

08b REV

We're in Revelation Chapter 14, not that we have worked our way up to it, but we skip forward to Revelation 14, Revelation Chapter 7, we're looking at the 144,000, who sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. We're not told what this song is, why is it? Their ultimate redemption into the land, the fulfillment of all of those promises to the full extent. They have never been possessors of all of the land promised to Abraham.

They have never been free from being beset by their enemies. They have never been free from internal problems. But all of those things are going to be fulfilled when the land stands on Mount Zion, surrounded by those overcomers from the age of Abraham, from the seventh week of Daniel, who constitute the heart of flesh.

God says, and we just saw it in Ezekiel, I will take out your heart of stone, I will give you a heart of flesh. That's a malleable heart, a teachable heart, a responsive heart, not a heart that... The heart of the age of Israel, the last seven years. And they are put forth and they represent and they symbolize all of the overcomers, all of those Old Testament prophets that were pounded and chased out of town and stoned and sawn in two and living in caves.

That's who these represent. Very interesting reference to them. This harks back to the Old Testament.

God used this in terms of his own people. You can go back to passages like 2 Kings 19.21. 2 Kings 19.21 says, This is the word which the Lord has spoken, The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised you and laughed you to scorn. The daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head behind your back.

The symbolizing of Israel as chaste and pure and dedicated to God is communicated by saying this daughter of Jerusalem, this virgin daughter of Zion. Isaiah 37.22 quotes the exact same statement. Jeremiah 18.13 in an opposite context, in a condemnation passage.

Remember Jeremiah the weeping prophet trying to call people in Judah back before the days of Ezekiel. Thus says the Lord, ask now among the Gentiles, This is Jeremiah 18.13, Ask now among the Gentiles, who has heard such things? The virgin of Israel has done a very foul thing. God says, O virgin of Israel, you shall again be adorned with your tambourines and shall go forth in the dances.

But in spiritual terms, God says, I am God, Then it says, These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. Firstfruits, in what sense can these people, these 144,000 ostensibly are sealed in the very tail end of the age of Israel. How can they be firstfruits? The last shall be first.

What are firstfruits anyway? We have seen this in Leviticus. Leviticus 23, a study we did just a few weeks back. Feast of Firstfruits.

Leviticus 23.10, speak to the children of Israel. When you come into the land which I give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. Remember that? If you have firstfruits, what does it mean? Harvest.

It is harvest time. What is the picture when the kingdom was proximate, when the kingdom was near, when the kingdom was offered the first time? What did John the Baptist, the great last prophet of the Old Testament age say to Israel? His winnowing fan is in his hand. When do you winnow? It is when you brought the harvest in.

Separate the chaff from the wheat. You have gathered the harvest. It is time for a celebration of a wonderful crop.

It is the feast of ingathering. Firstfruits is not the harvest. Firstfruits is when the first heads of grain ripen.

A lot of the rest of it is going to come in, but this is the portent. This is the harbinger. This is the sign that good things are ahead.

Look at these first ones to ripen. Jesus is the firstfruits of them that have risen from the dead. He is the firstfruits of them that sleep, it says.

Because we know that he was raised, we have the expectation that we will be raised also. The church is a kind of firstfruits. But the full harvest comes in when God redeems all of his people.

What are we looking at here? They are standing by the lamb, and they are a firstfruits to God and to the lamb. We know lamb means Israel, and these are a firstfruits. So, what do we see here? We go back to that fifth seal being broken, and the souls of those who were slain under the altar.

How long, O Lord? Here is your white robe. I have already judged you faithful. I have already judged you righteous.

Your future reward is assured. Your robe is the sign and symbol of that, but the time is not yet. When Jesus comes and stands on the Mount of Olives, and then goes across the brook and goes in and stands on Mount Zion, and he has these 144,000 standing with him, and they are a kind of firstfruits, what could this possibly mean? Well, this, believe it or not, is where we find another piece of vindication for our rather unique understanding of the timing of the sheep and goats judgment.

Nobody I know but us thinks the sheep and goats judgment is at the end of the millennial kingdom. These have already demonstrated their faithfulness under fire, as have many

of the Old Testament saints. God doesn't have to prove them out through a thousand years of the millennium, and discern their faithfulness or lack thereof by how they treat the hungry, or the naked, or those who are sick and in prison.

