

Rev 26-03-25b

We resume our study now, and I really want to emphasize how great it is to gain an understanding of what Jesus is communicating to us in Revelation chapter 14. Hopefully you've written down the elements of the chiastic structure here, talking about the 144,000. The book has been at pains to introduce them, to tell us how valuable they are to God because He suspends divine programs of judgment in order to mark them and preserve them and enable them to fulfill their purpose.

So I just want to add a few helpful references. If you've got the chiasm written down, here are some verses that will help not only confirm the truth and the helpfulness of these points, but also turn the corner into personal application. So we saw that this is a reference to the 144,000 redeemed.

What do we know about them? You can put Revelation chapter 12, verse 17, because after the dragon attacks the woman and she goes to her place where she is sustained for a time, times and half a time, the dragon is enraged with the woman, with Israel, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring. The rest of her offspring are these 144,000. They are not safely ensconced with these preserved of Israel.

They are the ones who are still out there in the mix, in the fray. And it describes them here, the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Have the testimony of Jesus or Jesus Christ.

There's a little variant there, it's not significant. But that's who these guys are. You can put in the margin next to 12, 17, the 144,000.

That is them. And so we see that not only have they received redemption and sanctification, but they have dedicated themselves and they keep the commandments of God and they maintain the testimony of Jesus. In the same way that we are the body of Christ and we should be a testimony, we should be faithful and obedient and be a testimony to the reality of Jesus Christ.

There are so many who think it's a myth, it's unhelpful, he's an invisible friend, people are weak, they need religion, let's do secular humanism and materialism and it's all about science and science put a man on the moon and gave us Tang, therefore we don't need faith. And it is a complete failure to discern domains. The science can't help you with guilt or shame or addiction or stress or worry.

Matters of the heart and soul are God's domain and science is helpless. I'll never forget one of the funnier things I heard Dr. Criswell say is when somebody is on their deathbed, you don't hear them say, bring me the Origin of Species by Charles Darwin so I can read it one more time before I croak, bring me my physics textbook, hand me that geometry book that's been collecting dust on the shelf. When people approach death and the prospect of what comes after, many times they turn to faith, they turn to scripture, they turn to people of faith and ask

themselves the questions that science can't touch.

But bearing the testimony of Jesus, that is something you do every single day. We do this any time we are awake and aware and I suspect even sometimes when we're asleep. That's a different subject.

But we bear the testimony of Jesus. Angels observe us. There may not be humans around, but we are under constant angelic observation.

And they watch. What is our decision making? Where are our priorities? What goals do we pursue? What values do we maintain? Is it a testimony to the Lord Jesus who bought us with his precious blood? Or are we storefront Christians and just for show and not for go? So that's a description. Revelation 12, 17.

These sanctified and dedicated people are described there. When it says that they are not defiled with women, and we've seen that this is illuminated by having no fault before the throne. This word defiled is only found three times in the New Testament.

And one of them is here. Not defiled. So the other two passages are helpful.

Turn back to 1 Corinthians 8, verse 7. What does it mean to not be defiled so that we can stand faultless before the throne? 1 Corinthians 8, Paul is talking about in verse 4, concerning the eating of things offered to idols. We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one, even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as there are many gods and many lords. Yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

If you missed it, I'm in 1 Corinthians 8, verse 5, 6, and now I'm about to read verse 7. However, there is not in everyone that knowledge. For some, with consciousness of the idol, until now, eat it as a thing offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled, compromised. The word in Greek that is translated defiled literally means painted over or made dirty, smudged.

You get something on it that you can't get off, stained, is the idea. It was used to paint, and it was used of mud and dirt that would get on a thing and couldn't be easily washed off. Their conscience is stained, it's besmirched, it's no longer the gold standard of what is right and what is wrong.

We've done a lot of study about conscience in the past, especially in the books of Timothy, that our conscience has to be set straight and has to be enabled and empowered by God's word. Otherwise, it's unreliable. People's conscience tells them that something is right when it's wrong, tells us that we are right when we're wrong.

