

Revelation Chapter Fourteen

The 144,000 in Heaven (vv. 1-5)

With the Lamb on Mt Zion (v.1)

VERSE 1 Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion (Καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοὺ τὸ ἀρνίον ἑστὸς ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος Σιών [*conj kai + aor.act.ind.1s. orao see; "looked" + conj kai + part idou behold = midd.imper.2s + art.w/noun nom.nt.s. arnion lamb + perf.act.part.nom.nt.s. histemi stand + prep epi on + art.w/noun acc.nt.s. oros mountain + noun gen.f.s. Zion*], **and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand** [καὶ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἑκατὸν τεσσαράκοντα τέσσαρες χιλιάδες [*conj kai + prep meta with + pro.gen.m.s. autos "Him" + adj.nom.f.p. hekaton one hundred + adj.nom.f.p. tessarakonta forty + adj.nom.f.p. tessares four + noun nom.f.p. chilias thousand*], **having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads** [ἔχουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ γεγραμμένον ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν [*pres.act.part.nom.f.p. echo have + art.w/noun acc.nt.s. onoma name + pro.gen.m.s. autos "His" + conj kai + art.w/noun acc.nt.s. onoma + art.w/noun gen.m.s. pater father + noun gen.m.s. autos "His" + perf.pass.part.acc.nt.s. grapho write + prep epi on + art.w/noun gen.nt.p. metopon forehead + pro.gen.m.p. autos "their"*]].

ANALYSIS: VERSE 1

1. This vision of John's looks forward to the moment when the 144,000 of Revelation chapter seven are elevated above the earthly scene to a place of paramount distinction in the 3rd heaven.
2. "Then I looked" introduces each of the three scenes of this chapter as it did the two scenes of chapter 13.
3. The three scenes consist of the Lamb standing with the 144,000 on Mt Zion (vv. 1-5), four special pronouncements to humanity during the tribulation (vv. 6-13), and a final vision of the climatic wrath at the 2nd Advent (vv. 14-20).
4. The first of these items is prefaced with "behold" to draw the reader's attention to a most striking and extraordinary development with respect to the 144,000.
5. This signals an unexpected event with respect to this category of tribulational saints.
6. "The Lamb" is none other than the glorified God-man first presented under this symbol in connection with the search for someone worthy to break the seven seals in chapter 5.
7. "The Lamb" is referred to as such in Rev. 5:6,8,12,13; 6:1,7,9,16; 7:9,10,14,17; 8:1, 12:11; 13:8; 14:1,4,10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7,9; 21:9,14,22,23; 22:1,3.
8. Besides pointing back to the gentleness and meekness of Jesus Christ who willingly laid down His life for His own, this figure contrasts sharply with the beast who arises from the sea and the imitation-like lamb arising from the earth in chapter 13.

