



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 14:1-5

"The Lamb and the Redeemed on Mount Zion"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We have finished Revelation chapter 13 in our exposition of the Apocalypse. The chapter in which John has outlined the ministry of the beast out of the sea and the beast out of the earth, or coming up out of the earth. And chapter 14 follows in, it would seem, remarkable relationship to chapter 13 and so we are reading the first five verses of chapter 14 which will be the subject that we will attempt to expound.

So if you have your New Testaments turn to chapter 14 of the Book of Revelation. We'll read verses 1 through 5. The apostle writes, "And I looked, and behold the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads." Now, you may remember that in chapter 7 of the Book of the Revelation John describes the 144,000. He writes, and I'm turning to chapter 7 and reading verse 1 through verse 4,

"After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God. And he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, 'Do not harm the earth, or the sea, or the

trees until we have sealed the bond servants of our God on their foreheads.' And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel."

And then John goes on to record twelve thousand from each of the tribes sealed as the servants of God.

Now it seems very plain that in chapter 14 when he mentions the one hundred and forty-four thousand who have his name, that is the Lord's name or the Lamb's name, and the name of his father written on their foreheads that he's speaking of the same group. And verse 2 continues, "And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps."

Now if you're a student of the Bible in the sense that you're a regular reader of the Bible, you'll notice again that John is drawing phrases from the Old Testament in constructing the picture of the vision that he received. He mentions, for example, the sound of many waters. And at least twice in the Old Testament the voice of God is likened to the sound of many waters. He mentions the sound of loud thunder. And the voice that he heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.

And in verse 3 we read, "And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders (who had gathered around the throne from chapters 4 and 5). And no one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been purchased from the earth. (That is, they were the objects of redemption). These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they are celibates."

Literally the original text has the term, the common term, virgins, which is a term that may be used of other than feminine individuals. So he says they are celibates. We'll say something about that later but just in case I forget in the exposition in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 in verse 2 the apostle referring to the church says, "For I am jealous for you

with godly jealousy for I have betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin."

So the figure of the virgin as representing that which is pure is probably in the apostle's mind and in our Lord's mind here in Revelation chapter 14. Now verses 4 and 5 of chapter 14,

"These are the ones who have not been defiled with women for they are celibates. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been purchased from among men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the word of God and for the ministry that it has toward us through the Holy Spirit. We know from the study of the Scriptures that the word and the Spirit are the means by which Thou hast dained to work in our midst. And we are grateful that by Thy grace, Thou hast spoken to us through the word of God and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit who brings regeneration and faith. And we thank Thee Lord for those in this audience who have by Thy grace been regenerated and who have faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and in the revelation that concerns him. And if there, Lord, should be some others in our audience who have not yet come to that experience we pray that by Thy grace, through the preaching of the word of God, they too may come to have the hope that we have through our Lord Jesus, grounded in the satisfaction, the saving death that he has accomplished on Calvary's cross.

We acknowledge, Lord, our need of redemption. We surely are sinners before Thee and we thank Thee that a way has been made for us by our representative, the

Lamb of God, who has taken our sins upon himself and born them that we might not have to bare them eternally.

We thank Thee that Thou hast caused a need upon him, the penalty that we all were responsible to pay for our sin. We are grateful Lord for all that Thou hast done. We express our worship to Thee and praise that Thou hast delivered us through grace. We pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ today and ask, Lord, Thy blessing upon each member of that body scattered all over the face of the globe. And we pray also for this local body, for its leaders, the elders, for the deacons, for the members, and for the friends, and especially for the visitors who are here with us today. May the ministry of the word of God be helpful and fruitful in all of our lives.

We pray particularly for the sick. We thank Thee for our country. We pray for our President, for others in our national government, and our state government, and in our city government. We thank Thee that the word of God has made plain to us that they are ministers of God, serving by virtue of the divine determination, the divine will, we pray for them. We ask Thy blessing upon them in the giving to them of the wisdom and guidance that they need.

