

Soldiers, Singers, Virgins, and Firstfruits

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[0 : 00] Open your Bibles, please, to the last book of the Bible, Revelation. And if you don't have a Bible, raise your hand. We'd love to bring you a copy that you can use, you could have, and take home with you. We're in Revelation chapter 14, verses 1 to 5.

Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Heavenly Father, we gather in your name once again this week.

And we humble ourselves and incline our ears to you again, to your Word. Because you are our Lord, our King.

And we want to be where you are. We want to go where you go.

We want to imitate your character. We want to be representatives and witnesses of Jesus. So, Lord, to that end, now speak to us and by your powerful Word, transform us.

[1 : 20] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. If you are willing and able, please stand for the reading of God's Word from Revelation chapter 14, verses 1 through 5.

Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb.

And with him, 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder.

The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. And they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders.

No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins.

[2 : 32] It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb. And in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.

This is God's holy and authoritative Word. Please be seated. When I was a student at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, I think some of you guys were just there this weekend to see some of our church members run a race in that area.

There was an older gentleman there named Mark Horvath who worked in campus security. And he's now retired, but he was one of the people that I respected the most at seminary because despite being pretty much unknown and unheralded for decades of his service and work there, he did so so faithfully and joyfully.

And even though his work wasn't directly related to Christian ministry, he considered it an honor to serve a seminary campus. And whenever he got the chance to speak one-on-one with a seminary student, he would take the opportunity to exhort them, and this is what he would say.

He told me this several times throughout my time in seminary. Sean, when you become a pastor, please take two Sundays to preach one sermon on heaven and one sermon on hell.

[4 : 05] It was a simple but profound counsel. I think he was sensing a drift in people's understanding of these topics and noticing the consequent loss of an eternal perspective that should govern our lives.

In his book, *The Eclipse of Heaven*, theologian A.J. Conyers concurs with Mark. He says, These are not prominent considerations in our modern discourse about the important matters of life, but they once were.

Keeping heaven and hell in view keeps our perspectives and our priorities aligned. It motivates us to press on in faith and obedience and to share urgently the saving news of Jesus Christ with others.

It holds out both the reward of heaven and the punishment of hell, calling believers to perseverance and unbelievers to repentance.

That's precisely what Revelation 14 does for us as well, and we're going to talk primarily about heaven today and about hell next week.

[5 : 45] Whenever the Bible speaks of heaven, it focuses on two most important aspects about heaven, which is namely the presence of God and the people of God who dwell there with him.

Heaven is in essence the place where God dwells with his redeemed people in the fullness of his glory. We'll get the definitive biblical treatment of heaven in the later chapters of Revelation, chapters 21 and 22, but here we still get a glimpse of what the redeemed people of God in heaven are like.

And they are those who maintain their undivided devotion to Christ despite the persecution of the beast. That's the main point of that passage. We see four specific details about the redeemed, and they are that they are soldiers, second, that they are singers, third, they are virgins, and fourth, they are first fruits.

And we're going to talk about each of those in turn. But before we see the army of the redeemed, we see first the Lamb of God in verse 1. It says, Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb.

The Lamb of chapter 14 is set in stark contrast with the dragon and the beasts that we saw in chapter 13. Sorry, did I say chapter 14 earlier?

[7 : 05] Chapter 14 is where we see the Lamb. Chapter 13 is where we see the dragon and the beasts. The second beast in Revelation 13, 11 had two horns like a lamb, but spoke like a dragon.

All the false messiahs and the pretenders out there, they all try to look like Jesus. They try to look like the Lamb. But we know what they are by what they say, by their words, and we've talked about that.

The dragon in chapter 12, verse 17, stood on the sand of the sea, but here the Lamb stood on Mount Zion. The sand of the sea is a symbol of impermanence and instability.

You can write messages on the sand. I'm sure you guys have done this all you want. Draw little hearts on the sand and build sand castles on the sand.

And momentarily, they're all gone, washed away by the incoming tide. In contrast, a mountain is a symbol of permanence and stability.

[8 : 08] Whenever I visit Seattle to see my parents, I notice that much of the landscape and the cityscape has changed. There are new buildings. There are new roads where there weren't roads before. There are new trees planted or trees raised.

There's all kinds of changes, but there's one thing that's always there that doesn't change, and that's Mount Rainier in the backdrop of the city. It's stable, immovable, permanent.

This contrast between the dragon that is standing on the sands of the sea and the Lord, the Lamb of God that's standing on Mount Zion, it evokes what Jesus says in Matthew 7, 24 to 27.

Because those who follow the dragon are like the people who build their house on shifting sand, which will surely come crashing down. But those who build on the rock, those who follow the Lamb are like those who build on the rock, those who build on a mountain that will withstand all the floods and the winds.