9. This “lamb” has His feet firmly planted on heaven’s Mount Zion as seen in the perfect participle “standing.”
10. His posture is no longer that of a sacrificial lamb, but that of a militant victor with His feet firmly fixed on the pavement of Mount Zion above.
11. The Mount Zion mentioned here is either the heavenly Mount Zion or its earthly counterpart.
12. Both here and in the only other mention of Mount Zion in the NT outside quotes from the OT (Matt. 21:5; Jn. 12:15; Rom. 9:33; 11:26; 1Pet. 2:6) the reference is to heaven above.
13. That other reference is Heb. 12:22 where the reference is clearly to the heavenly prototype (e.g., an original on which something is patterned).
14. The extended reference reads: “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood sprinkled, which speaks better than Abel” (Heb. 12:22-24).
15. Note also Gal. 2:26, “But the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.”
16. We thus dismiss the previous interpretation that saw the 144,000 rendezvousing with Jesus Christ on the hill in Jerusalem known as Zion at the 2nd Advent.
17. Outside of this verse and the verse in Hebrews Zion refers to the geographical spot within the hills of Jerusalem.
18. God’s eternal purpose is to install His King on the earthly Zion (cf. Ps. 2:6).
19. Of the 162 references to Zion in the Scripture, only two are in reference to the heavenly Zion, the prototype of the earthly Zion.
20. The prepositional phrase “with Him” suggests close physical proximity.
21. The 144,000 have previously been identified in chapter 7 as consisting of 12,000 male Jews from 12 tribes of Israel (cf. 7:1-8) who will be sealed around the midpoint of the tribulation.
22. In fact, the opening of the 7th seal is delayed so these men can be sealed and sent out to evangelize the nations for the balance of the tribulation (7:1-3).
23. The sealing suggests that these believers are completely insulated from the perils connected with divine wrath as well as attacks from human opponents.
24. Like the two witnesses before them, they are afforded supernatural protection from all enemies.
25. The difference is that these men are raptured out of the tribulation in the days just before the 2nd Advent.
26. They probably are taken out just before the seven bowl judgments of Revelation 16.
27. With respect to the tribulation there will be three great disappearing acts: the rapture of the Church, the resurrection of the two witnesses, and the resurrection of the 144,000.
28. To add support to this identification of Mount Zion, the scene which follows in verse 2 contains the same elements as noted earlier in Revelation, namely activities around the throne of God in anticipation of the coming kingdom on earth.
29. Finally, there is mention of the name of God the Son and God the Father written on their foreheads.
30. As with those who refuse to take the mark of the beast and suffer martyrdom and receive God’s name on their foreheads, so it will be done for these men (cf. Rev. 20:4).
31. In fact all believers will enjoy this mark as a token of ownership (cf. Rev. 22:4).

Musical Accompaniment (v.2)

VERSE 2 And I heard a voice [sound] from heaven, like the sound of many waters

and like the sound of loud thunder (καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς φωνὴν ὑδάτων πολλῶν καὶ ὡς φωνὴν βροντῆς μεγάλης [*conj kai + aor.act.ind.1s. akouo hear + noun acc.f.s. phone voice, sound + prep ek from + art.w/noun abl.m.s. ouranos heaven (3rd) + conj hos like + noun acc.f.s. phone sound, voice + noun gen.nt.p. hudor water + adj.gen.nt.p. polus much; “many” + conj kai + conj hos like + noun acc.f.s. phone sound + noun gen.f.s. bronte thunder; at 4:5; 6:1; 8:5; 10:3,4; 11:19; 14:2; 16:18; 19:6 + adj.gen.f.s. megas great*], **and the voice**

[sound] which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps [καὶ ἡ φωνὴ ἣν ἤκουσα ὡς κιθαρωδῶν κιθαριζόντων ἐν ταῖς κιθάραις αὐτῶν [*conj kai + art.w/noun nom.f.s. phone sound + pro.acc.f.s. hos which + aor.act.ind.1s. akouo hear + conj hos like + noun gen.m.p. kitharodos harpist + pres.act.part.gen.m.p. kitharizo play the harp + prep en + art.w/noun loc.f.p. kithara harp + pro.gen.m.p. autos “their”*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 2

1. This verse describes the musical accompaniment to the singing of the 144,000 man choir in the heavenly Zion.
2. The noun translated “voice” and “sound” in this verse is used in connection with that which is not intelligible speech.
3. “And I heard a voice/sound from heaven” indicates John’s perspective in the visionary mode.
4. He previously in his vision sees himself on earth (cf. 13:1 corrected translation).
5. He could have seen and heard this vision from the vantage point of heaven as in other instances (cf. 4:1ff.), but he sees and hears this vision from the perspective of someone on earth.
6. All is possible when dealing with this kind of revelatory information.
7. “From heaven” is an ablative of source with the preposition.
8. The sound or voice refers to the instrumental backing to the song of verse 3.
9. It reminds the seer of many waters roaring or like the sound of loud thunder.
10. The two make a similar noise, which is very impressive.
11. So these two phenomena in the natural world are replicated in the overall sound of the harpist who supply the instrumental support for the performance.
12. Yet the musical score resembles the sound of harp players (cf. comparative conjunction *hos*).
13. The music was both loud (flowing waters and thunder) and melodious (144,000 harpists).
14. The harpists are none other than those who are there as a consequence of their martyrdom by the beast.
15. They were first brought to our attention in connection with the fifth seal judgment (Rev. 6:9).
16. They are designated “a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation, and tribes and peoples and tongues” in Rev.7:9ff.