Remember the criteria for the sheep and goats judgment when I was this, that, and the other? These people are not subject to that end of millennium judgment. They have already been through the fire. They have already been given their white robe.

They are a firstfruits of the Israelites. The rest of the Israelites that have not manifested themselves to be overcomers are resuscitated, are living with the power of the Spirit and the presence of the Lamb on the throne for that thousand years, and they will either manifest their salvation and their faith in what they do, I will show you my faith by my works, sort of a thing, or they will not, and they will all be sorted out at the judgment at the end of the millennial kingdom. This brings us to an interesting conclusion.

Remember back, in fact, keep your finger here in Revelation 14 and turn back to Revelation chapter 2, verse 10 and 11, Church at Smyrna. Do not fear any of the things which you are about to suffer. The devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days.

Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.

What does this tell us? What we're doing is we're setting up a comparison between group, if I was talking in terms of set theory, I would say here's the set of the church and the subset which is the overcomers on one side, and I've got the set Israel and the subset Israelite overcomers over here. When we look at the church, we see that there are overcomers who, because of their faithfulness, are pre-assigned a reward and are not hurt by any subsequent judgment, i.e., the second death. Here you have set overcomers, subset overcomers out of the set Israel, and these 144,000 are pre-judged as a first fruits.

Their reward is to be with the Lamb wherever He goes and so forth, and they are not going to be subject to that end of millennium judgment either. They have already sort of risen to the top and they are first fruits. Overcomers are a kind of first fruits.

You get head of the line status, so to speak. Somebody was telling me, I forget who, that you can get a thing where... Oh, I know. It was my roommate.

He got a trip to Disneyland. My erstwhile roommate, Ken Russell, some kind of way won a free trip to Disneyland for his whole family. Not only did they fly them down there and put them up in accommodations, but they had these VIP passes so that when they went up to a ride, you know how it everlastingly is in an amusement park, and there is this big

queue just folded up on itself.

The VIP pass, you just walk up to the front of the line and get right on. This is the overcomer package. This is what we are talking about.

This is what you and I potentially can claim if we just wake up and smell the coffee. It is parallel in terms of its unique opportunity both in Israel and in the church. Same type of thing in different contexts.

24 elders that surround the throne get to do special things. Priesthood, reflecting the glory of God. 144,000, 12 times 12.

It is the Israelites of the Israelites. It is the 12s of the 12 that reflect His glory, go wherever He goes. They are the chaste and pure ones.

Verse 5 says, And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God. This idea of firstfruits is really, the idea is expressed in Jeremiah chapter 2 verse 3. Israel was holiness to the Lord, the firstfruits of His increase. All that devour Him, all that come against Israel, will offend and disaster will come upon them, says the Lord.

Israel initially, when you look at human history, was the firstfruits in terms of looking at the human race. Here are the first ones who recognize God, who worship God, and so forth. And anybody that comes against them is in big trouble.

When you look at Israel as a set, there is a firstfruits within them. There is a coming part of the age of Israel. There is a thousand more years, essentially, to run in the age of Israel.

The age of Israel is not really over at the end of the 70th week. The age of Israel, in terms of the judgment for them, doesn't end until the end of the millennium. They are going to get the chance to live the life you and I are living now.

God said, what I was going to give to you, that you rejected when you rejected My Son, I'm going to give it to the Gentiles. They are going to get the Spirit. They are going to get the individual priesthood.

They are going to get the opportunity. They are going to get to be body and bride of Christ. You are going to be on hold, and I will make you jealous by those who are not a people.

Once that phase is complete, and we are given as a gift to the Lord Jesus Christ by the Father, Israel is going to go into the land, and they are going to get all of the things they should have claimed the first time. Pour out My Spirit on all flesh. Take out your heart of stone.

Give you a heart of flesh. Every man with his own vine and his own fig tree. Peace, prosperity, structure, order, the Lamb on the throne, and all of that.

So, that's what's going on here. These are the ones who are pure, not defiled, virgin, follow the Lamb wherever He goes, redeemed from among men, the firstfruits to God, and to the Lamb. The firstfruits to God, and to the Lamb.