With the final battle between the Lamb and the dragon and the beasts soon to be described in Revelation 19, 20, it's also hard not to notice the strategic advantage of the Lamb's position.

[9 : 25] Military manuals for thousands of years have written and taught that in war, you should take the high ground and force your enemy to attack from the low ground. Why? Because the high ground gives you an elevated vantage point from which you can see wider and further.

And also because gravity is on your side and it's much more wearying to charge uphill. And because gravity is on your side, your projectiles also travel much further when you're shooting from uphill.

So this final battle is already decided. The Lamb is going to win. And these people who are with Him are going to be part of that victory and triumph and celebration.

Mount Zion is symbolically significant because, as Scripture repeatedly says, the Lord of hosts reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem. And in Psalm 2, there was a prophecy that God says, where God says, I have set my king on Mount Zion, on my holy hill.

And that's Him speaking of the Messianic king that will come, which is Jesus. And of Him, God says, you are my son. Today I have begotten you. I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession.

[10:38] You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. That's being fulfilled in this heavenly vision. Jesus, the King, the Lamb of God, standing on Mount Zion to bring vengeance upon the enemies of God and to deliver His people forever.

But it doesn't necessarily mean that Jesus will literally and physically come and stand on Mount Zion in Jerusalem in the Middle East one day. Because Mount Zion is also used symbolically throughout Scripture.

Hebrews 12, 22 says, Mount Zion is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Galatians 4, 26 likewise calls it the Jerusalem above, not here on the earth, but above.

So Mount Zion is figuratively describing the spiritual abode of God's people. That's why, even though the 144,000 are standing on Mount Zion, it says, their voice, in verse 2, is heard from heaven.

And they are singing before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders, which we all know from chapter 4, are in the throne room of God in heaven. So John's vision is depicting a heavenly reality that will soon come to bear upon the earth.

[11:54] And in heaven, the Lamb is not alone. He's surrounded by His heavenly army. It says in verse 1, Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with Him 144,000 who had His name and His Father's name written on their foreheads.

John mentions the 144,000 here without any further explanation because He already gave us a detailed explanation of who they are earlier in chapter 7.

There, the angels sealed the servants of God on their foreheads, and those who were sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel numbered 144,000, 12,000 from each tribe.

I preached on that chapter, chapter 7, in December, and I explained to you that the 144,000 do not represent the Jewish Christians only or only some special class of elite Christians, but that it represents all of God's redeemed people throughout the ages.

And if you want more detailed explanations of that, I encourage you to listen to that sermon because I'm going to go through that briefly here. The number 144,000 is a symbolic representation of all of God's people from all nations, Jews and Gentiles.

[13:16] The number 12 often throughout Scripture represents the people of God. Why? Because of the 12 tribes of Israel and 12 apostles of the Lamb, apostles of Jesus Christ who formed the foundation of the church of God.

And the number 1,000 is a figurative number in the same way we use it, representing a multitude.

And when you multiply 12 by 1,000, you get 12,000, which is the number of the sealed from each of the tribes of the redeemed, of the redeemed Israel.

And when you add that up, you get 144,000. In Revelation 21, we see the new Jerusalem, which we are told explicitly is the bride, the wife of the Lamb, which is an allusion to the people of God, the church of Christ.

And this new Jerusalem has 12 gates with the names of the 12 tribes of the sons of Israel inscribed on them. And it has 12 foundations, which have the 12 names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb written on them.

And so this is very consistently used symbols here. When you multiply 12 tribes of Israel, 12 apostles of the Lamb, and then that's 144, and then you multiply that by 1,000, you get 144,000, which symbolically represents the fullness of all of God's people.

[14:33] I mentioned all of these things to you earlier, but what I didn't mention to you when I preached in chapter 7 is that the 144,000 also represent the redeemed people of God as soldiers, as the heavenly army.

There are several clues for this. First, Revelation 7, 5 to 8, which first described the 144,000, is intentionally stylized like an Old Testament census.

It gives the tribe, it says, 12,000 from the tribe of Judah, 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben, and so on. And in the Old Testament, the census is always taken to determine the military might of the nation.

And this is confirmed later by Revelation 19, 14, where John sees a vision of Jesus riding on a white horse in heaven, and he notes that the, quote, the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white horses, following him on white horses.

So that's confirmation, that this is the armies of heaven. And here in chapter 14, verse 4, we are told that the 144,000 likewise follow the lamb wherever he goes. It's the same group of people.

[15 : 48] Their identity as soldiers, I think, is partly why they are described in verse 4 as not having defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins.