17. In Rev.15:2 this same group of believers in heaven are seen with harps.
18. The 144,000 and this multitude from the Gentile nations are the two subjects of Revelation chapter 7.
19. The one is ravaged by the perils of persecution, while the other is totally insulated from the sufferings common to all humanity during those unprecedented years.
20. Both groups will enjoy Ph2 blessedness based on their status as Ph1 and Ph2 overcomers.

The New Song (v.3)

VERSE 3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living

creatures and the elders (καὶ ἄδουσιν [ὡς] ᾠδὴν καινὴν ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου καὶ ἐνώπιον τῶν τεσσάρων ζώων καὶ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων [*conj kai + pres.act.ind.3p. ado sing + noun acc.f.s. hode song + adj.acc.f.s. kainos new + prep enopion before, in front of + art.w/noun gen.m.s. thronos throne + conj kai + prep enopion before + art.w/adj.gen.nt.p. tessares four + noun gen.nt.p. zoon living creature + conj kai + art.w/adj.gen.m.p. presbuteros*]); **and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth** [*καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐδύνατο μαθεῖν τὴν ᾠδὴν εἰ μὴ αἱ ἑκατὸν τεσσαράκοντα τέσσαρες χιλιάδες, οἱ ἡγορασμένοι ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς* [*conj kai + pro.nom.m.s. oudeis no one, nobody + imperf.dep.ind.3s. dunamai be able, can + aor.act.infin. manthano learn, be taught + art.w/noun acc.f.s. ode song + part ei if, since + neg me not = “except” + art.w/adj.nom.f.p. ekaton one hundred + adj.nom.f.p. tessarankonta forty + adj.nom.f.p. tessares four + noun nom.f.p. chalias thousand + perf.pass.part.nom.m.p. agorazo buy, purchase + prep apo + art.w/noun gen.f.s. ge earth*].

ANALYSIS: VERSE 3

1. Verse 2 presents the melodious aspect of the song, which is produced by the instrumental accompaniment of the great multitude which is featured prominently in the throne room during the seven years.
2. The musical accompaniment sounds similar to many waters and great thunder.
3. The overall effect is like that of many harpists playing.
4. This verse tells us that the song is sung “before the throne and before the living creatures and elders.”
5. This heavenly scene was first introduced to us in chapter four and following (cf. 4:1-4, 9,10; 5:6,8,11,14; 7:11; 11:16).
6. Some interpreters affirm that the song is not sung by the 144,000 but by angels in heaven.
7. This they must do because they think that the scene presented in verse 1 takes place on Mount Zion in Jerusalem at the 2nd Advent.
8. This is a real stretch as there is not direct indication that this song is sung by angels.
9. The “they” of this verse is the 144,000, as that is the most natural reading of the verse in its context.

10. Also, note the statement within this verse that says the 144,000 are the only ones who “could learn the song.”
11. It is their exclusive privilege to perform this “new song.”
12. In order to perform it before an audience, that includes the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders, they must be in heaven.
13. The preposition “before” means in the immediate presence of someone or something.
14. John is introduced to this future scene just as the performance begins (v.1).
15. The words of the “new song” will be revealed when the performers first sing it.
16. When first sung in heaven the words of the song and the doctrinal truths expressed will be perfectly clear to those in attendance.
17. The song no doubt will have to do with the unique experience of the 144,000 and the role they are called upon to play in the service of God during the tribulation.
18. It probably will be a ballad-like song narrating their spiritual history.
19. The song is “new” meaning that it is unlike anything that has gone before.
20. The statement that “no one could learn the song” means exactly what it says.
21. Only these men, among finite beings, are granted the ability to sing this particular song.
22. This is an unsolved mystery, since the song will be performed in the presence of many witnesses, who have considerable abilities.
23. The song will be a tribute to God, His power and His grace from the perspective of their experience as redeemed members of the chosen race of Israel (cf. Rev. 7:1ff.).
24. If these men are in heaven, as the preponderance of evidence suggests, then we must conclude that they get there one of two ways.
25. Either by mass death or by resurrection.
26. From what we shall learn in verse 4, the latter is the preferred interpretation.
27. The former idea conflicts with their sealing by angels at around the midpoint of the tribulation (cf. Rev. 7:1-4; 9:4).
28. It would seem to follow, that if these men are immune from the demon torment connected to the 5th trumpet judgment of Rev. 9:1-11, then they are immune from all demonically sponsored misery, including the genocide perpetrated by the two beasts of Rev.13 (cf. Rev. 9:4 “And they were told that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.”).