And Father, bless the ministry in this hour, bless our time together, the singing of the hymn that follows, and the word of God that we consider. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

[Message] That song that we have just sung always calls to my mind the Patriarch Jacob, who near the end of his existence after a remarkable life of ups and downs and ups and downs the object of God's elective concern and care but who nevertheless gained a reputation, perhaps somewhat rightly, as a supplanter and a crook, but by God's grace ultimately came to the place where he stands out in the word of God as a man of faith who near the end of his life said with reference to the Lord God, "The God who fed

me all the days of my life." Remarkable confession of God's hand in the life of that sinner, a sinner just as each one of us is.

The subject for today as we continue our exposition of Revelation is The Lamb and the Redeemer on Mount Zion. Among the solemn warnings of judgment through this great book the author of the book who is our Lord in Heaven intersperses glimpse of final blessedness. And following the awful revelation of the beasts of chapter 13, the beast out of the sea and the beast out of the earth one the anti-Messiah and the other the false prophet.

There comes a picture of the lamb and one hundred and forty-four thousand on Mount Zion and they're not only on Mount Zion as something of an assurance of the future but they have an anthem of redemption. And that anthem of redemption resounds everywhere like the roar of a mighty waterfall against the background of mighty thunder. Anyone who has lived very long in our world knows that in the midst of storms when you see the dark clouds, the black clouds, the flashing of the lightning, the roaring of the thunder, and the sheets of rain, and then after it has spent itself then sees something like a freshened universe with everything washed by the water, the sun now shining, though some of the dark clouds may remain, gets a picture that is very similar to Revelation chapter 14. Because what we have in chapter 13 is a storm but in chapter 14 we have a sunset, beautiful, reminding us of the ultimate consummation of the divine program. We do not have horrid beasts in chapter 14 but we have the lamb and the one hundred and forty-four thousand on Mount Zion in John's great vision.

Now I think anyone who reads chapter 14 in the light of chapter 13 would agree that this scene that we have in chapter 14 is an obviously intended contrast with chapter 13. Let me just spell out some of the contrasts. In chapter 13 we have the beasts. The first beast we've called him the Anti-Messiah or the Anti-Christ, and the second beast the false prophet. He's the beast that comes out of the earth and he has two horns like a lamb and so the two beasts, including that lamb with the dragons accent because he's

motivated by the dragon, Satan, over against the beasts we have in chapter 14, the Lamb of God.

In chapter 13 we have the beast's followers. They have the mark of the beast upon them, the 666. And in chapter 14 we have the lamb's followers, the one hundred and forty-four thousand, and they have the names of the son and the father upon them. In chapter 13 we have the beast's moral system of spiritual and literal harlotry, but in chapter 14 we have the lamb's moral system composed of purity and truth. There is no lie in those who follow the lamb.

In chapter 13 we have the beasts enslaving system, and in chapter 14 we have the lamb's system of ransom from earth and from men, redemption. In chapter 13 we have the beasts new age order, but in chapter 14 we have the lamb's ancient law of God together with the new song of redemption that meets the needs of individuals. In chapter 13 we have the beast overcoming the saints, we read in chapter 13 in verse 7 for example, "And it was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; an authority over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation was given to him."

That lies before us in the near future, according to John's way of putting things for he regards the end as near. But in chapter 14 we have the lamb victorious. Victorious then, that is in the future. So we know that while the struggles exist and while men and women are persecuted on account of their testimony for Christ by the beast and those who stand with him the ultimate victory lies with the lamb and those who are identified with him. In chapter 13 we have the beasts then and their dupes and we have suggestions that they also will head into perdition, not spelled out in chapter 13 but later on in this book for they shall be ultimately fond in the Lake of Fire, whereas in chapter 14 we have the lamb and those who follow him and they are before the throne in Heaven following him whether so ever he goes. It's a remarkable picture in 14 obviously intended to contrast with that which we have in chapter 13.

