



## Part 30 – The Lamb and His People

### Revelation 14:1-5

Chapter 14 of Revelation brings to an end the extended interlude which began in chapter 12. Thematically, chapters 12 and 13 depict the war Satan has waged against God and his people. Chapter 14 focuses on the response of God and his redeemed to Satan and his minions. Verses 1-5 of chapter 14 highlight the glory of the Lamb and his people while the remainder of the chapter focuses on God's judgment of sinners.

For the better part of chapters 12 and 13, John's vision has involved three strange and terrifying figures: the great red dragon (Satan) and two beasts, one that rises from the sea and the other which comes from the land. The coercive power and deceptive tactics of this unholy alliance are leveraged to lead the people of the world into idolatry and destruction. It takes only the slightest degree of discernment to see this diabolical work active in the world today. But these dread visions are answered by what John sees next: The Lamb standing upon Mount Zion in victory along with the vast multitude of his redeemed symbolized once again as a holy army of 144,000.

### *The Lamb and His People*

Chapter 14 consists of three sections each beginning with what John sees, followed by what he hears, which explains what he has seen (14:1-2, 6-7, 14-15). In this first section what John sees and hears is the victorious outcome of the conflict between God and the dragon.

**Vs. 1** – While the dragon stands on the shore of the sea waiting for the beast to come forth (13:16-17), the Lamb is depicted as standing upon Mount Zion waiting to receive his redeemed and victorious people. In the Old Testament, Mount Zion “symbolized God's reign or the people following him, meaning God's true city (2 Kings 19:31; Ps. 2:6; 48:2, 9-14; Isa. 4:2-5; 37:30-32; Joel 2:17; Mic. 4:5-8). Eschatologically, the Messiah will reign as King on Mount Zion, judging the wicked and bringing justice for his people.”<sup>1</sup> Mount Zion was the highest point in what became the city of Jerusalem, the place where the temple of Solomon was built. It became a metaphor for the kingdom of God and eventually of heaven itself.

The Lamb, of course, is a reference to the risen and glorified Christ. That he is pictured standing is significant in that it depicts “the Lamb as a divine warrior ready to destroy the dragon and his followers,”<sup>2</sup> and the Lamb's people are depicted as participating in that victory. Once again, the full number of God's redeemed people, the church, are symbolized as an army of 144,000 who have been sealed unto eternal salvation. This sealing is expressed symbolically as a mark upon their foreheads. The number of God's elect, the saints in heaven and on earth, is always 144,000 no matter how many millions are added to that number. It is the number of the church of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Song of the Redeemed*

**Vs. 2** – “And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters...” – As we will see in verse 3, this sound is of the saints singing. Their singing is likened to the loudest sounds known in the ancient world: waves pounding upon the shore and the clap of thunder (both used elsewhere in Revelation to describe loud sounds; e.g. 1:15; 6:1). The song of the redeemed is one of victory that could be sung only by those who had experienced both the trial of faith and final deliverance by the power of God.

**Vs. 3** – “...and they were singing a new song before the throne...” – In Jewish tradition, praising God with harps and a ‘new song’ was typical of life in the age to come.<sup>4</sup> So, what John is hearing is the hymn of victory known to and sung by all of God's redeemed people in the eternal life to come. It is a song known only to the redeemed because it is only they who can understand the mercies of God's grace in salvation. Even the angels do not know what it is like to be saved from sin and condemnation. The hymnody of the church in this life should reflect the realities of the new covenant fulfilled in the Person and work of Christ Jesus.

<sup>1</sup> J. Scott Duvall, *A Theology of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2025) p. 223

<sup>2</sup> David Aune, *Revelation Vol. 2*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1998) p. 803

<sup>3</sup> Herman Hoeksema, *Behold He Cometh* (RFP: Grand Rapids, 1969) p. 485

<sup>4</sup> G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) p. 735

### ***The Character of God's People***

The status of God's people has already been established. They are those whom God has redeemed out of the world through the blood of the Lamb. Their moral quality is not the cause of their redemption but the fruit of it.

#### **1. They are undefiled by immorality.**

**Vs. 4a** – “It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins...” – Here, the company of the redeemed are described as male virgins. A failure to understand the Old Testament background of this passage has led to a great deal of unhelpful conclusions. The Scriptures do not regard celibacy as a higher life than that of marriage. The Bible categorically denies that celibacy is a purer life than marriage. The Bible uses chastity as symbolic of spiritual faithfulness to the Lord just as fornication or adultery is symbolic of spiritual infidelity. Israel, married and unmarried alike, was to be a *virgin* before the Lord. When she lapsed into idolatry, she was described as having become a harlot. This symbolism is carried over into the New Testament. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:2 that his goal was to present the church in Corinth – married and unmarried alike – as a “pure virgin” to Christ. Later, in Revelation chapter 14, John refers to the sinful world's idolatry as “adultery” (vs. 8).

Israel's army would have consisted only of men, one of the requirements being that they would abstain from sex during times of war (Deuteronomy 23:9; 1 Samuel 21) and so the reference to virginity here is a general reference to their undivided faithfulness to the Lord comparable to Israelite soldiers engaged in holy battle. The idea being communicated here is that God's people are a holy army, undivided in their faithfulness.

#### **2. They are devoted followers of Jesus.**

**Vs. 4b** – “...It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes...” – In the Gospel accounts, following Jesus is the heart of discipleship. The Good Shepherd calls his sheep by name and they follow him wherever he goes because they know his voice (John 10:3-4). Christians are those who follow the Lord Jesus in everything. They live lives of eager discipleship. Seventy times in the Gospels, the nature of discipleship is described as a life of following Jesus. As we look across the sweep of Revelation, we are able to see particular themes repeated which speak directly to following Jesus: repentance from sin, the importance of good works, rejecting evil, giving witness to Christ, endurance, and worship. These all characterize the life of the disciple.

#### **3. They are redeemed and so belong to the Lord.**

**Vs. 4c** – “These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb...” – The term translated “redeemed” refers to those who have been purchased (“with your blood you purchased men for God” – 5:9) and (“purchased from every tribe, language, people, and nation” – 14:3). Christ's death was payment for sin's penalty. The cross was the requirement of holy justice to save sinners. The term “firstfruits” is symbolic of the people of God as those whom the Lord has planted, watered, and harvested. It also carries with it the idea that the redeemed are a living offering to the Lord, their Savior. Again, the emphasis here is that the 144,000 are symbolic of the entire company of God's people redeemed throughout the ages.<sup>5</sup>

#### **4. They are blameless.**

**Vs. 5** – “...and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.” – “Blameless” is an idiom we find in the Bible which is not a claim of sinlessness. Again, we must interpret Scripture with Scripture. For God's people to be “blameless” means to be a believing people, relying wholly on Christ and his righteousness for justification. It also carries with it the idea of a life of deliberate faithfulness to the Lord, a determined pursuit of godliness. The truthful quality John describes “is broader than telling the truth and refers to the faithful proclamation of God's truths as well as a refusal to surrender to Satan's deceptions (12:9; 13:14).”<sup>6</sup> “While the beast utters blasphemies (13:5), the redeemed speak without lies or deceit. They are ambassadors of truth, and for this reason they are ‘blameless,’ a term emphasizing ethical integrity (Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22; Jude 24).”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Beale, Duvall, Hendriksen, Johnson, Osborne, Caird, Mounce, Bauckham, Schreiner, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Grant Osborne, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002) p. 531

<sup>7</sup> Duvall, p. 225