I'm not going to follow the world. I'm going to follow Jesus. And I know that makes me an outcast and a stranger, but, oh, some day they will be the outcasts and Christ will say to me, Come into my heavenly home. Come, you blessed, into the kingdom prepared for you. Come into the mansions that have been built. Come into the presence of the Lamb and the angels, and there find delight and blessing forever.

And now Father, strengthen us in our warfare so that we might persevere to the end and be found faithful in that day. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.