

The Coming Victory Celebration

Revelation 14:1-5

We return once again this morning to Revelation chapter 14 if you will take your Bibles and turn there with me. This morning we will examine verses one through five, Revelation chapter 14. Let me read this amazing text to you.

And I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. And they *sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb. And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.¹

Every Christian will agree that these are difficult days in which we live. As we look around the world and look at our own lives and families we will acknowledge that we struggle with the inevitable problems of life as we live it out in this sin cursed world. We battle against Satan and the world's systems that he operates through his minions. We look at the deliberate falsehoods that are presented to us from our politicians. We see the corruption in our government and in our media. We find ourselves having to deal with the special interest groups in our country and around the world that are committed to the complete eradication of Christianity. We deal with the anti God educational system and an entertainment industry that bombards us with all manner of evil. And then we see the false religious systems. We turn on the television and it is there. We turn on the radio, it is there. We go to the bookstores, it is there. And we see false teachers multiplying faster than fruit flies.

Indeed the world, dear friends, is being prepared for the antichrist. The world is moving inexorably towards a day of judgment. And on top of all of this we are all besieged with health problems, with financial problems, with relational problems, the list goes on and on.

Well, dear friends, I have good news for you. The truth is all of this is going to come to an end one day for those who know and love Christ. It is all going to be over and we can rejoice in that. This is God's promise.

And in chapter 14 we have a marvellous glimpse of the future, of what our lives will even be like someday when the battle is over. We have a preview here of a future victory celebration in which we will participate, a foretaste of triumph and glory. And I have titled, therefore, my discourse to you this morning, "The Coming Victory Celebration."

¹ Revelation 14:1-5.

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This is a welcomed relief after our Lord has revealed to us previously the rise of the dragon who is Satan and the antichrist and the false prophet in chapter 13. There we read of all manner of wickedness and deception and violence that will mark the coming days of tribulation. And remember chapters 12 through 14 form a parenthesis in the chronology of the tribulation. Just after the announcing of the seventh trumpet judgments—the details of which we will resume in chapter 15 that will lead up to the Lord’s arrival—chapters 12 and 13 actually recapitulate the events of chapters six through 11. You will recall chapter 12 there is the description of the career of the antichrist as he opposes God and seeks to destroy Israel and all who love him. And we also see in chapter 13 the unveiling of the career of the antichrist as well as the false prophet. And as we observe the malignancy of sin and apostasy that is constantly eating away at every system of our age, we can see how the world is being prepared for the maniacal reign of deception and terror that will be the mark of the reign of the antichrist.

But now in chapter 14 we have the third and final division of this informative interlude, if you will. John records here a series of electrifying visions that really provide for us an overview of the final events in heaven and on earth that will ultimately terminate in the return of our Lord and Savior.

So this is a wonderful passage, an encouraging passage of Scripture. These truths offer hope for every true believer, especially those who are weighed down with the cares and calamities of this world. But as we examine the text we are going to discover something else. Not only hope for the future, but also grace for today, practical wisdom for Christian living.

Have you ever wondered why it is that some people just collapse under the weight of life whereas others seem to be able to transcend it? Why do some Christians, even, live with worry and confusion and depression and doubt and discouragement and anger and loneliness and they just can’t seem to rise above it? Their life is anything but a celebration.

We are reminded by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:57, “Thanks be to God,” he says, “who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”² And yet there are some Christians who walk around like Eeyore. Everything is horrible and terrible and they just can’t seem to function.

In our text this morning the Lord reintroduces to us the most godly, Christ honoring men the world will ever know, 144,000 faithful victorious men, men who will endure unprecedented and unparalleled hardships as they live out their lives in the harshest living conditions that the world will ever see. We cannot even imagine how difficult life will be during the time of Daniel’s 70th week, the time of the tribulation judgments, yet their lives, as we will see, transcend the pain. Somehow their lives transcend the heartache. You never see them giving up. They are never beat down. They never allow Satan’s temptation as well as their own natural bent towards sin to defeat them. And we want to

² 1 Corinthians 15:57.

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ask the question: Well, how does this happen? And we have a bit of an understanding here in this text. We have an understanding of how we, too, can live victorious lives.