Now when you read chapter 14 you will notice that this is a chapter composed of three visions but six scenes. Now I'll just point out the three visions, it seems to me that this is so, we have the expression, "And I saw" in the original text [unintelligible 16:49] three times.

Verse 1 we read, "And I looked, and behold the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion." And in verse 6 the same expression in the original text but here we have, "And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven." And in verse 14, "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man."

So six scenes but three distinct visions marked out by the apostle as he writes. So now we're going to look at 14, verse 1 through verse 5 and we begin by paying a little attention to the 1st verse where we have the vision of the lamb and the one hundred and forty-four thousand.

Now this is a kind of anticipatory vision. And I must admit I'm speaking down to you a little bit there because you probably have already grasped that but all of the commentators use the term proleptic. But not too many of us are really familiar with the term proleptic. So anticipatory, I think, is a proper way to speak of this. In other words, what John is doing is he's looking into the future and he's seeing what will take place in the future but he is describing it now as a vision which he has received. So this is an anticipatory or proleptic vision of the destiny of the one hundred and forty-four thousand mentioned in chapter 7.

Now they are one hundred and forty-four thousand, as John has said, from every tribe of the sons of Israel. Now it is very common for commentators to speak of this as a round number and thus to say the one hundred and forty-four thousand represent simply the church of Jesus Christ. I can be sympathetic with some of that because this book contains a great deal of symbolism. But it seems to me that a better way to approach the word of God is to take words in their ordinary meaning if at all possible. We do not deny that there are figures of speech in the Bible that there is symbolism. We do not have a

kind of literalistic interpretation in which words even in figures of speech are taken literally. That to my mind is a wrong way to approach an apocalypse.

This book has a great deal of symbolism but nevertheless it also has a lot of plain speech. And furthermore in the symbols and the figures of speech they're usually references to events and things that can be called ultimately historical. That is the things that are spoken of in symbolic or figurative ways are real events or things and therefore we want to be sure to catch that.

So when we turn here in verse 1 to the vision of the lamb on Mount Zion and the one hundred and forty-four thousand, we're going to take them as one hundred and forty-four thousand of the sons of Israel, as John has told us in chapter 7. We take this to be the same number. As far as this being a round number I do not know of anyone who would think of one hundred and forty-four thousand as a round number. But it is true that when it is spelled out there are twelve thousand from each tribe, one gets the impression there maybe something that is roundish about that. But that belongs to a sphere of understanding that is beyond me and I think beyond most of us human beings. We're going to attempt to take the word as John has written it.

Now he describes the lamb on Mount Zion and I think it's rather striking he's just talked about the raging of the nations. Remember, one of the great chapters of the Old Testament that lies back of the Book of Revelation is Psalm 2. In fact, some have even suggested that the Book of Revelation is simply an exposition of all that is found in Psalm 2. That's the Psalm which begins,

"Why do the nations rage, why do the peoples devise vain things, the kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his Messiah. Let us tare their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us."

So the Book of Revelation is a symbolic picture of how God deals with those who seek to destroy the Lord God, the Messiah, and those who are associated with them. So the heathen may rage but the lamb will be victorious. That's the major point. And so when we read, "I saw the lamb standing on Mount Zion" that's John's way of saying that this is divine assurance given that God will ultimately accomplish the purposes that he intends to accomplish through the Lamb of God who will offer himself an atoning sacrifice for sinners and be the means by which we who are sinners may be delivered from our sin and established before God with a righteousness that is acceptable to him. Justified, is the biblical term.

The scene, as I take it, is a heavenly scene. And it gives assurance of that final victory. The one hundred and forty-four thousand, we've said, are the saints of Israel. They are marked servants of God. Sealed by God for a special service in the tribulation period, that last part of the great time of trouble on the earth that is to come called "Jacob's Trouble" by Jeremiah in his prophecy.

