

REVELATION 14:1-12

REVELATION 14:1-5

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.

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. (Revelation 14:1–5)

Chapter 14 comes as a reprieve after Chapter 13. In Revelation 13, the future looked very bleak for the saints. After revealing the beasts' deceptive and destructive plots, John assures believers of our security and victory.

In Revelation 14, John paints a picture of the joy and happiness that the saints express in following the Lamb and being in His presence. The focus now shifts away from the earth to the heavenly realm, where the justice and sovereignty of God are once again emphasized. All is not what it appears to be on earth below.

A. 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. (Revelation 14:1)

1. A Lamb is standing on Mount Zion

Even though the text does not have a definite article, there is no question which Lamb this is. This is a clear reference to our Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 5:6).

Mount Zion is also known as "the City of David" (2 Sam. 5:7). There are several interpretations as to the Lamb, where he is standing, and what it means.

- Literal interpretation. Our Lord Jesus will return with 144,000 on Zion.
- Spiritual interpretation. Zion is in heaven and that is where the Lamb and the church, represented by 144,000 gathers in joyful assembly (Heb. 12:22-24).
- Symbolic interpretation. The Lamb on Mount Zion stands in contrasts with the lamb coming out of the earth (13:11).

2. Zion

In the Bible, “Zion” is used in a variety of ways and can refer to as many as three different locations:

- David’s City in time past. In the OT, Zion refers to Jerusalem, the city that David conquered and made a capital of the united kingdom of Israel (1 Chron. 11:5; Ps. 2:6; Isa. 2:3).
- The Millennial City in the future. In a prophetic sense, Zion refers to Jerusalem as the future capital city of the nation Israel in the millennium (Isa. 1:27; 2:3; 4:1-6; Joel 3:16; Zech. 1:16-17; 8:3-8; Rom. 11:26).
- The Heavenly City in eternity. In the NT, Zion also refers to Zion as the New Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22-24), the eternal city (cf. Rev. 21-22).
- The City of Rest. Zion here is symbolic, denoting the dwelling place of God, and a symbol of safety and stability for his people.

There are strong arguments for and against each of these views.

3. 144,000 having his Father's name written in their foreheads

This is the second time the number 144,000 appears in Revelation (see 7:4). In both places, the definite article is omitted. The two groups are identical: they are the saints who received the seal and the name of the Lamb and the Father.

B. 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: (Revelation 14:2)

John first saw the Lamb and the 144,000 on Mount Zion, and then he heard a sound coming to him out of heaven.

1. I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters

John does not identify the speaker of the voice. However, he describes the voice. It is the voice of many waters and great thunders (see 1:15; 19:6), which is the description of the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps

Some translations render it as “the voice which I heard as harpists harping,” implying that John did not really hear the harpist harping but that he only heard a voice like that of harpists harping.

If John hears harpists playing their harps, then they which sing in the following verse could refer to the harpists. On the other hand, if John is saying that the voice sounds like harpists, then there may not actually be harpists.

If the voice (singular) is in view rather than harpists (plural), then they (plural) which sing (14:4) probably refers to the 144,000.

What is perhaps less ambiguous than the identity of the harpists is the activity that is associated with the harp. The four living creatures and twenty-four elders are said to have harps (5:8). So do those who have victory over the Beast (15:2). Harps were often used in worship in the OT (2Sam. 6:5; 1Chron. 25:1-7; Ps. 33:2; 43:4; 57:8-9; 98:5; 147:7; 149:3; 150:3-6).

C. And they sang 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. (Revelation 14:3)

1. They sang as it were a new song

They sang a new song. Who are the “they”?

- If the harpists are the singers in heaven, then they sing in commemoration of the unique experience of the 144,000 on earth.
- If the 144,000 are singing in heaven, the song they sing is probably motivated by their similar experience to those who had victory over the Beast through martyrdom (Rev. 15:3).
- If this is a millennial scene and they sing from the earth, they sing because they were protected for the entire duration of the Tribulation.

In the Bible, new songs are often the by-products of trials, expressing themes of deliverance (Ps. 40:3; 98:1; 144:9). So it is generally accepted that this new song would be the song of deliverance from and victory over the dragon, beast, and false prophet.

2. Before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders

They sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. The musicians stood before the throne in the presence of God himself, and in front of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders who surround the throne (4:4, 6).

3. No man could learn that song but the 144,000, which redeemed from the earth

What is the reason that no one else could learn the song? One reason could be that this new song speaks of a unique and personal experience of the 144,000.

