
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Revelation

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Revelation 14:1-5: “The Followers of the Lamb”

General idea: Imagine this incredible scene! John now sets his eyes on The Lamb, standing on Mount Zion. Hope and victory are seen! Christ is there with those who are loyal to Him in faith and deeds, who have not allowed themselves to be deceived. Their focus is Christ and they follow Him as He leads and loves. They have been faithful and have kept themselves from sin even through the toughest of circumstances and temptations. John not only sees His Lord and great Hope, he also sees some of the wonders and sounds of things to come. John sees that Faith is tangible as God’s majesty is shown in its splendor and power. Yet, it was smooth and soothing, a great comfort and reassurance. The mark of the beast was rejected and the mark of Christ was received. The result was faithfulness and glory to Christ the Lamb. The faithful fruits that we display are also the encouragement others need and a testimony of conviction to those who struggle. Beware that there will be judgment for those who scorn righteousness and the precepts and plans of God.

Vs. 1-5, Contexts: This passage uses agricultural images given to an agrarian people living in a city. John receives another vision and gives it to us with a play on words (Ezek. 10:1; 44:4; Dan. 10:5). The call here is to be faithful or be harvested for judgment, because God wants the best for Himself just as He offered His best to us. Continuing the theme of allegiance, this is about the contest and contrast of the mark of loyalty versus disloyalty. Will our loyalty and faith be to ourselves and/or evil, being easily led by manipulations, or will our allegiance be to the Lord and marked by Christ? Previously, the Dragon and the Beast, representing evil and disloyalty has manipulated and twisted truth and deceived people. Then, in Chapter 13, evil’s intentions are made fully known and clear, so there is no excuse. There is no excuse of manipulation or deception; evil is what evil does and you either follow it or God. This passage refers to those who are saints, people who are the *elect*, saved by grace—the redemptive work of Christ. These are the people who are sealed by their faith, motivated by their devotion and trustworthiness to Christ, and marked by the flow of their faithfulness and Fruit. This is not some esoteric, metaphoric number or flutter for speculation. It is quite clear; it is us, those who are Christians, all who have ever been and will be—Christianity in completion and in unity with Christ. In this passage, these followers, the 144,000—all of faithful Christianity who are consecrated to give worship and praise to God on Mount Zion (Ezek. 9:3-f; Rev. 5:10; 7:4-8).

Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Lamb.* This is an image of Jesus Christ, the sacrificial Lamb of God who redeems the sins of humanity. Christ is the ultimate depiction and application of this—Jesus Saves (Gen. 17:3; 22; Ex. 12:3; 2 Chron. 7:3; Is. 53:8; Mark 3:11; 10:45; John 1:29; 3:16; 1 Cor. 6:20; 2 Cor. 8:9; Heb. 12:22-24; Rev. 5:6)!

