The Book of Revelation

Zanesville, OH | Wednesday/Sunday Bible Study

**Chapter 14**

* **14:1-5– The Blameless Disciples of The Lamb**
  + The first 5 verses of chapter 14 anticipate the glorious, conquering victory of Christ over the beast(s) and its followers of chapter 13. Those that follow the Lamb understand that while this victory is not yet consummated, its guarantee on behalf of Christ’s death and resurrection assures their place in the kingdom with Him.
  + **Verse 1**– John sees the true Lamb (cf. 5:6) standing on “Mount Zion.” The term Zion or “Mount Zion” occurs numerous times in the OT and it typically refers to the same general idea: **God among His people/God dwelling with man** (Psa. 9:11; 135:21; Isa. 8:18).
  + Zion is often interchangeable with Jerusalem since God dwelt there in the temple (2 Sam. 5:7; 1 Kings 8:1; Jer. 51:24; Lam. 1:4). Zion is also commonly associated with divine deliverance and the sovereign rule of God (2 Kings 19:31; Psa. 2:6-12; 132:13-14; Isa. 37:32; Joel 2:32; Micah 4:5-8).
  + Deliverance and sovereign rule in the NT is fulfilled in the church/kingdom because of Christ’s death and resurrection. NT authors like Paul and Peter apply the term Zion to Jesus’ establishment of the church/kingdom (Rom. 9:22; 1 Pet. 2:6 cf. Isa. 28:16).
  + The writer of Hebrews also describes Zion as the reign and rule of Christ, church/kingdom of God (Heb. 12:18-24; cf. Isa. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1-8). Together, these points illustrate that Mt. Zion here represent Jesus and His people dwelling together in the kingdom He established. This will ultimately be fulfilled in Heaven but the picture here is not that yet.
  + The Lamb stands with the 144,000 which is the same group of people from 7:1-8. These are the faithful who have God’s seal on their foreheads (2 Tim. 2:19; Rev. 7:2-3). The point is to contrast these with the beast and its followers of chapter 13.
  + **Verse 2**– John hears a voice likened to the sound of many waters (cf. 1:15; 19:6), the sound of thunder (cf. 6:1; 19:6) and the sound of many harpists playing on their harps (cf. 5:8). What John hears is reminiscent of Jesus among the lampstands so loud like crashing thunder yet so melodious and celebratory as that of many harpists strumming their instruments. This is clearly a scene of ecstatic celebration, praise and thanksgiving.
  + **Verse 3**– These who stand on Mt. Zion with the Lamb (144,000) sing a new song before the throne, the elders and the living creatures. The singing of this new song here is almost identical to the scene of 5:8-10 which helps us to understand what the meaning is here.
  + The new song denotes a song of praise and thanksgiving to God because of His mercy, love, forgiveness, grace and deliverance. This is how it was used in the OT (Psa. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1). Only those who have been purchased and redeemed by Christ’s blood can learn this song and know it (cf. 5:8-10).
  + **Verse 4**– The 144,000 is described as virgins. This is not to be taken literally. In the OT the people of God, Israel, was often described as a virgin since they were betrothed to God (2 Kings 19:21; Isa. 37:22; Jer. 14:17; 18:13; 31:4, 13, 21: Lam. 1:15; 2:13; Amos 5:2).
  + This is also how the term virgin is being used of the 144,000. They are the bride of Christ or the Lamb (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2) who have not compromised their faith by turning to the world or seeking after false gods (idolatry). They have maintained their loyalty to their betrothed (cf. Hos. 2:19-20).
  + This doesn’t suggest that they are sinless but it does suggest that they do not seek to sin and to commit metaphoric (spiritual) adultery against God by defiling themselves with immorality and impurities (idolatry, pagan worship etc.). They are faithful to the Lord and strive to grow ever closer to Him.
  + The 144,000 are also described as those that follow the Lamb wherever He goes. This speaks to the kind of disciples they are (Ruth 1:6-18; 2 Kings 2:1-6; Lk. 9:23-25, 57-62; 14:25-33; 1 Pet. 2:21-22). They follow Jesus with the caveat in mind that they suffer, serve, love, sacrifice and are self-less.
  + They are also described as first fruits to God and the Lamb. In the OT, the first fruits of the harvest were offered to God to illustrate that they belonged to Him and that God was the sovereign owner of everything they had and were blessed with
  + Likewise, the saints belong to God. They are His people and His possession (1 Pet. 2:9-10; Rev. 7:2-3 cf. Jer. 2:2-3). Paul speaks of Christians as first fruits in Rom. 16:5 and 1 Cor. 16:15. The idea of Christians being first fruits is important as it plays an important role in the latter part of this chapter.
