

Rev. 14:1-5, The Triumph of the 144,000
September 17, 1994
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Overview

In the discussion of the "beast from the earth,"

1. 13:11-17 is vision;
2. 13:18 is the call for understanding;
3. ch. 14 is devoted to two cycles of triumph of the saints and God's vengeance on the persecutors. One cycle for each of the two groups that we have already seen in ch. 7 and ch. 12:

7:	12:	14:
1-8, 144K	12-16, the Woman	1-5, 144K
9-17, Multitude	17ff, remnant	12-13, martyrs

4. Each of the four sections in this chapter is introduced with a testimony of witness ("I saw" or "I heard").
5. 1-5, Triumph of the Sealed Believers
We saw this group first in chap. 7, sealed to protect them from the devastation of the Great Tribulation; then protected from the dragon in the wilderness in ch. 12. Now we witness their ultimate triumph.

Chiastic: Outer descriptions of the preserved 144K surround an angelic music lesson. Once through the tribulation, they are instructed in how to praise God.

A. 1, First Description

1. The Lamb on Mt. Zion. Corresponds with their Jewish identity, and fulfills various OT millennial promises to establish Jehovah's rule from Mount Zion.
 - a) Isa. 59:20, "the redeemer shall come to Zion"
 - b) Isa. 2:2-4NB: this scene is on earth, not only because that's where Zion is, but also because John, standing with the redeemed, hears the angelic song coming from heaven in v.2.
2. With the Lamb. Note the order: not "he is with them," but "they are with him." "The Lamb is all the glory, in Emmanuel's land." In this current pilgrimage, he is with us (Matt. 28:20), but in the kingdom the order is reversed.
3. Bearing his name. Contrast 13:16,17, the mark of the beast on the unbelievers. These Jewish believers carry the Lord's name, showing their worship of him and possession by him. Fulfills the promise of 3:12.

B. 2-3, The Song

1. 2a, Its origin: heaven.
 - a) It is a "voice from heaven." Shows that John's standpoint is not in heaven, but himself on earth. ("Voice" can mean simply "sound," and here includes both the harps and the song that they accompany.)
 - b) The "voice like waters and thunder" is elsewhere always angelic: 19:6, and 1:15 (following the Majority Text).

2. 2b, Its accompaniment: harp, *kithara*, "guitar." (Hand-held, multi-string, could be played either with fingers or with a pick. Not clear that this had neck and frets, though a necked fretted instrument was known even in pre-Christian times, and this is the word from which "guitar" is derived.) 5:8 shows that both angels and the redeemed can play. Here we focus on the angels; in 15:2, it is the redeemed.

3. 3a, The Song: "A New Song."
 - a) This is one of two songs mentioned in Rev.
 - 1) In 5:9, the words of the "new song" are outlined: praise for redemption.
 - 2) 15:3ff gives the "song of Moses," which praises God for his works and judgment, but makes no mention of salvation. (Exod. 15 does mention salvation, but the main thrust is on the destruction of Pharaoh's army.)

 - b) The OT seven times speaks of "a new song," and in each case the emphasis is on God's deliverance of his people.
 - 1) *Ps. 33:3. vv. 6-11 are judgment, but the outer wings are God's blessing on his people.*
 - 2) *Ps. 40:3 celebrates the deliverance of vv. 1-2.*
 - 3) *Ps. 96:1; 98:1; in each case, v.2 is "salvation."*
 - 4) *Ps. 144:9; v.10 is salvation*
 - 5) *Ps. 149:1; emphasis is on God's blessings to Israel (v.4 "salvation")*
 - 6) *Isa. 42:10, cf. vv. 6-7, deliverance.*

 - c) *Application:* This distinction points to two aspects of our worship of the Lord. We praise him both for his goodness to us (the New Song) and for his faithful judgment on his enemies (the Song of Moses). Modern liberalism wants to forget the second song, but without it we have a senile Santa Clause who tolerates sin, not a sovereign, holy, righteous creator.

4. 3b, The Students: the 144K. Note that they "learn" the song. They are stationed on earth as hearers and learners, not the original heavenly chorus.

All creation, even the rebellious, will one day bow down and confess that "Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2). All creation will come to acknowledge the Song of Moses, the glory of God manifested in his victory over his enemies. But only the redeemed can appreciate his work of salvation. "The love of Jesus, what it

is, none but his loved ones know." <- Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee.

C. 4-5, Second Description

This itself is arranged chiastically, with outer negative statements (both qualified "for they are X"), and two inner positive affirmations.

1. 4a, Negative:

- a) Some people use this verse to say that if you're not a virgin, you're defiled. The single state would then be "more holy" than the married. But then how can Paul command younger widows to marry (1 Tim. 5:14)?
- b) Some take the verse figuratively, describing the spiritual virginity of the 144K as the bride of Jehovah, having kept herself from the defilements of the beast. But this sort of spiritualization is hard to control.
- c) The two clauses are not equivalent. John does not write, "They did not defile themselves with women; that is, they are virgins," but "...because they are virgins." They did not defile themselves through fornication and impurity, because in fact they kept themselves from any contact with women whatsoever. In time of persecution and flight, the single state is much less burdensome. These 144K of the Jewish remnant are virgins for pragmatic reasons, and because we know they are virgins, we can be sure that they have not participated in the uncleannesses of the society of their day.

2. 4b, Positive: They manifest complete obedience to the Lamb, following him wherever he goes.

3. 4c, Positive: They have been redeemed from among men. Israel as the "firstfruits" of the redeemed on earth, to be followed by the martyred saints who participate in the First Resurrection.

4. 5, Negative: They have not participated in falsehood (lit. "lie" in MT); in fact, they are without spot. (Reference to "before the throne of God" is not in MT.)

5. Summary: Two positive signs of those who are the Lord's, and two negative ones.

- a) Positive: both redemption and good works. Cf. Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 3:4-8. Two great errors in the world today: that you can earn salvation by good works (the RC error), and that you can presume that you are a believer without good works (the evangelical error). True believers are both redeemed from among men, and follow the Lamb wherever he goes.
- b) Negative: from the many possible sins, John singles out two that these have avoided: physical impurity, and deception. All

sins are heinous, because they offend the righteous God who has forbidden them, but these are particularly common and particularly damaging to ourselves and others, and for those reasons particularly to be avoided.