If you want to see something that is both funny and informative, I was regaling the family last

night with something called instant karma. What people do that live in the city, and they keep having their Amazon packages stolen off their porch, is some of the more mischievous ones have made booby-trapped packages that have a paint bomb or a colorful powder with a small explosive, or a glitter bomb. So they have a ring doorbell there, and these cheeky people will come up and insult the people and say, thank you for leaving me my Christmas present as they grab this package off the porch.

When they get a certain distance, I like it best when they get all the way to their car at the curb, they open the door and they're sticking the box in there, and the explosive goes off and there is paint and bright colored powder everywhere and all over them. The reason I bring this up, not just that it's amusing to watch, and the instant recompense for doing something wrong. What's amazing is these people will run back up to the doorbell and insist that they are going to sue.

They're going to call the police. In some cases, they have called the police and the police are on the ring doorbell video, and they're trying to explain how wrong it is that this person pranked them with paint or powder, oblivious to the fact that they brought it on themselves by trying to steal what was not theirs. They are so infused with the indignation of having a wrong done to them, and they're oblivious to the wrong that they were trying to do to someone else.

And after you stop chuckling, and believe me, you can watch these like chain smoking, it never gets old, but it does give us pause. We're all made of mud. We are all subject to the fallen proclivities of human nature, and it is a dangerous thing to lack objectivity, to not have our morals and our ethics and our understanding of right and wrong grounded in objective truth.

And when you see people who aren't, and you see it everywhere, you see it on the news, you see it in the political differences and whatnot, it is such a treasure to have the Word of God, and through humility and teachability, to come to understand what is absolute right and absolute wrong, and then to live in a way that reflects that, and is a testimony to the Lord Jesus. These who have the testimony. And we do not defile our conscience by rationalizing, by letting self-interest color and sway and twist our perceptions, so that we want what we want to be right, and we want the other person to be wrong, and others can look and see how ridiculous we are being, and what a tragedy to not be able to see it ourselves.

This is the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the power of the Word of God. Don't underestimate it.

Don't devalue it. Don't take it for granted. It is a precious thing to have objective truth, truth that is anchored in the character of God Himself.

So, we do not want a defiled conscience. That was 1 Corinthians 8, 7. We also saw it in Revelation 3, 4, and you can review this. You have some who have not defiled their garments in Sardis.

They will walk with me in white and so on. Revelation 3, 4. That's the three places, our passage and those two, are where this word for defiled is used. These individuals have not defiled

themselves in this context with women.

It says, for they are virgins, and we talked about this corresponding with a mouth that speaks truth. In their mouth is no deceit. Sometimes it's hard to tell the truth when it reflects badly on us.

We want to tell a partial truth. We want to minimize the negative and accentuate the positive. These individuals, there is no deceit.

If you ask them for the story, they will tell the unvarnished truth. To be truthful, even when it reflects badly on us, maybe we need a bad reflection because we did in fact fail. To hide that is to sow fig leaves and run from the sound of the Lord in the garden.

It doesn't avail. It doesn't help. Truthfulness, lack of guile, lack of deceit characterizes these individuals as it should characterize us.

This idea that it is associated with virginity, turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 11, and we're going to be looking at verse 2. 2 Corinthians, Oh, that you would hear with me, bear with me in a little folly, and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. This is the Apostle Paul talking to the members of the church at Corinth.

I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. Think about this.

You know about the Corinthian church. You remember 1 Corinthians, I'm of Paul, I'm of Wallace. There are wars and divisions among you.

You're taking each other to court. You're elbowing poor people out of the way when you have a fellowship meal at the church. You're doing despot to the spirit of grace.

You're wronging the body of Christ. Not that you're not being sufficiently solemn and eating a cracker. You're being inconsiderate and unkind to fellow members of the body.