  + **Verse 5**– This verse comes as no surprise because of what has been said about the characteristics of the 144,000. No lie being found in their mouth doesn’t just denote general truthfulness but it speaks also to the refining and testing of their faith.
  + Through persecution, suffering and perhaps death they are found to be tried and true like their Lord. They hold fast to the word of their testimony even in the midst of opposition and temptation to compromise (Rev. 1:5; 2:13; cf. Jn. 8:40, 44-45; 18:37).
  + Lying in Revelation and Johannine literature is directly associated with denying Christ as divine and holding up Satan and evil powers to that position (1 Jn. 2:22-23; Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8, 27; 22:15).
  + Their blamelessness because of their effort and tried and true faith groups them with the descriptions of the suffering servant of Isaiah (Isa. 53:7, 9). Because they follow the Lamb, they become like Him and attain to the same standards as He did.
* **14:6-8– The Impending Judgment**
  + **Verse 6**– The language in these verses primary relate to judgment. This is true because of the audience the angels address. John sees an angel flying in midheaven (cf. 8:13) having an eternal gospel to preach to the earth dwellers.
  + This gospel is the same gospel to be preached to the nations which speaks of Christ and what He has done to the end that all might be saved (Matt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Rom. 16:25-27; Jude 1:3). It is called an eternal gospel because it does not change. It is incapable of destruction and permanently valid (cf. Matt. 24:35; Jn. 10:35; 17:17).
  + **Verse 7**– The angel announces that the hour has come for judgment which solidifies the idea that this “gospel” is dealing with judgment of the unbelievers. The word gospel is used because this message is good news to the saints that their enemies will be judged and held accountable for what they have done.
  + The loud voice urges in a command to fear God, give Him glory and worship Him. In the OT similar commands were given to both believers and unbelievers. The believers adhered joyfully (Psa. 22:23; 115:1; Isa. 42:12) but the unbelievers did so forcefully (Ex. 7:5; 14:4, 18; Josh. 7:19; Jer. 13:16; Ezek. 25:11, 17: 26:6; 28:22).
  + Therefore the understanding here is that the time is coming when the enemies of the saints will be coerced so to speak to honor God and recognize that He is in charge (cf. Dan. 4:34, 37; Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 5:13; 11:13). Those incredulous of God will one day find out who He is and what He is capable of doing (cf. Jon. 1:9-10).
  + **Verse 8**– Another angel enters the scene and announces that *“Babylon the Great”* is fallen. This phrase and terminology is primarily drawn from Isa. 21:9; Jer. 51:6-8 and Dan. 4:30. To properly understand what Babylon means in Revelation, we must go back to the OT.
  + In the OT, Babylon was the nation who destroyed the temple of God and carried off the people of Judah into Babylonian exile (cf. 2 Kings 25:8-17; Jer. 52). In Babylon, these Israelites lived under an idolatrous and ungodly regime. This, of course, presented scenarios of compromise which some did not adhere to. When they remained loyal to God, they were persecuted (cf. Dan. 1-6).
  + This idea is carried over to the NT in Revelation as a way of describing Rome and its ungodly regime and its influence on all the nations around them. The Babylon connotation is solidified because of Rome’s destroying of the temple in AD 70. In Revelation, saints are pictured as being persecuted and killed because they maintain loyalty to God.
  + For these reasons, OT Babylon was destroyed but also for these reasons NT Babylon will be destroyed or “fallen” (cf. Jer. 51:64). She is described as making all the nations drink of the *“wine of the passion of her immorality.”*
  + The idea is that all the earth dwellers flock to Rome because of its promise of security, economic and social prosperity and political power. All these are proclaimed to be the byproducts of idolatrous and pagan practices (cf. Hos. 2:8-13; Rev. 13:16-18).
  + The immorality spoken of here is the idolatry and evil practices associated with pagan worship although physical sexual immorality was almost always intertwined with these pagan practices (cf. Ezek. 23; Jer. 3:1-10; Hos. 1:2; Rev. 17:1-9, 15-18). The idea of Babylon is not to be limited to OT Babylon or Rome or any other nation.