Now one thing you will notice about the one hundred and forty-four thousand is this; they are individuals who are characterized by a particular confession. That is, they're not individuals who do not have a doctrine or viewpoint. They have a doctrinal viewpoint. They are the servants of the Lamb of God. And so they have a confession and their confession is the Lamb of God has redeemed us, as we shall see. They have a specific confession. Every Christian, every true Christian, has to have a confession. In other words, at the heart of Christianity is a doctrinal confession of truth. There can be no Christianity if there is not a doctrinal confession of truth. They have a confession. And it's a confession of redemption and ransom from men and from the earth, put in the words of our 5 verses.

They are also characterized by an unworldliness. They are not individuals who consider the world to be the place where they ought to live and by which they should move in their experience of life. The world's principles, the world's goals, the world's

ambitions are not the principles, goals, and ambitions of the Saint of God. They are unworldly. They are pure. They are guided by the principle of purity. There is no lie in them. That is, they do not follow the Anti-Christ. They do not follow the Anti-Messiah in his viewpoint. They are individuals who have purity as one of their principles. And finally from a something - say something along the same lines, they are individuals who are guided by truth, truthfulness.

Christians, of all people, should be truthful. Unfortunately, it is not always true. And in fact, when a Christian is not truthful it's pathetic. Because he's supposed to stand for truth but when he of all people is not truthful it is, I say, pathetic. And in many of our Christian institutions the presidents and the faculty often carry on their duties with a bit of untruthfulness. I just heard this past week in Anaheim, California when I was meeting with the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, an account of untruthfulness in the leadership of one of our individual - one of our evangelical institutions. It's pathetic when we have that in our institutions. The followers of the lamb are those in whom there is no lie. No lie was found in their mouth. They are blameless.

So, my Christian friend, you name the name of Christ. You are to be guided by truth and truthfulness. You are to be guided by purity. You are not to be a worldly individual. The principles of the world are not the principles by which you operate. Your principles are related to the Lamb of God and how he stands for the word of God.

Now I should mention that these individuals, the one hundred and forty-four thousand, have the name of the lamb and the name of his father written on their foreheads. In other words, they have a specific mark. Now the mark in the ancient world, a commentator has pointed out, could stand for five things. Ownership, as in the case of a slave who was branded by the name of his owner. Loyalty, as when a soldier branded his hand with his beloved general's name. Security, dependence, as for example when Arab sheikhs branded their dependents, not simply their family, but those who were in their extended relationships with the name of their camels in order, the brand of

their camels in order to indicate dependence on the sheikh and safety. Devilties of the false gods often stamped the name of their own god or the sign of the god upon them. And in our case we have a different kind of branding, like the one hundred and forty-four thousand have the brand of the name of the lamb and the name of the father written on their foreheads, Christians today are those who possess as the mark of their Christianity the presence of the Holy Spirit.

You remember the Apostle Paul said in Romans chapter 8, "He that hath not the Spirit of Christ is none of his." That's the thing that marks out a Christian, the presence of the Holy Spirit. In fact, Paul also said you remember in Galatians in chapter 4 and verse and 6 and 7 that, "Because individuals are sons God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father."

So the characteristic of a Christian is the presence of the Holy Spirit. And that should be evident in our lives. In other words, there should be clear evidence of the fact that we belong to the Lord God and the presence of the Spirit is the mark. If we do not have the Spirit of Christ, we do not belong to him. That's plainly what Paul says.

So they have his name and the name of his father written on their foreheads. Now in the 2nd and 3rd verses he writes of the mighty anthem of the redeemed. Now I'm going to take and use the expression of, as he puts it, the sound of many waters, put it together in a statement. "Like the sound of the cherubim in flight," as Ezekiel puts it in chapter 1, "Like God's glory coming from the way of the East," as he puts it in chapter 43 in verse 2. "Like the roar of a mighty cataract, the melodious anthem of the one hundred and forty-four thousand is heard." I love that expression like the sound of many waters. It creates so many meanings in my mind, reading it in the Old Testament in Ezekiel, twice at least reading it in the New Testament in this book already in the vision of our Lord and it speaks of the might and the power of our great triune God.