The answer, of course, to how we can live a victorious life is found all through Scripture, but as we look at this unique passage of Scripture I find three categories that I think will help us if we approach it this way. We are going to see, first of all, that they had a *confident faith* and we must have a confident faith; secondly, a *celebratory song*; thirdly, a *committed life* and, as we will see, their lives will be committed to *sexual purity, to Christ, to truth and to holiness*.

If you claim to be a Christian yet your life is a disaster, dear friends, if you are brutally honest with yourself you will discover that you are woefully lacking in one of these areas. All of us have something to learn here from this passage, not only about the future—certainly that is the primary intention of the text—but also about how to honor Christ in our lives.

Now, before we examine this text, let's be reminded afresh of who these men are. You will recall back in Revelation chapter seven and the first eight verses we were introduced to them. They are “bond servants of God,” the text tells us, whom God has sealed on their foreheads. They are from every tribe of the sons of Israel. And then he offers an extensive list of those particular tribes. So these will be a select group of Jewish believers that God will mark out for his own protection and possession. This will be the purpose of the seal that he places upon them, 144,000 converted Jewish evangelists.

They tell us today that there are approximately 50,000 true missionaries in the world today. There's many more than that, but these are only the ones that truly preach the gospel of Christ. So you can imagine, now, these men are introduced around the mid-time of the tribulation when about half of the population will be gone. So we will have the greatest army of missionaries that the world has ever seen that God will unleash upon this dreadful era. These will be the firstfruits of the redeemed of Israel, 144,000 godly men that are of the remnant of Israel on the earth during that time of great tribulation. And they will begin to fulfill what Israel failed to fulfill, their original role as a witness nation. You will recall that they were the custodians of divine truth, but because of their sin, that was transferred to the Gentile Church. The time of the Gentiles, by this time, is about to be over and we are going to see now these men taking up that role once again and, of course, this will continue on throughout the millennial kingdom.

And as we think about that, may I remind you as well that once again we see God's faithfulness to his covenant promises to Israel, to his covenant people. You will recall that back in the first eight verses of Acts chapter one there is the discussion of Israel's national restoration. That was the theme of conversation between Jesus and his disciples just prior to his ascension on the Mount of Olives. And there we learn that after his resurrection the Lord spent a period of 40 days instructing his disciples regarding the things concerning the kingdom. And we know biblically that at the end of Daniel's 70th week, the time of the tribulation, the Lord will return and establish the earthly phase of that kingdom that will last for 1000 years. And these 144,000 Israelites will be preserved

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from the impending plagues that will fall upon an unbelieving world during the second half of the tribulation so that they can be instruments of saving grace in God's elected purposes for Israel and for even the lost Gentiles that will be left upon the planet during that time.

These men were first introduced in chapter seven during the time of these unimaginable catastrophes that were... or that will be occurring on the earth as a result of God's first six seal judgments. You will remember that there will be world-wide wars and famine. There will be the ashen horse of death that will bring war and famine and disease and the wild beasts of the earth. And then there will be the earthquakes. Death will be so widespread the Word tells us that just the earthquakes will kill a fourth of the earth. That is a fourth of those that are still left alive. Inconceivable earthquakes and asteroids, we read about that will hit the earth, a time of unimaginable chaos and confusion and death and destruction.

And amidst all of that, you have Satan now and the antichrist and the false prophet seeking to obliterate Christians and Jews. The salt and the light of the world, the Church now is gone. We read that the Holy Spirit of God has now stepped aside and he now allows man to fully indulge all of his passions. It is like Romans one, they are now totally given over to their flesh, to a reprobate mind, a worthless mind to pursue all of their lusts. And, therefore, they will experience the consequences of their iniquities. And yet, dear friends, in the midst of this hell on earth many people are going to be saved. That is amazing. And many will hear the gospel from these 144,000 Jewish evangelists.

Now, let's examine the text and discover what God will do one day and what will be the mark of the character of these men that results in such triumph, marks of triumph that should be with every believer.