D. 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. And in their mouth was

found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God. (Revelation 14:4-5)

Here, John gives a fourfold identification of the redeemed from the earth:

- they are not defiled
- they are followers of the Lamb
- they are firstfruits
- they are without fault

1. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.

There are some who believe that the phrase “not defiled with women” refers to celibacy. If this the case, it runs counter to the Bible’s teaching of marriage (Gen. 2:18-24; 1 Cor. 9:5; Heb. 13:4; see also 1Tim. 4:1-3)

There are others who modified the idea of celibacy by saying that verse 4 means that the 144,000 were adult men who abstain from physical intimacy for ceremonial purity at this time.

While the Bible allows for a temporary abstinence of physical intimacy in a marriage, the conditions set for such abstinence is strict (1Cor. 7:5)

In the context of 14:4, the interpretation that these 144,000 were doing some form of ritual purification is weak for the following reasons.

- First, there is no indication that the 144,000 are all adult men.
- Second, physical intimacy in a marital relationship is not wrong; on the contrary, it is blessed (Heb. 13:4).
- Third, the verb “to defile” [*molunō*] occurs three times in the New Testament (1 Cor. 8:7; Rev. 3:4; 14:4), and in every instance, it is used figuratively. In the context of Revelation 14, the word “defile” means not being unfaithful to the Lord, and not to be taken literally to refer to the acts of illicit sex.

2. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

Our Lord Jesus told the disciples that “taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:38). He also said that the Shepherd, “He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice” (John 10:4). Our Lord Jesus expects believers to follow Him.

The words “follow” and “goeth” are both in the present tense, which means that it is an ongoing activity of the Shepherd and the sheep.

3. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

They are the redeemed and firstfruits unto God. What is the meaning of the expression firstfruits?

- In Mosaic ceremonial law, “firstfruits” is a technical term for the first portion of grain and fruit harvests and flocks offered to God. When the Israelites harvested the first ears of the grain harvest and consecrated them to the Lord, they expected the rest of the harvest to follow.

The firstfruits are the first portion of a harvest which is dedicated to God. It demonstrates the priority which is given to God (Lev. 23:10-14).

Figuratively, it also refers to persons as the first of a set or category first. The nation of Israel is said to be the firstfruits of God’s increase which would eventually include multitudes of redeemed Gentiles (Jer. 2:3).

In the New Testament, the first converts in an area are described as firstfruits (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:15; James 1:18).

- “Firstfruits” applies to the entire entity, the totality of the 144,000 wholly offered in thankfulness to God and the Lamb. After the Church Age and the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (Rom. 11:25), these represent the firstfruits of the spiritual awakening of Israel in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom to follow.

Some regard the firstfruits as those Jews (7:4-8) who come to faith in Jesus as Messiah during the Tribulation and are uniquely preserved. They would represent the “first fruits unto God and to the Lamb” (14:4).

4. In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

“In their mouth was found no guile.” The word “guile” is also translated “deceit” (Mark 7:22; Rom. 1:29). It is also translated “subtlety” (Matt. 26:4; Acts 13:10). The first part of verse 5 is actually taken from the writings of Isaiah and Zephaniah (Isa. 53:9; Zeph. 3:13), which actually describes our Lord Jesus Christ (1Pet. 2:22; see Ps. 15:1-3)

The phrase “without fault” is also translated as “without blemish” (Eph. 5:27; 1 Pet. 1:19), “without spot” (Heb. 9:14). This is a picture of the offerings of the animals to God, which must be without blemish (Lev. 1:3; 3:1, 6; see Eph. 5:26-27)

In conclusion, four characteristics describe the great multitude of saints who are with the Lamb on Mount Zion (Ps. 2:6). As the forces of the Antichrist attack the church on earth, it demonstrates purity, obedience, commitment, and veracity. With these traits, the saints are able to overcome the evil one.

REVELATION 14:6-13

⁶ And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

⁷ Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

⁸ And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

⁹ And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

¹² Here is the patience of the saints: here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. (Revelation 14:6–12)

A. The First Angel – And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Revelation 14:6–7)

1. I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven

John writes that he saw another angel flying in the sky between heaven and earth. John introduces another group of three angels referred to as “another angel.” In 14:6, it is “another [*allos*] angel” of the same kind.