Four Distinctive Characteristics (vv. 4-5)

VERSE 4 These are the ones who have not been defiled with women (οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ μετὰ γυναικῶν οὐκ ἐμολύνθησαν, παρθένοι γάρ εἰσιν [*pro.nom.m.p. houtos “these”; occurs 3x in v.4 + pres.act.ind.3p. eimi to be + pro.nom.m.p. hos “the ones” + prep meta with + noun gen.f.p. gune woman + neg ouk + aor.pass.ind.3p. moluno stain, soil; defile*], **for they have kept themselves chaste** [παρθένοι γάρ εἰσιν [*noun nom.m.p. parthenos virgin + conj gar for + pres.act.ind.3p. eimi “have kept themselves chaste”*]]).

These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes (οὗτοι οἱ ἀκολουθοῦντες τῷ ἀρνίῳ ὅπου ἂν ὑπάγῃ [*pro.nom.m.p. houtos “these” + def.art.nom.m.p. hoi “the ones” +*

pres.act.part.nom.m.p. akλουtheo follow + art.w/noun dat.nt.s. arnion lamb + conj hopou where + part an “ever” + pres.act.subj.3s. hupago go, journey, lead].

These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the

Lamb (οὗτοι ἠγοράσθησαν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀπαρχὴ τῷ θεῷ καὶ τῷ ἀρνίῳ [*pro.nom.m.p. houtos “these” + aor.pass.ind.3p. agorazo purchase; redeem + prep apo from + art.w/noun gen.m.p. anthropos man + noun nom.f.s. aparche firstfruit + art.w/noun dat.m.s. theos God + conj kai + art.w/noun dat.nt.s. arnion lamb*]).

VERSE 5 And no lie was found in their mouth (καὶ ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτῶν οὐχ εὐρέθη ψεῦδος [*conj kai + prep en in + art.w/noun loc.nt.s. stoma mouth + pro.gen.m.p. autos “their” + neg ouk + aor.pass.ind.3s. eurisko find + noun nom.nt.s. pseudo lie*]; **they are blameless** [ἄμωμοί εἰσιν [*adj.nom.m.p. amomos unblemished; blameless*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 4-5

1. The 144,000 are converts and disciples of the two witnesses.
2. The two witnesses will provide a detailed and accurate presentation of Bible prophecy including the book of Revelation for those who faithfully listen to their prophetic voice.
3. Included in that presentation will be doctrine related to those who will be chosen to be among the 144,000.
4. So those who are chosen and sealed out of the tribes of Israel will know their destiny and special responsibilities.
5. Three times in verse 4 the demonstrative pronoun translated “these” demark the 144,000 from all other categories of tribulational saints.
6. Actually, there are four distinctives with respect to these men; the fourth is noted in verse 5.
7. When these individuals are sealed and commissioned to evangelize the nations they will have been fully apprised of these distinctives.
8. They will know both who they are and what is specifically required of them.
9. First, these individuals are called to celibacy.
10. They are undoubtedly young men of marrying age.
11. Yet they are called to forgo divine institution number two which is marriage.
12. Furthermore they are to avoid all temptation with respect to overt sexual immorality.
13. They will possess a sin nature and will like all believers sin and need to rebound, but they are to absolutely avoid fornication.
14. So both legitimate as well as illicit sexual activity is forbidden to these men.
15. Actually, their niche is not conducive to taking a wife.
16. They are afforded supernatural protection from the elements and from enemies, but their wives and families would not be so protected.
17. They are constantly traveling during the last half of the tribulation taking the message of eternal salvation to the nations.
18. They will be tempted but they are to remain chaste with respect of women.
19. The words “with women” stand in the emphatic position making it clear this is not figurative language.
20. The Greek term translated “they have kept themselves chaste” is literally “they are virgins.”