Notice in the first verse, here we now have John being introduced to another startling vision, a startling revelation. It says, "And I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads."³

Now, there is no indication that these men knew that they had been sealed. Back in chapter seven we read of an angel "having the seal of the living God" who was commissioned to do the sealing to these particular men who we know were already faithful servants because they were called "bond servants." They were already slaves of Christ. So they had already been saved by grace. But there is no evidence that they have or that they are aware of some visible mark upon their forehead.

We don't want to be dogmatic with this, but I don't see that. There is no evidence that they were aware of some angelic visitation where an angel wrote something or tattooed something on their forehead, no evidence that they knew one another, no evidence that they knew that they were somehow special objects of divine protection. Yet we see that they fearlessly and faithfully served the Lord. They are not strutting around pointing at

³ Revelation 14:1.

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some tattoo on their forehead and saying, “Aha, you can’t get me.” That is not the attitude here.

Their seal, we know, will protect them from the wrath of God during the judgments at the last half of the tribulation, but not from the wrath of Satan, not from the antichrist. We know that they are part of the woman’s seed in chapter 12 verse 17. Some of them—if not all of them—will be martyred for their faith, for refusing to worship the image of the beast.

There is no evidence that all of these will be preserved unscathed through the tribulation. In fact, Dr. Thomas says this, and I quote, “Martyrdom is the ultimate goal of Christian faith. The highest place in the future awaits the martyrs. He certainly would not exclude the 144,000 from that number. They are not secured from physical death as Revelation 13:15 so distinctly indicates. If God allows the beast to dispose of the two witnesses in Revelation 11:7, he certainly will not isolate the 144,000 from terminal harm inflicted by this arch enemy,” end quote.

The point is this, dear friends, these men will worship and serve the living Christ amidst unprecedented persecution and they will do that by the power of faith, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God like every other saint. So don’t think that somehow these men have been endowed with some supernatural, super human ability to be faithful in the midst of persecution. We just don’t see that here. They are going to worship and serve Christ not because they are just invincible to his judgments or because they knew they were in any way special.

I believe this leads us to the first point that I want to make as we look at this text. They must have had, number one, *a confident faith*. This is the foundation for Christian living, by the way. And here in this very first verse we have the evidence and the outcome of their faith in this opening scene. Again, don’t you know, they will read this text and they may not even know that it is applying to them, but they will read Revelation 14:1 and they will see, “And I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.”⁴

Obviously, they believed all along that God is going to do exactly what he has promised he is going to do. The question is: Do you believe that? Do you believe with all of your heart that Jesus is coming again? They trusted in the power and the promises of God. They had read the prophets. They knew the prophecy in Psalm chapter two: “But as for me, I have installed my king upon Zion, my holy mountain.” They knew that Jesus was going to come. And this is the first thing the Lord reveals in this amazing scene of his Second Coming. Notice more closely we read that the lamb was standing on Mount Zion. This is where Christ promised that he would return. In Isaiah chapter 24 verse 23 we read, “For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem.”⁵ There are so many texts I could give you. I will give you but a couple more.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Isaiah 24:23.

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In Micah chapter four and verse one we read, “And it will come about in the last days That the mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, And the peoples will stream to it.”⁶ “For from Zion will go forth the law,”⁷ in verse two, “Even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”⁸ And in verse seven:

And the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion From now on and forever. As for you, tower of the flock, Hill of the daughter of Zion [referring to Jerusalem] To you it will come— Even the former dominion will come, The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.⁹

What a magnificent fulfillment. You see, these men—as will other saints during that time and hopefully those of us today—will live in the light of his coming glory.

So the lamb was standing on Mount Zion, we read. And we also see that with him is the 144,000 having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads.

I believe, dear friends, that John is now seeing in this vision something that, perhaps, they could not see, the name of the lamb and his Father written on their foreheads. Again, this is a picture of the coming glory of God. And it is possible that all of these men will be martyred during the time of the tribulation and now they are standing with the Lord. And they will enter with others who are still left alive into millennial glory. Together they will enter the kingdom with the rest of the saints that will be left alive during that time and they will probably even continue their evangelistic efforts during the millennial age. There is no reason to believe that would not be the case.

You will recall that many of the offspring of the redeemed who enter into the millennial kingdom will not believe in Christ. We know that because of what will happen towards the end when Satan is released when there will be a large group that will try to destroy Christ and those who belong to him and the Lord will do away with them.