2. Having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth

This angel is said to be flying in the midst of heaven, or more accurately in mid-heaven (see Rev. 8:13). In 14:6, the angel will be pronouncing the everlasting gospel. The audience will be those who “dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”

This is the only time that the word “gospel” is used in Revelation. The “gospel” is preceded by the adjective “everlasting” but without the definite article. “Everlasting” points to the timelessness and permanence of the Word of God, which people ignore to their own detriment.

“Gospel” [*euangelion*] means “good news.”

The expression “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” occurs repeatedly in Revelation and alludes to unrepentant residents on this earth who reject God (compare 11:9; 13:7; 17:15), to the saints who worship the Lord (see 5:9; 7:9), and to people everywhere who are being called to repent (10:11).

Here the angel addresses a message of repentance to all sinners who have been indifferent to God and his Word.

3. Fear God, and give glory to him

The angel calls on all the inhabitants of the earth to hear and respond to the message. The command is to fear God and to give Him glory and worship Him.

4. The hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

The reason for these commands is that the hour of God’s judgment has come. Time is running out for the human race, for the end is near with the Judgment Day at hand.

B. The Second Angel –And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. (Revelation 14:8)

After the first “another angel,” there is a second “another angel.” The announcement of first “another angel” is related to the announcement of the second “another angel” in that when the people refuse to repent and give God the glory that is due Him, they will be judged.

1. Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city

The name Babylon appears six times in Revelation (14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21). Revelation 14:8 is the first time that the name is mentioned. There are at least three interpretations for this name:

- Literal Babylon, because the name of the Euphrates River also appears (9:14; 16:12).
- A reference to the evil in particular places throughout history.
- A code name for Rome, which Peter alluded to in his epistle (1 Pet. 5:13).

2. Because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

The second part of the clause is taken from Jeremiah 51:7. Here, John mixes his metaphors – drinking wine and wrath. Wine, when drunk in quantity, distorts one’s capability to think soberly and rationally. And when one is drunk, the next step is usually immorality. When people are intoxicated with

their own selves, and when they reject God and His Christ and His Gospel, they will be led to their own downfall.

The word “fornication” [*porneia*] is the word from which we get the English word “pornography” or sexual immorality. This will be one of the marks of the last days – a proliferation of sexual immorality.

C. The Third Angel –And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: (Revelation 14:9–10)

1. If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand

There is a third “another angel” is the last one in a group of three to pronounce a warning of advancing doom and destruction. This angel addresses all those who already pay homage to the beast that is coming up out of the sea of humanity and who worships the image that has been erected in his honor.

2. The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation

These will be the same people who will drink of the wine of wrath (14:8). John again uses the image of drinking wine. But here, the act of drinking wine is in the future tense.

Notice that this wine of wrath is poured out, meaning that God hands the cup to the individual himself. The individual will be made to drink the cup of wrath; the future tense signifies the inevitability of the act.

John also says; that this cup will be “poured out with mixture,” which literally means without being diluted. God’s wrath has not been diluted but is poured full strength into the cup handed over to sinful people (Jer. 25:15; Isa. 51:17, 22; Ps. 75:8).

3. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb

The last part of verse 10 tells us the effects of drinking the wine of God’s wrath. The punishment will be everlasting. The phrase “fire and brimstone” first appears in the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24). Fire and brimstone is also applied to others in the Bible: the wicked (Ps. 11:6), Assyria (Isa. 30:33), Edom (Isa. 34:9), and Gog (Ezek. 38:22).

John describes the lake of fire and brimstone as the place where the devil, the beast, the false prophet, and all the wicked will be (19:20; 20:10; 21:8).

- D. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. (Revelation 14:11)**

The judgment will be everlasting. John here alludes back to Isaiah 34:9-10. Sinners are in this fire of torment. The Bible does not teach annihilation. There is no end to their torment.

- E. Here is the patience of the saints: here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. (Revelation 14:12)**

While John writes about the wicked and God's perfect judgment, he does not forget the saints. For Christians to continue to live in a hostile pagan world, John says that they must continue to keep God's commands and the faith of Jesus. The commandments of God are the Bible. As the world increasingly turns away from the divine commands and considers them obsolete, Christians are told to keep them.

The last phrase in this verse, "the faith of Jesus" is translated in several ways.

- The faith of Jesus (KJV, NKJV), implying an objective faith is reciting a Christian creed at worship or giving a defense of the gospel.
- Their faith in Jesus (ESV, NASV) implying a person's subjective faith in Jesus Christ
- Faithful to Jesus (NIV), implying faith that demonstrates dedicated loyalty to Jesus.