So like a mighty cataract this melodious anthem is heard by the apostle. He says, "I heard a voice from Heaven like the sound of many waters, like the sound of loud

thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps." Now I would take this to be something said with reference to the redeemed. That is, the one hundred and forty-four thousand. Not the angels but the redeemed in a chorus of exultation singing a new song of themselves. In fact, they are the only ones that can sing this because in the third verse he says, "No one could learn the song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth." Only they who have experienced the truth that they have experienced are able to understand it. That's one of the reasons when the Christian message is set forth and individuals say, "I do not understand it, I cannot follow it," we should not be surprised. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them unless they are discerned through the Spirit.

So we should not expect the man who sits in our pew who does not know anything about Christianity to understand what we are talking about unless the Holy Spirit of God who gives light upon the word should enlighten him. Show him his need. And show him Christ's sacrifice for sinners. And call him effectually to trust in him.

Now the theme of this song of the one hundred and forty-four thousand, as you might expect, is his deliverance of them. After all, isn't that what we all particularly respond to? The deliverance, the redemption that we have experienced.

One man whose sermons I used to like to read was Vance Havner. He has a little comment that he makes in one of his books, I think it's really a book just of little sayings, but in the course of it he says, "The most common place things have a way of suggesting spiritual realities and the one who loves the Bible doubtless has been reminded more than once of Isaiah's words, Isaiah chapter 28 I think about verse 20 where Isaiah writes, "For the bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself in it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." I've always felt like that incidentally when I go to Germany and try to be contented with that thing that the Germans put on the bed; I've never been able to handle that too well. I put it on my back and my front is chilly, I put

it on my front and my back is chilly, I put it down on my feet and my head is chilly, I put it near my head and my feet are cold, which is the worst of all things. But at any rate, Havner goes on to say, "The prophet has in mind the self-righteous rulers in Jerusalem who scorn the judgment of God." And then he went on to say that, "Many Evangelicals have made an application of this to those who trust in schemes of their own devising, plans of salvation instead of the sufficiency of the Messiah's death, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Matthew Henry, one of the older commentators, put it this way, "Those who do not build upon Christ as their foundation but rest in a righteousness of their own, will prove in the end thus to have deceived themselves. They can never be easy, safe, or warm. The bed is too short, the covering is too narrow, like our first parent's fig leaves the shame of their nakedness will still appear."

Then Mr. Havner goes on to express his own experience, he says, "Any man who's wrestled with an inadequate sheet or covers until he has ended up with both head and feet exposed for all the world like a map of the earth with both north and south frigid and the rest only temperate will understand with fresh appreciation the homely word of the prophet," which is as he has put it that if one is in a bed that's shorter than he can stretch himself on or he has covering that's too narrow, he will not be too happy about it.

Gypsy Smith used to say some things that resound I think in my own heart, he used to say, "Above all let me never get used to being a Christian." And then he once said something that I certainly think was a great statement, "I have never lost the wonder." And those, the one hundred and forty-four thousand and any other genuine Christian like the one hundred and forty-four thousand who knows what redemption from his sin is deliverance from the guilt and penalty of it should, my Christian friend, never lose the wonder of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

I'm not surprised that these individuals sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and elders and no one can learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who have been purchased from the earth. This kind of

song of redemption can only be sung by those who have been purchased. That word, incidentally, is in when it refers to redemption refers always to an effectual redemption. Not simply something that's conditional or provisional. But always refers to something that is effectual. They have been purchased and they now belong to the lamb and to his father, separated from the evil ways of the world and the tyranny of its pernicious philosophies and particularly from the apostasy of the beasts referred to in the preceding chapter.