As we think of this, dear friends, I ask you to ask yourself: Do you have a confident faith that these things are, indeed, going to come about? Because if you don't, you will never endure persecution and times of trials. Instead, you will always find yourself looking down at the ground rather than looking up to see the Lord coming.

Beloved, faith is a gift of God that we must learn to exercise. We read in Hebrews 11:1 that, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”¹⁰ We know that the Lord has said in John 14:1, “Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God,

⁶ Micah 4:1.

⁷ Micah 4:2.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Micah 4:7-8.

¹⁰ Hebrews 11:1.

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believe also in Me.”¹¹ “Believe what I am telling you. I am who I say that I am and that includes I am coming back. Trust me.”

In Hebrews 11 we have examples of great heroes of the faith and in verse 13 we read that, “All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.”¹² And verse 16 goes on to say they desired a better country, a heavenly country. In other words, they didn’t see the fulfillment of the promises, but that is what they desired. That is what they kept looking for.

Whenever I think about this I am reminded of a story that a friend told me that happened in a facility not far from the Moody Bible Institute where I attended years ago. This was a facility for retarded adults and he went through a tour of this facility. It was somehow affiliated with some of the things that their church was doing and one of the janitors that was with them was cleaning the windows and he made the comment that, “My biggest job around here is to keep the windows clean.” And he said, “Do you know why? Because these dear people constantly have their faces pressed against the glass looking for Jesus to return.”

What a testimony of child like innocent faith. And that is how we should be. Beloved, we have to have a confident faith, a faith that is conscious, one that keeps ever before us the reality that Jesus is coming again and this will result in victorious living. The apostle Paul said in Romans 5:2 by faith we stand in the grace of God. And he went on to say, “And rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”¹³ These men had no doubt that Jesus was going to return and glorify himself and this stunning scene of triumph is a testimony not only to God’s faithfulness, but also of the faith of those who served him.

You see, dear friends, this was the scene that no doubt they had ever before them in their mind. This is what they longed for. This was the goal, shall we say. This was the finish line that they constantly had on their mind and in their heart. Everything in their life would therefore be prioritized around that particular triumphant moment when they would see the Lord face to face in all of his glory. And I believe that we will see him at the time of the rapture, but, nonetheless, that is still the goal that we need to keep in our mind, that the Lord is coming for us and he is going to return to this earth and do all that he has said.

You remember what the apostle Paul said in Philippians three. Remember that great passage where he recounts all of the accolades of praise that the world would give him. He was a highly successful, highly educated Jewish leader. But he said that he had no confidence in the flesh. That meant nothing to him. He said, “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have

¹¹ John 14:1.

¹² Hebrews 11:13.

¹³ Romans 5:2.

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suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.”¹⁴

He goes on to say:

That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.¹⁵

Now, like the apostle Paul, the 144,000 will keep their eyes fixed on the goal, on the finish line of Christ coming in all of his glory.

You say, “Yes, but, pastor, you don’t understand my finances are drying up.” Well, my advice to you would be, you need to examine your finances. You need to be responsible. You may need to get some counsel, but, dear friends, above all stay focused because the bigger issue is: Are you serving the Lord, because he is coming again? That is the real issue.

“Well, yes, but you don’t understand, my marriage is falling apart.”

Well, my advice would be to you to examine your heart. The Lord tells us in James one when we have severe trials that we are to ask him for wisdom. In fact, he commands us to do that. You need to examine your heart, he says, that I will give to all men who ask for wisdom. I will give to all men generously. You need to look at those types of things. You need to honor Christ. You need to pray. But, dear friends, when it is all said and done at the end of the day, you need to get focused once again on the fact that Jesus is coming again. That has to be your priority. That is the result of a confident faith.

Here the Lord of glory stands before those whom he has sealed, the 144,000, this amazing picture symbolizing the ultimate triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ and the saints that he has come to deliver. The reign of the redeemed on earth is about to begin.

Now as we look at this again people will say, “Well, I am depressed. I am lonely. I am discouraged. I am afraid. I am worried.”