How can somebody think that if you don't think deep sorrowful thoughts when you're drinking the alleged cup and eating the alleged bread, how much more important is it how we treat each other? How we operate in the one another realm? And Paul is upbraiding the Corinthians and 1 Corinthians for their treatment of each other at the Lord's table. It's completely misconstrued as, oh, you're not doing communion right. You're not doing fellowship right.

You're not looking out for the interests of others instead of your own right. That's what disrespecting the body is all about. This is that church where nine chapters plus into the second letter to the Corinthians.

And Paul says, I have betrothed you to Jesus Christ as a chaste virgin. These are the people he had to talk to about meat offered to idols and doubtful things and you know, do you eat meat, do you eat vegetables, so many different things. But he says, I have betrothed you as a chaste

virgin.

Remember, it doesn't matter what happened in our past. Don't let it lurk. Don't let it rear its ugly head.

Don't let it drag you down and distract you. Don't let dead corpses crawl out of the grave and haunt you like the knuckle dragging walking dead. The Lord Jesus Christ bled and died for those sins.

They are gone. They are no more. They have been forgiven.

They have been removed as far as the East is from the West. Don't go in there like Frankenstein and try to reanimate them. Dr. Frankenstein tried to take dead tissue and bring it back to life.

And he, in the story, succeeds. Not to a very good effect. Don't give life.

As Paul says, there are people who forget that they have been cleansed from their old sins. Don't forget that. Don't reanimate them.

They are gone. They are dead. We are washed.

We are cleansed. And God's washing is perfect. He didn't miss a spot.

He didn't almost get it out. He got the weak sins out, but those strong sins, I'm sorry, but, you know, you need a second blessing. You're going to need a second wash.

You're going to need some spray and wash. You're going to need some pre-treatment to get that one out. God's grace is greater than all our sin.

It's another great hymn. Grace that is greater than all our sin. Your sins are gone.

Paul says to the Corinthians in this verse, I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. Paul is looking forward to the day when the dead in Christ rise, those who are alive and remain, meet them in the air, go to be with the Lord, and Paul the apostle, this is another argument for not having suspended souls, you know, hovering, waiting for the rapture.

Paul wants to introduce them as a chaste virgin to Christ. Here, Lord, are the Corinthians who supported me, who listened to the teaching and responded to it, who grew in grace and knowledge, who suffered abuse and castigation at the hands of Romans and idolatrous Corinthians in their vicinity. They kept the faith.

They maintained their purity. Paul says, I have betrothed you and I want to present you as a chaste virgin. Remember, the church is composed of men and women, but he says, as a group, I present you chaste, virginal to Christ.

This is the idea, I think, in Revelation chapter 14. They are virgins. They are virginal the way the

Corinthians that Paul wants to present to Christ are.

So, helpful passage there. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes in chapter 14. If you're back in Revelation chapter 14, turn a few pages forward to chapter 17 and verse 14.

This of course, Revelation 17, if you know your significant chapters of the Bible, this is the Scarlet Harlot, Mystery Babylon, and so on. And when you get to verse 14, there is a description. The angel is explaining the woman and the beast vision to John.

He says, 10 horns, which you saw in verse 12, 10 kings receive no kingdom. They receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind and they will give their power and authority to the beast.

These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them. For He is Lord of lords and King of kings. And those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.

Those who are with Him, guess who's with Him? There may be others, but I guarantee you some of those who are with Him are the 144,000 who follow Him wherever He goes. So what characterizes those who are with Him? They are called, they are chosen, and they are faithful. Romans 8, 28-30.

We know that God works all things together for good to those who are the called, who are the chosen according to His purpose, whom He foreknew, and so on. Do we respond to the call? God has called us in Christ to dedication, to purity, to sanctification, and to follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Called, chosen, and faithful.