- *Mount Zion* refers to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and/or the city of Jerusalem, the representations of Hope and sacredness, which are the most holy and sacred places in Judaism. Before Jerusalem was Israel's city, it was a pagan fortress that was taken over by David; he established it as the capital (2 Sam. 5:7). Thus Zion, the pagan name, becomes a synonym for Jerusalem and a symbol as the eternal dwelling place of God. This is also an image of great comfort in that Jesus Christ has victory over evil and corruption (1 Cor. 15:24-28; Rom. 8:19-21; Gal 4:26; 2 Thess. 2:8; Heb 12:22-24; Rev. 11:19; 14:6-18; 19:11-16; 21:2), and will physically and spiritually rule over all of the earth (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:28-30; Rev. 20:1-10). This also refers to the restoration of the faithful—from captivity for the Jews, and the promise of Christ's second coming for Christians as Jesus rules from His throne in Zion/Jerusalem (Is. 2:2-4; 65:17-25; Zeph. 3:11-13; Zech. 9:9-10; 14:16-21; as well as 4 Ezra). Jesus in His glory, is seated on the throne, and the righteous (those who accepted Christ) will be clothed with authority by His righteousness to inhabit the New Kingdom (Dan. 7:22; Matt. 19:28; 25:34; Luke 12:32; 22:28-30; 1 Cor. 6:2; Rev 2:5; 21:2-3), fulfilling the Kingdom of God on earth (Matt. 16:18-19; 26:29; Mark 14:25; Heb. 8:11).
- *Jesus Saves* is a symbol, meaning that the numbers are beyond counting or unfathomable to man. (Rev. 1:1; 2:20; 7:1-8; 22:6) This denotes how Israel returned from the Babylonian captivity to inherit the land (Ezek. 48). This also alludes to us, the Church, who are the inheritors (Rom. 11:1-36; Rev.12).
- *His name...written on their foreheads* is a contrast of allegiance to the beast versus to Christ (Rev. 13:16-18). It refers to the loyalty of the faithful and the contrast of the disloyalty of those who desire evil over the Way of God. God sees and protects those who are His (Rev. 3:12; 7:3-8; 13:16; 22:4).
- *Sound from heaven...rushing waters*. This image is from Ezekiel, a display of God's splendor, purity, and overwhelming elaborations, magnitude, and majesty. These words, as in any human language or thought, are insufficient to convey who God is or what Heaven is like (Rev. 5:6; 14:14; 19:11-13). Obviously, this is a figurative, not a literal description of Heaven (Ezek. 1:24; 43:2; Rev. 1:15).
- *Loud peal of thunder* is the symbolic representation of God's mighty power coming to deliver His people. It is also hope, a glimpse into the awesome majesty and power of God. This is not to be scary; rather, it refers to God's Supremacy and Authority and our duty to heed His voice and reverence Him with our allegiance and continual faithfulness. (Ex. 19:16-19; Job 37:5-6; Psalm 18:11-15; 77:18; Ezek. 1:4-13, 24-28; 43:2; Dan. 7; 10:6; 1 Tim. 6:16; Heb. 12:18-29; Rev. 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18; 19:6).
- *Harpists playing their harps*. A reference to worship and praise to God (Rev. 5:8; 15:2).

- *Harps* were small, bowed, stringed instruments used in Jewish worship (not to be confused with the large, modern European harps from the 12th century), and were considered the most beautiful musical instruments of that time; here, they are presented as an image of something used to praise God with sincerity and reverence (1 Chron. 25:1-6; 2 Chron. 5:12; 29:25; Neh. 12:27; 1 Sam. 10:5; Psalm 33:2).
- *Sang a new song* refers to the theme of our deliverance. This also compares to “ascents” of the soul, like the Psalms of Ascent (Psalms 120 to 134) as describing mystical experiences or encounters with God (2 Cor. 12:2-4). This is also an image of “being caught up” with our encounter with God, or meeting God as He is our life transforming and our true conviction for our faith and practice. It does not mean a “rapture” as in flying up in the air to meet God (Ezek. 2:2; 3:14, 24: 8:3; 11:1-24; Luke 17:30-35; John 14:2–3; Philip. 3:21; 1 Thes. 4:17).
- *No one can learn it* refers that this *song* is an image of real music for those who are redeemed. This is also an image of an offering of gratitude for our salvation and used to express our deliverance or blessing. Here, it denotes being inspired by the Spirit and/or being spontaneous in worshipping Christ, the opposite of something “canned,” or obligatory (Psalm 33:1-3; 40:1-3; 96:1-6; 98:1; 144:7-9; 149:1; Is. 42: 8-12; 2 Cor. 12:2-4; Rev. 5:8-9; 14:3).
- *Not defile themselves with women* means keeping oneself free from sexual immorality. Wrong sex at the wrong time with the wrong person hurts both us and others, and defiles us before God. It destroys relationships when we are called to make good ones. This is also a call not to be involved with things that are worldly or pagan.
- *Pure/virgin* refers to being chaste spiritually while giving a physical example, as in faithful with our sexuality. In Jewish culture, it referred to the call of purity for priests (Lev. 15:16-18; Deut. 23:9-11). Here it is a call to be faithful in our daily lives, relations, and relationships with others. The contrast is fornication with the *beast* or faithfulness to God. We cannot have friendship with God and still seek the evil ways of the world; it is our choice—either One or the other (Ex. 34:15; 1 Cor. 1:8; 6:15-20; Heb 13:4; James 4:4).
- *They follow*. This is an image of sheep following the care of the shepherd. Here, Jesus is the Shepherd who loves and cares for us; we follow Him from our faith and gratitude, staying on His path (Matt. 19:21; Mark 8:34; John 10:4; 14-15; Rev. 7:17; 13:17).
- The expression, *First fruits*, gives the image of faithfulness as an offering of the best we can be; “my utmost for His Highest” before the Lord is an expression of our true devotion to God. It is used as a term for the first Christian converts who exercised real, extreme faith and who were willing to cut off their family and cultural ties, and face persecutions. In the Old Testament, the Jews offered God the first of their