Again, beloved, let the Second Coming of Christ be the center of gravity around which your life will orbit. You will never transcend the temporal unless you learn to constantly gaze upon the eternal. Keep your face pressed upon the glass, if you will. There is where

¹⁴ Philippians 3:8.

¹⁵ Philippians 3:10-14.

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the power, the joy and the triumph and the celebration will be even in the midst of suffering.

1 John three verse two we read:

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.¹⁶

So first we must have *a confident faith* and this will result in, number two, *a celebratory song*. Verse two. “And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.”¹⁷

Now as we study the Word of God we see that harps are typically associated with joyous praise. And as we look at chapter 19 and verse six in Revelation we can understand that what is being described here is a magnificent chorus of heavenly voices with full orchestral accompaniment. The singers are probably an innumerable angelic host that is introduced in chapter five verse 11 and chapter seven and verse 11.

Beloved, when Christ returns, what we see here is that heaven is going to erupt in praise. And here we see the Lamb of God who was slain now standing victorious as the king of glory. Think of the contrast here. You have the grotesque image of the beast that has been set up in the temple, and the false prophet has been able to make this thing talk. And there is now the mark of the beast on people who worship the beast. And in contrast to that, now, you have the Lamb of God, the Lord of glory with those whom he has marked. So he stands here, a picture of his coming majesty and glory.

Notice verse three. “And they *sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures.”¹⁸ Notice that the song here is one that is sung by this angelic chorus and is sung before the living creatures. That would be a reference to the seraphim as we read in Isaiah six that are these exalted, this exalted order of angels stationed in and around the throne of God. In Revelation 4:6 we read that as well, they are singing before the elders. That is emblematic of the glorified Church. In other words, that is us. Beloved, what we are reading here is a description of the song and the orchestral accompaniment of what we will one day hear. Please understand that.

Verse three. “And no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth.”¹⁹

¹⁶ 1 John 3:2-3.

¹⁷ Revelation 14:2.

¹⁸ Revelation 14:3.

¹⁹ Ibid.

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Now this is a curious statement. Evidently the theme of this song that we will hear will include some kind of special lyrics describing the unique protection from the wrath of God that they enjoyed during the time of the tribulation and now the glorious result of, perhaps, their martyrdom. So this will be a song of their triumphant glory because now they are standing with the one who has delivered them, the lamb, as the text says, “who purchased them from the earth.”

Now, I have got to digress here for a moment. Beloved, God loves music. We see this all through the Scripture. In fact, he commands music to be an integral part of worship. We see this in the Old Testament and the New Testament. We see this in terms of what will come one day in heaven and on earth. We know that the Word of God informs our heart and our mind regarding the truths of redemptive faith and what it means to be part of Christ and all of the things that he is going to do for us. And music is the vehicle that God has given us to express the doxologies of our heart that literally want to explode from within us (if you truly know and love Christ and if you are serving him). And this gives glory to God.

In 1 Chronicles 23 and verse five we read how there were 4000 people that were praising the Lord with the instruments that David made. There were about 40,000 people that served in the temple, a pretty large church. And 4000 of them were just the orchestral musicians. We read in the Old Testament about how that they were skilled musicians. We read all through the Old Testament about music. You will remember in Exodus 15:1 that Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song before the Lord. What an exhilarating thing that would have been to hear a couple of hundred thousand, maybe a million men singing together. I have been in situations where I have heard three and 4000 men sing and, ladies, nothing wrong with your voices, but there is something absolutely overwhelming to hear men sing praises to the Lord. We see that back in Exodus 15.

And then also in that text we read how Miriam, the sister of Moses leads a women’s chorus. Music is all over the place. In 1 Samuel 10 we read about the Old Testament prophets that had a male chorus with instruments and we know that there in the Old Testament the Lord had choirs that would sing in the temple and they would sing antiphonally where one group would answer the other group back and forth.

The first temple choir loft would hold several thousand singers and, of course, the 4000 instrumentalists. Later on even when Zerubbabel came back and built the smaller temple and the choir loft would hold 200. It wasn’t near like the first one, but you still see the priority of music.