And finally the section closes in verses 4 and 5 with a description of these redeemed one hundred and forty-four thousand and they're described under three figures. First of all, they are undefiled virgins. Now the word "they" is masculine in each of the three occurrences in which it occurs here in verse 4, "These are the ones who have not been defiled, these are the ones who follow the lamb, these have been purchased from among men." That particular pronoun, demonstrative pronoun, is masculine. So we're looking at masculine individuals, it would seem. And they are called virgins so that raises some questions. It is also said they are not defiled with women. So we ask the question, is John talking about an elite, celibate body? And is he suggesting that an elite, celibate body is preferred by God? Well, one might make a case for that if he looks only at a passage like this.

In fact, Marcian who lived the earlier part of the Christian centuries formed a church of only celibates because he thought that that represented a higher form of spiritual life. Origen, the first Christian theologian not a great one in my opinion, but the first to write a theology, what could be called a theology, Origen it is said had himself castrated in order to more fully serve the Lord as his God.

But it's more likely in spite of the fact that one might make something of a case for that position that when the apostle writes, "They are celibates," that he is using the term in the figurative sense. Now I referred to 2 Corinthians chapter 11 in verse 2 but in the Old Testament if you'll remember when Israel's apostasy is referred to, God frequently refers

to their apostasy under the form, under the figure of spiritual adultery. When Israel went after the false gods, God called that adultery.

Now it so happens that the false gods of many of the nations also in their temples had temple prostitutes with whom one would commit fornication, kind of fertility rites, commit fornication in order to fulfill what they regarded as both a spiritual activity as well as an activity by which they could secure the blessing of their god for fertile flocks and fertile fields. So the term celibate, the term adultery, the term fornication, is used both literally and figuratively in the Old Testament. Figuratively, however, it seems to me as the way we are to take this. It's figuratively used of those who have kept themselves, that is they are celibates, they have kept themselves from spiritual adultery, spiritual fornication, and of course because he mentions purity from physical fornication and physical adultery as well. In other words, to be more specific and down to earth for them they have resisted the seductions of the beast. They have not worshiped him, they have not allowed his mark to be placed upon them, they have served our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we live in, of course, a pornographic society, it seems to me, and one that is religiously pornographic as well. In the sense that many Christians are engaged in activities that are contrary to their Christian faith. They are supporting churches, religious institutions that are opposed to the doctrines of the word of God. Many times they do it out of what they feel are proper motives. That is, we can reach people by making these identifications. We will ultimately fail, in my opinion. Because truthfulness, purity, the confession of the truth and the holding to the doctrines of the word of God is the only means to ultimate spiritual blessing and fruitfulness.

Now he says secondly that they are not simply spiritual celibates but they follow the lamb. Here he stresses discipleship just as our Lord when he spoke to the rich, young ruler and dealt with him with his particular needs you remember that Jesus finally said to him that he was to sell what he had and then come follow me. It's characteristic of a

Christian in his Christian life to follow the Lord as we have an account of him, his principals, his activities, his teaching, in the New Testament.

And finally, we read they are sacrificially acceptable to the Lord. They have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the lamb. In other words, that expression incidentally would mean in our language they are specially the Lord's. The first fruits is a sacrificial metaphor because at the time of the barley harvest the children of Israel went out into the field, took a sheaf of the barley harvest, brought in a sheaf and waved it before the Lord in an offering to him of the best of their grain, the best of the produce of the land, the best of the crop for him. And in the Old Testament that term is used occasionally in that sense, the best of the crop for him, or that which was regarded as blameless in the proper sense.

So here they have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the lamb and no lie was found in their mouth, they are blameless. They are ceremonially blameless. I would understand this also to mean that since when a person went out in a harvest and he took a sheaf of the harvest and he waved it before the Lord that indicated also just by simple reasoning that there was more of that out in the field. And it was like that which was waved before the Lord. And if Christ is the first fruits, as Paul says, that means there are others out in the field who are to be brought into the Lord and they will be like him as Scripture says. Here, however, I think that reference is simply to the best of the crop for him, the first fruits to God and to the lamb.