21. The noun *parthenos* refers to anyone who has had no sexual intercourse.
22. The term is used for doctrinal purity as in 2Cor. 11:2 and Matt. 25:1.
23. The meaning of *parthenoi* is here in reference to celibacy; i.e., it excludes married men.
24. The peculiar demands of their mission require celibacy.
25. This in no way denigrates marriage, but is necessary due to their niche and calling (cf. 1Cor.9:5).
26. Considering their special and supernatural existence in a dangerous cosmos, they will be targets of seduction when it is obvious they cannot be harmed physically.
27. But to a man they will resist all such attacks.
28. Next comes a reference to their complete devotion to God in the words “who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.”
29. The present participle “who follow” refers to their habit of continually following the Lord/Lamb.
30. They demonstrate themselves to be willing to go and do whatever is required of them to the end.
31. The repeated admonition of Christ was for men to follow Him (e.g., Matt. 9:9; 10:38; 16:24; 19:21; Mk. 8:34; 9:38; 10:21; Lk. 5:27; 9:23; Jn. 8:12; 10:4,5,27; 12:26; 21:22).
32. These men will sacrifice whatever is necessary to fulfill their special calling.
33. Where the Lamb goes is where the Spirit directs.
34. The Lamb remains in heaven but it is His agent whom they follow.
35. The last item (line 3) in verse 4 refers to their special phase 3 situation that is based on their phase 1 redemption.
36. Obviously these men are converts who come out of the tribulation.
37. Like all men they will be redeemed from the grip of spiritual death and condemnation (see doctrine of redemption).
38. The term “first fruits” (*aparche*) occurs 9x in the NT (Rom. 8:23; 11:16; 16:5; 1Cor. 15:20,23; 16:15; 2Thess. 2:13; Jam. 1:18; Rev. 14:4).
39. Its background is the first portion of a crop harvest that is close at hand.
40. It refers to the very first grain that comes to maturity in the field.
41. It is used figuratively of the first converts in an era or place (cf. Rom. 16:5; 1Cor. 16:15; Jam. 1:18 (alpha church)).
42. It is also used of a category of resurrection, namely the first and only individual, Jesus Christ (1Cor. 15:20, 23).
43. It is used of the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit as the token of future resurrection (Rom. 8:23).
44. In 2Thess. 2:13 it is used in the sense of “from the beginning” in reference to eternity past.
45. And in Rom. 11:16 the reference is to Jewish converts followed by the converts of the CA.
46. There is no evidence that the 144,000 are the very first to believe in Christ following the Rapture.
47. But we do have evidence that they are the first believers to be resurrected during the tribulation.
48. Their presence in heaven before the throne implies their resurrection (cf. v.1).
49. There is no evidence that these men will undergo mass martyrdom at the hands of the beast as they are sealed from all harm.
50. These men are the earnest of the blessings about to come to humanity in the golden age to follow.

51. These then are an elite who will enjoy a prestige all their own.
52. They are a kind of offering to God and to the Lamb which portends blessing for those who come after them in resurrection.
53. Adherence to the truth of BD is another critical quality this group will exhibit (v.5).
54. Particularly commendable is their avoidance of falsehood with respect to God's plan and word.
55. They remain separate from those who engage in lies.
56. Note the anarthrous "lie" to emphasize quality.
57. They will avoid all pressures to compromise their message.
58. No ridicule or threat or bribe will dissuade them from speaking the truth to whoever is in front of them.
59. There will be 144,000 voices and there will be total unanimity of content.
60. The abrupt "they are blameless" refers to the Ph3 assessment that all who know and adhere to the truth can attain (cf. Eph. 1:4; Col. 1:22; Phil. 2:15; Jude 24
61. The term "blameless" is used of OT sacrifices that were without flaw and therefore fit to be offered.