And in the Old Testament we read of all these instruments that the Lord loves. We read about drums, timbrel, bells, woodwinds, trumpets, clarinets, flutes, ram’s horns. And it goes on and on. And if you study the type of music that the Lord loves—not in terms of style—because that is never necessarily the issue—but what you will see is the Lord likes his music loud. He likes his musicians skillful and he wants it to be sung from the heart with great joy. And the theme of the music has to be a new song. Repeatedly in the Old Testament we read, “Sing a new song unto the Lord.” This is the song of the redeemed.

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This is the song of salvation. This is the song of forgiveness and grace and eternal life, the song of new creations, the song of salvation.

And please hear me. Any man who claims to be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and has no desire to sing the new song, probably does not possess it. David's testimony of salvation in Psalm 40 and verse one says this.

I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me and heard my cry.
He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, And
He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. He put a new song
in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear And will
trust in the LORD.²⁰

Again, hear me closely. If you love the songs of this sin cursed world, these songs of pain and sorrow and immorality and drug abuse and all of these types of things, if you love that more than the new song of redemption and transformation and eternal life, there is something seriously wrong with your spiritual condition.

1 John two and verse 15, "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world..."²¹ And, by the way. Here is the theme of the songs of the world. "The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life."²² All of those things of the world, he says, it is not from the Father, but it is from the world. And he goes on to say, "And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever."²³

Now, beloved, this was the heart of the 144,000. And I say that proleptically because this will be ultimately their heart. Their lives will reflect the transforming power of salvation. And never forget, a virtuous life will be a victorious life, and this is the example that we have here in the 144,000.

So certainly they will have *a confident faith*. Secondly, they will be able to sing *a celebratory song*. And notice the progression here. Finally, they will have *a committed life*. This will be the fruit of all of this, a life committed to sexual purity, to Christ, to truth and to holiness.

First of all, *sexual purity* in verse four. We read, "These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste."²⁴ And I believe the emphasis here is upon sexual purity, not celibacy.

We know that in Hebrews 13:4 that marriage is honorable and there is nothing defiling about sexual intimacy within the bonds of marriage. And grammatically as we look at

²⁰ Psalm 40:1-3.

²¹ 1 John 2:15-16.

²² 1 John 2:16.

²³ 1 John 2:17.

²⁴ Revelation 14:4.

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the original language, the word “these” is in what we call the emphatic position which points to their unique position. These are men who were worthy of honor because they have kept themselves separate from the world, a world that will be unimaginably corrupt.

You think the sexual promiscuity and immorality that is rampant today is bad? Beloved, during the tribulation it will be exceedingly worse. You can take all of the immorality of the spring break crowd and all of the debauchery of mardis gras. You can put all of that together and it will look like a Sunday school picnic compared to what will happen when the Church is removed and the Holy Spirit is set aside and Satan is reigning unchecked.

These men will be committed to sexual purity. They will be obedient, therefore to the apostle Paul’s command in 1 Thessalonians 4:3 where he said, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality.”²⁵

Young people many times ask me, “Pastor, can you help me know the will of God.” Sure, get out your Bible and there is a whole list of things. Here is one of them right here. This is the will of God, your sanctification. You are to be set apart from the world. And here is one way. Abstain from sexual immorality.

Young people, if you want a victorious Christian life filled with power and joy and blessing, you need to heed these truths. You also need to heed the same truth that the apostle Paul gave to young Timothy where he said in 2 Timothy two and verse 22, he said, “Flee from youthful lusts,”²⁶ run from it so it doesn’t get you. And he says, “And pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”²⁷

Young people, if I can challenge you for a moment. Stand apart from your culture. Dare to be a Daniel. Stand guard over your heart. Run from what the apostle Paul tells us in Galatians five are “the deeds of the flesh which are immorality, impurity, sensuality” and the list goes on. Those are the very first ones. Isn’t that interesting? Immorality, impurity, sensuality. Later on he says, “Those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”²⁸

Young person, older person, if you are practicing those things and you think you are going to heaven, think again.

And so the Word tells us these men were committed to *sexual purity*. Secondly, they were committed to *Christ*. In verse four we also read, “These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.”²⁹ In other words, they followed the voice of their shepherd. What did the Lord say in John 10:27? He said, “My sheep hear my voice, and

²⁵ 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

²⁶ 2 Timothy 2:22.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Galatians 5:21.