Now if one were to ask, if they are the first fruits what is the harvest? I would only make this suggestion; we are told in the Bible that in the future Israel should expect a restoration to the blessing of God by virtue of the ancient covenants that were given to them. The covenant to Abraham included references to the land and ultimate settlement upon it. The covenant made with David suggested that David's son would rule forever upon a throne. And the new covenant that Jeremiah describes, describes the redemption that is the ground of all of God's blessings. So I would suggest to you that if the one

hundred and forty-four thousand are the first fruits then the harvest is the restoration of ethnic Israel to the blessing of God described by the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 11, verse 26 and verse 27 in these words,

"And thus all Israel will be saved: Just as it is written, the deliverer will come from Zion, he will remove ungodliness from Jacob: And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

So I look forward to the restoration of ethnic Israel and I look forward to the day when Israel, ethnic Israel, shall enter into the blessings promised by a God who makes unconditional promises to that nation. I'm so thankful that in those covenants there is a place made for gentiles and they are also grafted into the olive tree and enjoy the blessings that are Israel's blessings, their ancient covenanted blessings. Scripture, in my opinion, teaches that plainly. The one hundred and forty-four thousand, however, are first fruits of what will be an even greater in gathering of harvest at the time our Lord returns to the earth the second time.

If I were to sum up the message of these five verses it would be that the one hundred and forty-four thousand have arrived safely and faultless by reason of the Lamb of God who has offered himself an atonement for sins.

Ian Blakelock was professor of classics at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. In a very interesting little testimony he tells how he came to faith in Christ. He said he became a Christian as a student through an encounter with Christ. "I met Christ as one might meet a friend, through another's introduction," he said. Let me illustrate, in 1964 Professor Blakelock was in Bristol, England and was delivering the Rendell Short memorial lecture and on a rainy afternoon he walked out to look over the city of Bristol. He came to the old meeting house where Wesley trained his first preachers and it stands in a yard between some busy streets. On one side facing one of the streets John Wesley

sits on horseback on a bronze horse in the forecourt. And then facing the other street is Charles Wesley standing with his hands outstretched toward the passing crowd and underneath the statue is a line from Charles Wesley's hymn, "O let me commend my Savior to you."

Someday when you're in Bristol look it up and see the statues and see Charles Wesley with his hands outstretched, "O let me commend my Savior to you." He said, "It was in just such a fashion as a student, an ardent manly minister of Christ commended his master to me. I stopped like one of the passing crowd and looked. I was young, life was opening up to me, I had found the portrait of Virgil, I had found Racine in Shakespeare, and I found Christ," he said. "I was groping for some purpose in life, some loyalty, some basis for my feet," Professor Blakelock said. "The man who's testimony I heeded call me only to experiment to test the Christian faith by living it," and he said, "That's forty-five years ago. The response of 1920 might be dismissed as a boy's idealism, youth's sudden rapture without relevance. Were it not for the fact that that choice is still the core of my experience after a lifetime in scholarship, authorship, journalism, travel, and public life. All that I value through all those years flows from that experience, that choice of a faith to live by."

I commend the Christian faith to you. I commend the song of the one hundred and forty-four thousand who sing of how they have been purchased from the earth by the saving ministry of our Lord Jesus the Messiah. May God in his wonderful grace touch your heart and may you respond to the invitation that comes first and foremost as we shall see later on in this very book from God, the Holy Spirit.

Come to Christ. Believe in him. Trust in him. Give yourself to him. Found your life upon the word of God. And I surely can say from my own experience you'll never regret the decision that you make. We invite you to believe in him who saves sinners by the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross. Come to him. Trust in him. Don't leave this auditorium with that decision not made. Let's stand for the Benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for these pictures, visions, that the apostle has given us. We know they come from Thee, Lord, through the Son of God and his apostle. Oh Father, if there are any here who do not have a place upon which to stand by Thy grace touch their minds and hearts. May the commendation of the savior that the Holy Spirit issues as an invitation be received and responded to by the decision of our minds and hearts. Go with us as we leave. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.