This is not because all of the 144,000 are literally male virgins, but because they represent God's holy army.

Because the Israelite army in the Old Testament is engaged in holy war, they were commanded in Deuteronomy 23, 9-11 that the sisters are to keep themselves from becoming unclean.

And specifically, they had to remain ritually clean while at war by abstaining from sexual intercourse because even accidental nocturnal emission of semen made them ritually unclean, according to the specific commands there.

This was not because sex is evil in and of itself, but because it was intended to teach the Israelites the meaning of consecration, what it means to be set apart for God, to be different from the other nations.

[16 : 57] To give you an example, in Leviticus 11, you see an extensive set of dietary laws that the Israelites had to observe. They're forbidden from eating various kinds of animals, not because those animals are evil or bad in and of themselves, but because, as God says in Leviticus 11, 14, for, this is the reason, for I am the Lord your God.

Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. That's the reason why they had to observe those laws. To be holy means to be set apart, to be uncommon, because Israelites didn't eat those animals, they were unlike all the other nations surrounding them.

It set them apart. It made them different, and it reminded them. That was precisely the point. It reminded them, we are not like the other nations, because we belong to God.

God has set us apart, especially for himself. Similarly, for the Israelites, who are the soldiers that are at war, there could be no emission of semen among the Israelites' soldiers.

Enemy soldiers would visit prostitutes. They would masturbate. They would rape their female captives, as soldiers have done for millennia, all throughout the world, but not the soldiers of God.

[18 : 23] They were not even allowed to sleep with their own wives. Why? Because they were holy, set apart for God, not like their enemy soldiers.

In 1 Samuel 21, we see an example of this principle at work. When David and his soldiers are fleeing from Saul, they take refuge with Ahimelech, the priest, briefly and ask him for some bread. But Ahimelech, the priest, informs them, there is no common bread on hand, but only holy bread. And because there's only holy bread that's been consecrated to God, he tells David and the young men, if they can help themselves to the bread, if the young men have kept themselves from women. And David answers him, truly women have been kept from us, as always, when I go on an expedition. This is how they always fought in war. God's soldiers were to keep themselves from women while at war.

Let's see this law at work in 2 Samuel 11, when David commits adultery with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. Right? David commits adultery with her and impregnates her and he's trying to cover his tracks.

[19 : 35] He's trying to hide it. And so he commands Uriah, who is a valiant man, fighting in the battles of the Lord, he recalls his home.

He tells him to come home. And then he throws Uriah a party, feasts him, feeds him full, and makes him drunk, gives him all this choice wine, gets him drunk, and then he tells him, hey, go to your house and rest.

He wants Uriah to sleep with Bathsheba so that he can pass off his kid as Uriah's and act like nothing happened. Isn't it amazing how Bible really doesn't hold up these heroes as real heroes, but tells us exactly what kind of sordid life they had?

This is what David is trying to do. But this is what Uriah says to him. The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths. Meaning they're out on campaigns.

And my lord Joab, his general, and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Meaning they're at war. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink and to lie with my wife?

[20 : 43] As you live and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing. Amazing. Because they're in the middle of war, Uriah refuses to sleep with his own wife while he is drunk.

Uriah refuses to do while he is drunk with his own wife what David does while he is totally sober with someone else's wife.

I mean, that's crazy. We need more men named Uriah. Uriah. Anyway, that's... I mean, David's redeemed later on, so I know there's...

David's a good name too. God has mercy on us. We're all sinners. So that's one reason why the 144,000 ark is described specifically as not having defiled themselves with women.

They are soldiers at war following the commander-in-chief, the Lamb of God. Remember also that this chapter follows on the heels of chapter 13 where the beast, which represents the worldly kingdoms and rulers that oppose Christ and his church, they put there the beast's name and the number of his name, the mark of the beast, on the foreheads of all of his followers.

[22 : 06] And those who refused to take his mark on their foreheads were embargoed from buying and selling and some of them were slain. The 144,000 are those people who refused to take the mark of the beast because they had the seal of God on their foreheads, the name of the Lamb and the name of his Father written on their foreheads.

And ironically, this army of the redeemed, they conquered the dragon not by killing, but by dying. As it says in Revelation 12, 11, they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they love not their lives even unto death.

The 144,000 are those who follow in the footsteps of the Lamb of God, who, as we saw in Revelation 5, 5-6, conquered by being slain.

The Lamb defeated the dragon and redeemed his people by dying on the cross and pouring out his blood. And we also, as his people, likewise, are to defeat the dragon in this life by dying on the cross and pouring, carrying our own cross, dying to ourselves, bearing witness to Jesus.