Now, how can they be the firstfruits to God? Remember when I was stressing the fact that these are representative of all of the overcomers throughout the Old Testament age? Who are the true firstfruits to God? Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Methuselah, Shem, etc. Abraham. These are the firstfruits to God, are they not? These 144,000.

It's like Paul says in the New Testament somewhere, when he says, we who were the first to believe. I forget if that's Romans 1 or Ephesians 1, where he says, we who were first to come to Christ. And he's talking about Israel.

He's talking about the Old Testament saints. So, you have here this idea, that they are firstfruits to God, and they are firstfruits to the Lamb. And it brackets, it goes all the way back to the earliest believers, all the way to the very last believers, those who have no progeny, because they're the last ones in the age of Israel, the last ones in the human reproductive period of time.

Well, those are the 144,000. That's what we see here in Revelation 7. And they are separate and distinct from the great multitude which no man can number, who stand clothed with white robes, crying out with a loud voice, saying, now notice, clothed with white robes. When do you get your white robe? At your judgment.

Those who stand out by faith, and you know, I think it's a little bit intimidating, because I remember when I was growing up and in Sunday school and learning all the Bible stories, and you know, dare to be a Daniel, and here's Moses, and here's David, and Goliath, and all of these heroic things, and I thought, you know, that is just a world apart from me. I'm a little guy wandering around here. I can't be any kind of big heroic.

That's other than me. That's out of my world. It's out of my reach.

It's out of my understanding. I'm sure that God smiles on these faithful people that got burned at the stake and were thrown in the lion's den and into the fiery furnace. You know, it's just heroic beyond all reality to me.

I'm just a little guy wandering around here trying not to get beat up at school and trying to get my stuff done. It's beyond, you know, it's just other. I have no access, no part of that.

And I think a lot of times we still think that way, no matter how old we are, no matter how long we've been studying the Word of God. We think, well, all of this stuff about

overcomers, and white robes, and the 24 elders, I know that somebody besides me is going to be standing out there. There's a gospel song that says, basically, I'll just be glad if they let me in the gates.

I'll just be glad if I get inside that beautiful heavenly scene. I don't have any aspirations greater than just not being kicked out. And it's really a shame because as the Scripture says about something else, it is not up in heaven that we should have to ascend unto it.

It's not down. It's near. It's in our hearts and on our lips.

It's accessible. It's doable. It's a real thing that you and I can actually claim.

It's not far away. What it is, is not well known. Not well understood.

The reason most of us as Christians miss this great opportunity to be part of that great glorious priesthood that is close to God, that great set of overcomers, it isn't that you've got to have a faith of biblical proportions. It's that you have to want it. That's the biggest test, is taking it seriously enough to want it.

Think about it. None of it is human strength. None of it is human energy.

None of it is human ability. None of it is some sort of predisposition or something that you inherit or something that you went through some horrible experience and now you've come out with this great big blue twisted steel faith or something. It is purely a matter of choice and desire.

If you love God, you'll keep pursuing this goal. Jesus said, the one that loves me is the one that keeps my words. And it means to guard, to treasure, to consider something to be important.

My daughter has a ring. It's kind of like a chrome looking thing. It looks like kind of a flower.

It's got like a plastic stone in the middle. Well, I find that thing all over the house. I don't find Patty's diamond wedding ring all over the house.

Why? One is considered a treasure and is considered valuable and is very carefully, if any time it leaves the hand, we know where it is. We don't by any means want it to go down a drain or get knocked into a trash can when something else is set down. We have places where our valuable things go because we value them.

And we don't have some kind of heroic, massive intelligence to do that, do we? You think about something that is really, really important to you, some possession that you've got. I think about the Bible that was given to me. I've told you many times about that Bible.

It's probably the only material thing that I would go rushing into a fire to retrieve. It

means a lot to me. It's signed by all my grandparents and my parents.

It's irreplaceable. The one time that it was lost for a couple of days, it just nearly killed me. Well, you have something like that probably.

You have something that's either got sentimental value or intrinsic value. How hard is it for you to pay attention to where that is and to take care of it? Well, think about the Word of God. Think about the opportunity that Jesus died to give us to be overcomers.