So that's a helpful passage in terms of dedication, following the Lamb, firstfruits to God and the Lamb. So, this brings us now to the great menorah with Christ at the center and the two reapings. We'll take a quick look at this as we prepare to leave chapter 14 and move into chapter 15.

The three angels that appear beginning in verse 6, there is another angel, angel number one, has the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, every nation, tribe, tongue, and people. This is at the end of the second three and a half year period in the 70th week. I know this because that period is the time of Jacob's trouble.

The time of Jacob's trouble. And this focuses on Israel. If you look at the scriptures that talk about this, turn with me back to Jeremiah chapter 30 and verse 7. You kind of hit two-thirds of the way through and you get Isaiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jeremiah chapter 30, verse 7. This is describing the period at which we are now looking.

Jeremiah 30, thus says the Lord, beginning up in verse 5, we have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now and see whether a man is ever in labor with child. So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor and all faces turned pale? Alas, for that day is great so that none is like it.

It is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. He shall be delivered out of it. And he goes on to describe how he's going to do it, break the yoke off of the neck and so on.

This is also referred to in Daniel chapter 12, verse 1. At that time, Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people, Daniel's people, Israel. And there shall be a time of trouble, pay attention now, this time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time, your people shall be delivered.

Everyone who is found written in the book. Now think about the trouble that Israel has had. They have been slaves in Egypt.

They've been captives in Assyria and scattered. They've been captives in Babylon. They've been oppressed by the Persians, by the Greeks, by the Romans.

They were scattered after 70, AD 70, to all of the nations. They have been hounded and persecuted. Anti-Semitism, satanically inspired, has been rampant now for 19 centuries.

Think of the Holocaust. Famously so, World War II, up to 6 million Jews slaughtered in Europe. This is going to be worse.

There are those who used to see this a lot more than you do lately, but they used to say never again. The Jews would look at the Holocaust and say never again. There would be bumper stickers, there would be signs, never again.

We're never going to let people forget the Holocaust. We don't ever want this to happen again. This will be worse because the Bible says so.

The time of Jacob's trouble is going to be a Holocaust squared. That's why there are souls under the altar. That's why the 144,000 begin.

They are sealed from the judgment of God, but like the two witnesses, God will allow them to be overcome and slain as martyrs to their faith. I am grateful that as Body of Christ, we, especially in this country, are seldom called to put our faith on the line and to be faithful unto death. Throughout history, there have been those who have been so tested and so called.

If you ever get depressed, if you ever think life is hard and the challenges are devastating, if you ever feel desperate, we have not suffered to the point of blood as these have done and as they will do in the last half of Daniel's 70th week. Matthew chapter 24, verses 21 and 22, Matthew 24, this is the great end time description from the Lord Jesus. 24, 21, Jesus says that we can start up in verse 15.

You see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, the prophet standing in the holy place. Whoever reads, let him understand. Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. Let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes, but woe to those who are pregnant, to those who are

nursing babies in those days. Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

Notice there is Sabbath observance because this is a time when they are back under the law of Moses. We're not under Sabbath observance in the age of Israel, not in the literal sense. We are to be taking our own seventh part of every day, every week, every month and dedicating it to the Lord.

But the Sabbath will be a day of observance during this time. Then there will be a great tribulation such has not been since the beginning of the world until this time. No, nor ever shall be.

The Lord Jesus Christ himself said this is going to be incomparably savage and destructive. You will find the same thing in Mark chapter 13, the parallel account of this same discourse. A time unlike any that has ever been or ever will be again.

And it is the time of Jacob's trouble. This is how hard it is going to be for those who identify as true Israel. This is the time of the wrath of the dragon.

This is the time when God will allow them to be overcome as a testimony and as a witness. It's a special calling. But back to Revelation chapter 14, verse six, when this first angel appears.

Now we're not talking about the time of Jacob's trouble. The time of Jacob's trouble has concluded. And now it is the time of trouble for the earth.

It is the time of God's judgment upon the earth. The focus will now land on that. So this angel flying in the midst of heaven has the everlasting gospel to preach those who dwell on the earth.