²⁹ Revelation 14:4.

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I know them, and they follow me.”³⁰ The point is: Those that don’t follow me aren’t my sheep. I am not their shepherd.

These men were not like the Lord’s unfaithful disciples in Luke 6:46 where the Lord said, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”³¹ If I am your master and you claim that I am your master, why don’t you do what I say? These men will deny themselves. They will take up their cross and follow him.

Notice in verse four at the end he says, “These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.”³² First fruit in the original language has the idea of a contribution. First fruit offerings in the Old Testament were considered to be the first portion of a harvest from a particular crop that would be given to the Lord and used for service. And the majority of the time that this particular term is used in the Septuagint—which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament—we find that it simply refers to a one time contribution. But it also at times can refer to a contribution that symbolizes the first of more to come. And I believe both are in view here.

These men are not only a special contribution to the Lord because of the profound faithfulness that they will manifest in their lives and demonstrate in their service, but they will also be the first fruits of a redeemed remnant of Israel that will be saved.

So they will be committed to *sexual purity*, committed to *Christ*. Thirdly, committed to *truth*. Notice verse five. “And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.”³³

What a contrast to the antichrist and to the false prophet. The mendacity of the way these men speak, the deliberate falsehoods; and all of the false prophets of that day, even as we see today, men that are notorious for being the opposite of what drives these men, false prophets today are notorious for being immoral, self serving, hypocritical lie speakers. These men will speak only the truth though it might cost them their life. These will be men of integrity.

If you want to have a victorious life, be a man or a woman of integrity, not a person of duplicity, not a person of hypocrisy. Be a person who would not be ashamed for other people to view your private life. Because of all of these qualities, indeed, these men, finally, are committed to *holiness*.

At the end of verse five, “They are blameless.”³⁴ It doesn’t say they are sinless. We know in 1 John 1:8 that if we say that we have no sin we are deceiving ourselves for the truth is not in us. No, they are not going to be sinless, but they will be beyond reproach. They will be sincere, faithful, godly men. These will be men obedient to Peter’s admonition for all of us in 1 Peter verse 15. We are to “be like the holy one who called you. Be holy

³⁰ John 10:27.

³¹ Luke 6:46.

³² Revelation 14:4.

³³ Revelation 14:5.

³⁴ Ibid.

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yourselves also in all your behavior because it is written, you shall be holy for I am holy.”

Beloved, these men will be the Lord’s special forces during the time of the tribulation, men who will lead a vast multitude of terrified people to a saving knowledge of Christ.

So here we have a preview of coming glory, one that gives us hope, but also gives us an understanding how we are to live.

And I chose with this thought. Again, if you were weighed down with this life, if you are just kind of overwhelmed with confusion and depression and doubt and loneliness and anger, maybe life dominating sins or anything like that, if your life is anything but a celebration, examine yourself. Ask yourself: Do I have a confident faith in Christ as my Savior and Lord and do I know absolutely that he is coming again and I am going to see him face to face?

And, secondly, do I therefore have a celebratory song in my heart? Is my heart filled with praise? Am I just overflowing with joy because my sins that have been forgiven, for the hope of eternal life that I have, for the mercy and grace that I now possess that I do not deserve? And therefore I just long to express my heart in praise. And, finally, do I have a life that is committed to sexual purity, a life committed to Christ, a life committed to truth, a life that is committed to holiness.

And, if so, if so, beloved, rejoice in the coming victory celebration. Rejoice. It is coming. And let your life be a living testimony of the words of the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:14 where he said, “Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ.”³⁵

Let’s pray together.

Father, we rejoice in these eternal truths. They give us such hope, such a confident faith. Lord, again, our hearts are reignited with praise as we contemplate not only what you have done, but what you are doing and what you will do. Lord, cause us all to examine our heart and may we walk faithfully with you and enjoy the victory that you long to give us even in the midst of great adversity and persecution and suffering in this old fallen world. And, finally, Lord, save the lost. Bring conviction to their heart. Oh, God, how I pray that today will be the day they will confess you as Savior and Lord, for it is in Jesus’ name that I pray. Amen.

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³⁵ 2 Corinthians 2:14.

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