If you consider that important, like you do a personal possession, it's easy to think about it. It's easy to prioritize it. It comes to your mind.

Just like, where's my ring? Where's my wallet? Where's my car? Dude, where's my car? Things that we consider important, we prioritize. When you fall in love and get infatuated with somebody, they just keep popping into your mind all the time. It doesn't matter how long you've been married to them or whatever.

They just pop into your mind all the time. You think about it. Well, it ought to be that way.

You think about these 144,000. You know what their reward is? They get to be close to the one they love. That's their reward.

What other reward do you see here? Do they all have Cadillacs? Does it say they've got big mansions? Does it say they can fly with eight wings? They have access to the ninth dimension? What does it say they have? They go wherever the lamb goes. And there's nothing more that you could give them that they would want than that. Why? They love him.

You prioritize the thing you love. It's distractible. But generally, you prioritize what you love.

You pay attention to it. You treasure it. You think about it.

This is the key to being an overcomer for you and me. It is not hard. And it isn't out of reach.

It's a matter of focus. It's a matter of recognizing and assigning value to a thing. That's all it is.

If it's real to us, and I hope that our study in Revelation is making it real to us, this is not pie in the sky. It's not theoretical. It's not legendary.

It's not mythical. This is actually going to happen. Jesus is really coming back.

There's really going to be a millennium. There are really going to be people who are an

eternal priesthood in the throne room of God. And it is a desirable thing.

You think, well, priesthood. I'd rather be off playing heavenly tennis somewhere. It's beyond what we can ask and think.

These are all symbolic terms. But it is going to be desirable. It's going to be the most fulfilling, satisfying, beyond imagination.

Great. And you and I can be heirs of it if we just wake up and realize that this short little space of time we have here is determinative for the eternal future. So that's the significance of the 144,000.

They are to Israel what the 24 elders are to the church. 24 is a double of 12. The double portion.

And it speaks of the elder serving the younger. It suggests the church. It's the church built on the foundation of the Old Testament.

It's the 12 apostles on top of the 12 tribes. It's the doubling of all of those things. The 12 times 12 is the fulfillment of the original Israel.

It's all 12s. It's not number 2 times 12. You see the relationship there.

It's all stemming from what God started in the Old Testament. But what the 144,000 are to Israel, the overcomers are to the church. The 24 elders representing those with robes, crowns, thrones, and access to God.

They are close to God. But these are the firstfruits to God. They got there before the elders.

In the sense of faith. In the sense of chronology. They were there first.

Firstfruits to God. And they are firstfruits to the land. Because they saw Him in prospect.

Moses, seeing it afar off. Job, I know that my Redeemer lives. I will see Him from my flesh on the last day.

Firstfruits to God. Firstfruits to the land. Well, in chapter 8 we saw this.

When He opened the 7th seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Out of sort of left field. I was thinking about the 144,000 all this week.

And I don't know why the thought came to me. But this silence of half an hour really has intrigued me. It sets up the time of anticipation.

We talked about this silence after the 7th seal. But it occurs to me that we're at the end and the culmination and the great climax of human history here, right? And these seals

are the biggest thing going in the sequence and in the order of end time activities. End time happenings.

How did history begin? Six big days and then a pause. And on the 7th day, God rested. Here you have the Lamb busting open six seals.

And when He gets to the 7th seal, there's a rest. It's like in music where you're playing or you're singing a part or whatever. And maybe the instruments in an orchestra are playing along.

The violins have the carrying the melody for a while. And then they're going to have a little reed section or something. The oboes are going to wail on for a while.

And so the violin player looks at his music and it's rest, rest, rest, rest. Wait until it's time for you to play again. So when the 7th seal is open and there's silence in heaven for about half an hour, it's very symmetrical, isn't it, with the rest that happened as soon as the 7th day dawned in creation week.

It doesn't say at the end of the 6th day God rested, does it? It says on the 7th day. Break into the 7th day, now God is resting. You break the 7th seal and there's a rest.

What happens after the 7th day of creation? Is God still resting? That's what the deists claim. Deism says, well, yeah, there's a God and he created the world, but then he got distracted. He's busy somewhere.