Every nation, tribe, tongue, and people saying with a loud voice, unmistakably clear, fear God and give him glory for the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made heaven and earth and the sea and springs of water. You should be able to detect his presence and realize his power by looking at nature.

Same thing you find in the last half of Romans chapter one. What we know of God is manifest in creation. They are without excuse.

It doesn't say believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It doesn't say, look at the witness of the new Testament gospels. It says, fear God and give glory to him.

The hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water, the sea and springs of water, sources of life of sustenance, both saltwater and fresh. God has made an environment that embraces both the chaotic foaming waters of the sea and the healthful, refreshing springs of freshwater.

He made them both. Then another angel, number two in verse eight follows. Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wrath of her fornication.

Notice the contrast with the 144,000 in spiritual terms. Pictured as chaste, virginal, undefiled, Babylon is the exact polar opposite. Pictured as a harlot and she has made the nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Now, this is not her wine and it is not her wrath. The wrath and the wine come from God. Her fornication is the problem.

She identifies as a fornicator. She is proud of it. We're going to see this in fulsome detail in chapter 17, where she says, I'm good.

I am not a widow. I'm not divorced. I'm riding the high on the beast with the seven heads and the 10 horns, and she's got a cup in her hand.

But what she is going to drink is the wine of God's wrath, as we will shortly see. Babylon is fallen and she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of God that is a result of her fornication. She has fornicated with the nations and they have been complicit.

They have agreed. They have entered into the same kind of thinking as she. Then a third angel followed in verse nine.

If anyone worships the beast in his image and receives his mark on his forehead, on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of his indignation. Lest there be any doubt, the wine of wrath comes from God and he is going to make them drink it because of their choices. And these shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the lamb.

Fire and brimstone. This is where we get our classic traditional understanding of the everlasting lake of fire. Fire and brimstone.

He shall be tormented with this fire and brimstone. Verse 11, the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever. They have no rest day or night who worship the beast and his image and whoever receives the mark of his name.

These are coincident with Babylon. She has committed fornication with the nations. This is the mark of their fornication.

This is the expression of it that they have thrown in with and worship the beast, taking his mark and his name and so on. So this is all a singular judgment. What's fascinating here, and we don't have time to do it tonight, so I'll save it for this Sunday.

Does this passage teach everlasting conscious torment? I have fresh information about this that we will look at on Sunday. I will save it for then. It'll run us long if I cover it now.

But the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever. They have no rest day or night because they worship the beast and his image, receive the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints.

Here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Here is the patience of the saints. We will take a look at this because Revelation refers to this patience over and over again.

I'm not going to rush it because this is the kind of patience we need. Where does it come from? What does it look like? How can I get it and practice it? We will see that. We will see the duration of this punishment in the fire and brimstone, drinking of the cup, the wrath of God, all of that coming up on Sunday.

We will see these two reaping judgments by way of review, and we will start chapter 15 on Sunday. In conclusion, how important is it for us to do the same thing we do with Old Testament Scripture, the same thing we do with the Gospels and the record of the early church in the New Testament? We observe, we interpret, and we make personal application. When you look at these faithful 144,000 and their description, what it means, it is obtainable, it is doable, and it is required of us.

We should be examples for these individuals who will live after we are gone. We pray that they can look back at us and find a helpful example just as we look at Hebrews chapter 11 and find those who, by faith, pleased God. May we be those who are sanctified, who are pure, who are dedicated, and who follow the Lamb wherever He goes, so that we will be with that number who sings these songs.

We're also going to see next time what does it mean to play a harp? Fascinating study. All of that coming up on Sunday. We'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the revelation of information and truth that guides us, sustains us, enables and empowers us in this life, and prepares us for the next. We pray that in all things, in our lives, in our fellowship, in our conversation, that the Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified, and we ask it in His name.

Amen.