harvest, which was the best, before they partook of the labor and toil of their cultivation. Here, it is a call to cultivate our faith and offer it up before our Lord as obligatory as well as a form of worship (Ex. 22:29; Lev. 2:12-16; Deut. 18:4; Neh. 10:35, 37, 39; Prov. 3:9). For us, it is more of the freewill verity of faith to declare our confidence of faith and holiness to God. It is also a means of conviction to others as people see our faith. The Spirit uses that to be a testimony (Lev 23:9-14; 2 Kings 4:42; Jer. 2:3; Rom. 11:16; 16:5; 1 Cor. 15:20).

- *No lie/no guile*, meaning falsehood, refers to standing for ethics in God's truth—nor engaging in false teaching, manipulating others for personal gain or skewed agendas, or theological falsehoods, keeping them and/or refusing to yield to real Truth. (Ex. 1:19-20; Is 53:9; Jer. 38:25-27; Rom. 1:25; 1 Pet. 2:21-22; 3:8-11; 2 Pet. 3:3-18; 1 John 2:22; Rev. 3:9).
- *Blameless/without fault* means to be at peace with God because we are “bought” by Christ's redemption. As Christians, we can have peace with God as a result of being justified by faith. By the same token, we can still sin, disappoint, and displease God even though we are saved. He calls us to live according to His requirements, and if we refuse, we need to take heed. Our salvation is secure but we are still accountable for our actions for we will receive commendation and rewards when He returns (Matt. 5: 33-37; Rom. 5:1; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 6:11-20; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph 1:3-14; 1 Pet. 1:19; Jude 24, 25).

Thoughts and Applications:

Being blameless and of faith has a resound that benefits us and reaches to Heaven and God's ears. There is a direct link to how we are accountable to one another and how we are enticed into sin. This also directly relates to our faith and spiritual growth in Christ. If we are tempted or get caught up in sin, we must realize our need and call to repent, and seek Christ's forgiveness. Being faithful and pure sexually means you are a person of faith and conviction, while to be unfaithful and in contrast, being loose sexually means we are loose with our relationship to God. This will result in personal and relational devastation and chaos. Sex causes a bond and is meant for a sacred occasion. When it is misused, it is devastating to all involved and greatly affects our faith and how we run our churches. This is also the reason sexual abuse is so devastating for people! The victim is bonded to his or her attacker in a perverse way, so the act stays in the mind as he or she keeps living it out.

In the case of abuse or mistakes, we have to be diligent to seek forgiveness and repentance. And, if needed, we should seek professional counseling to overcome the experience through God's grace, love, and forgiveness (Gen. 2:24-25; 34:1-3, 8; Prov. 5:15 -22; Rom. 8:12-17; 1 Cor. 6: 12-20; 7:3-5; 2 Cor. 10:5-6; Eph. 1:3; 2:4-10; 5:21-32; Col. 3:1-4; Heb. 13:4; James 4:4).

Real worship comes from our gratitude and faithfulness to the Lord; it must never be pretentious! In our planning of worship, we must allow the Spirit to direct us. It is OK

to compose, plan, and rehearse our praise and music, but we should not allow our worship to be a performance or a show of personalities. Rather, we are called to be an offering of praise to the main and only audience, who is Christ our Lord

The Four Prevailing Views

The Preterist view: They see this passage as a description of the powers of Heaven being greater than the combined forces and associates of evil. The Dragon, Beast of the Sea, and the Beast of the Land try to eliminate the Church but are no match for Christ or we who are in Christ. The primary themes of victory for the faithful and judgment for those who are evil are shown, and when Christians choose to associate themselves with evil and evil's ways, woe to them! When Christians choose to rebel, there are consequences that are eternal. The Early Church prevailed against the savage assaults from Nero and the Roman Empire. Some see this as a duplicate scene in chapter seven, but with more detail. The *song* is a song of redemption and only those who are redeemed can sing it. The *virginity* is not seen as sexual or physical; rather, it is seen as being faithful and refusing to bow to manipulations and temptations from evil. The purpose of the apocalypse is to allow the fruition of faith, the encouragement and growth of the Church, and show that faith, victory, and hope in Christ will prevail against all those who oppose Christ.