Kind of like Elijah taunting the priests on Mount Carmel. Pray louder, pray louder. Maybe he's asleep.

Maybe he's distracted. And if you call loud enough, you'll get his attention. Because he's not paying attention to you.

Deism says, we believe in a higher power and he got everything cranked up, but he's uninvolved. He's away. He's out to lunch.

Well, what did Jesus say? My Father is working and I am working. After the 7th day, God went back to work. God is active.

God is involved. God is imminent. He is busy in human history.

He is listening to prayers. He calms down. I don't know how people can... You just have to dismiss the whole Bible.

How people can believe this. Did God not come down and look at the Tower of Babel? Did God not come down and look at Sodom and Gomorrah? Did God not come down and talk to Moses face to face as a man talks to his friend? Did God not come and create the Pillar of Cloud and the Pillar of Fire? Did God not come down and take the top off Mount

Carmel? Did God not come down and fill the temple that Solomon built with Shekinah? What are people thinking that God is not involved? After the 7th day rest, he started doing things again. And after this rest, at the breaking of the 7th seal, things crank up.

Things get busy. It's not like the rest of the book of Revelation is not here. So then, 7 angels who stand before God, and to them are given 7 trumpets.

But the reason this rest is important, as I said before, is it is another reminder that we are doing a rewind. God is still engaged in creativity of a different sort after Creation Week is over. And God is engaged in activity after the 7th seal is broken.

And when we start having the trumpets, we get another view of the activity involved in this Judgment Week. This is a week of judgment. The 7 years of the Tribulation Period.

It's a Judgment Week that corresponds to Creation Week. So, we saw these angels with their trumpets. We saw the prayers that were in the censer that went up.

And then the first trumpet with the vegetation, the second trumpet with the seas, the third trumpet with the waters. And all of this harks back to what we saw way back with the four winds that were held back until the 144,000 were sealed. What were the winds going to strike? The sea, the vegetation, the trees, the waters, and the heavens.

Where did the waters come from? The waters are not the sea. The waters is the fresh water. This is the streams and the rivers and all that.

That's all flowing across the land. Where were ancient cities built? You've got to have water. Nobody built a city where there is no water.

So, the idea of the wind striking the established civilization on land is there. And then the heavens. Well, we finished up chapter 8 last time looking at the fourth trumpet.

The fourth angel sounded in verse 12. And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, a third of the stars. We talked about this relative to the previous events under the sixth seal.

With the cosmic disturbances, the sun becoming black and the moon becoming like blood and so on. Losing a third of the day and a third of the night. And there is woe to the inhabitants of the earth because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound.

Those four trumpets are the angelic perspective that are separate and distinct from the earthly perspective represented by the seals. Then in chapter 9, the fifth angel sounded. And I saw a star falling from heaven to the earth.

To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit. And smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace.

So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power as the scorpions of the earth have power.

They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth or any green thing or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. Well, our analysis of this fifth trumpet will go into great detail next week. There's just one point I want to make in the light of what we've seen about the 144,000.

Notice, those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads are harmed by what comes out of the bottomless pit. What do we know about the bottomless pit? This is about the first time that we see it mentioned. Can you think of anything else about the bottomless pit? Where will Satan spend the vast majority of the millennium? In the bottomless pit.

I would just suggest, something for you to chew on until next week, that this is a place or a dimension or an aspect of our space-time continuum that heretofore has not been accessible. But, a key, probably kept by God himself, is going to be given. And that previously not accessed thing is going to be accessed.

And whatever it is, it is a place capable of containing a sentient being, i.e. Satan, and keeping him out of the material world for a thousand years. So, it is a place, and by accessing that place, great harm is wrought in the physical, material world. Well, we'll pick up here in chapter 9 next time.

Let's close in the word of prayer. Father, thank you for the motivation and the encouragement that we gain by recognizing the opportunity you have given us to fulfill your purpose and plan and to reflect your glory by taking advantage of the promises to those who overcome by faith. We pray that we can be in that number, that God the Holy Spirit will illuminate our path and show us how that can be accomplished in each individual life.

We pray it in Jesus' name.