The Futurist view: They see this as events taking place as the Great Tribulation as its closes and the Church Millennial Age begins. They see this passage as a glimpse of the conflict of good versus evil and how the Good of Christ prevails. Others in this camp see it as extra information or an index describing an overview of events of the Tribulation. Some see the *144,000* as Jewish believers; others see it as faithful Christians or more informing information to chapter seven. *Mount Zion* is seen as literal or a synonym for heaven. *Virgins* and *no lie* are seen as faithfulness and the willingness to confess and turn from sin, and *first fruits* as offerings to God. Others see those people who were raptured as the ones who return to earth after the Tribulation.

The Idealist view: They see this as a voice from Heaven, the *144,000* who are the people God has redeemed giving testimony and praise to God. They also see this passage as a duplicate scene found in chapter seven, just adding more details. The rest of the passage deals with the contrast of loyalty and allegiance to the beast or to Christ. Then, new *song* can only be sung by those whose joy is in the Lord. They see this passage as pastoral, as giving hope and comfort to the struggling early Christians so we today can have patience and endurance.

The Historicist view: They see this passage as the struggle of the Church trying to reform against the evils of the Medieval Catholic Papacy. Even though its early reformers (such as Wycliffe) were killed, the Church still prevailed and their work still lived on for Christ's glory. Their faith was a song of testimony and faithfulness to countless generations. The images in this passage represent the triumph of the faithful giving eternal glory to God and encouragement to the Church. They see the *144,000* not as an actual number of any particular people being saved, but rather as

representative of those whose faith is in Christ. *Virgin* represents the spiritual decline after the Reformation when the reforming Church was struggling to stay faithful against persecutions and a loss of energy. Others see the *new song* as the declaration that Christ is our Rightfulness. *Virgin* is seen as people refining from sexual immorality and being morally pure, which glorifies God.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What do you find that is smooth and soothing—music, an encouraging note, or?
2. How would you feel and think if you set your eyes on The Lamb standing on Mount Zion? How does Christ help you with your dependability to His precepts and call?
3. Christians, who focus on Christ, will be able to follow Him as He leads and loves. How has this been so for you? How can you be better at it?
4. This passage testifies to the fact that our faith is our benefit. When we are faithful and keep ourselves from sin—even through the toughest of circumstances and temptations—we persevere into greater use and maturity. How has this been so for you? What prevents this from happening?
5. How would you contrast loyalty versus disloyalty in faith? What about how a church is run? How do you display loyalty to God and others?
6. How has Christ as your Lord been your great Hope? How can your faith become more tangible? How can God's majesty and splendor empower you further in faith?
7. How can your faithful fruits be displayed as an encouragement to others? When have you done this and what were the results? What usually needs to take place so a new or immature Christian can be more of a solid testimony of conviction?

8. Why do you suppose people scorn righteousness and the precepts and plans of God? How does it make you feel that there will be judgment for those who maintain contempt toward God?
9. What does it mean to your faith and confidence that God wants the best for Himself? Now, consider that He offered His best to you... because...?
10. Why do some Christians allow themselves to be easily led by manipulations or *showman* personalities and not by the Truth of the Word? How is this like the way the beast will deceive people?
11. If tough times really hit your church, will their allegiance be to the Lord and marked by Christ or to something else? Do you think that there is no excuse for being manipulated when the Truth is in us by both the Spirit and in writing contained in the Word?
12. What can you do to make sure that your faith and deeds will not be deceived? How does Christ give you hope and victory? What can you do to see His hope more clearly in times of stress and discomfort? What can you do to improve your loyalty, faith, and allegiance to the Lord and be marked by Christ? How will your faithfulness and Fruit be used?