Jesus, even when we are persecuted and killed by the dragon and the beast. That's what the soldiers of the Lamb are meant to do. It says in 2 Timothy 2, 3-4, share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

[23 : 47] No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. A soldier ought to be focused and disciplined for the sake of the war at hand and not entangled in civilian affairs.

Do your purposes, people of God, do your purposes and priorities in life reflect the spiritual reality that the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet are at large and after us?

Are you sharing in the sufferings of Christ by bearing witness to him or are you shirking your responsibility as witness in search of the comforts and the distractions of civilian pursuits?

Is your aim in life to please the one who enlisted you, your general, your king, Jesus Christ? or are you living to please someone else who wields, who wields in your life controlling influence upon your thoughts and behaviors?

Is it Jesus or is it someone else? Are you, as verse four says, soldiers who follow the lamb wherever he goes or are you straying and following your own way?

[25 : 16] our country cherishes one of our greatest strengths as a nation that we cherish the values of individual freedom.

But even here in the military, submission, following orders immediately and completely is considered of utmost importance.

why? Because the chain of command is not respected in the military, it's impossible to maintain order, discipline, and unity in the army.

Because soldiers often work in high stakes environment where following orders can be a matter of life and death, not only for themselves but for many others. A habit of questioning orders and delaying obeisance can prove deadly and imperil the entire mission.

are we ready to follow our king, our general Jesus wherever he goes?

[26 : 27] Come what may be. Come fire or water. Go wherever he goes. the redeemed are soldiers.

They're also singers. It says in verses 2-3, and I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder.

The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.

The voice of the saints here is compared to the roar of many waters and the sound of loud thunder. Earlier in Revelation 1-15 in John's exalted vision of Jesus, the risen Christ, it said that Jesus' voice was like the roar of many waters.

many waters. The redeemed of Christ follow him wherever he goes and obeys whatever he says and now they even sound like him as they worship him.

[27 : 42] Ezekiel 1-24 gives us more details about what the sound of the roar of many waters sounds like. It says, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of many waters, like the sound of the almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army.

This sound, which is a sound of tumult like the sound of an army fits well again with the vision of that heavenly army. Imagine the sounds of a mighty host marching and you feel the rumbling of the ground like a roar of mighty waters like the Niagara Falls falling and as you draw nearer that deafening sound, you can make out what they're saying and they're singing like the sound of harpists.

It's passages like this and Revelation 15-2 where those who have conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name have harps of God in their hands. It's passages like this that have been frequently misused to create the impression that heaven is boring and unexciting. In his book, Heaven, Randy Alcorn writes about how a friend of his once honestly confessed to him, whenever I think about heaven, it makes me depressed.

I'd rather just cease to exist when I die. And Alcorn asked him, why? And he answered, I can't stand the thought of that endless tedium to float around the clouds with nothing to do but strum a harp.

[29 : 22] it's all so terribly boring. Heaven doesn't sound much better than hell. I'd rather be annihilated than spend eternity in a place like that.

That's a disastrous misconception. And he's completely missing the point of the singing that's intended to convey.

First, singing is not the only thing that we'll be doing in heaven. I think that's obvious in many passages. 2 Timothy 2.12 says we're promised if we endure that we will also reign with Christ. And then in the parable of the minus in Luke 19, Jesus says that the servant who is faithful with the gospel that has been trusted to him and bears much fruit and it brings back ten minus more will be given authority over ten cities.

So we will have things to do in heaven. We will be involved in the governing of the kingdom of heaven, reigning with Christ. But the description of heaven in scripture often features singing because there's something about music and about singing that captures the transcendent joy of heaven.

[30 : 37] In his book, The Joy of Music, renowned American composer and conductor, Leonard Bernstein, recounts the conversation he had on a road trip with a friend of his who was a British poet.

And they were driving through the mountainous region of the Picasso Pass of New Mexico and his friend remarks looking at the hills, he says, these hills are pure Beethoven.

I don't know what that means but it must have been beautiful. And Bernstein follows up with the question, why Beethoven? Beethoven? Why not Bach, Mozart, Mendelssohn, or Schumann?

And then they go back and forth discussing the merits of Beethoven's compositions, why they have such a transcendent and luminary quality. And then this is what Leonard Bernstein concludes.

Quote, let me put it this way. Many, many composers have been able to write heavenly tunes and respectable views. Some composers can orchestrate the C major scale so that it sounds like a masterpiece or full with notes so that a harmonic novelty is achieved.

[31 : 44] But this is all mere dust. Nothing compared to the magic ingredients sought by them all. The inexplicable ability to know what the next note has to be.

Beethoven had this gift in the degree that leaves them all panting in the rear guard. When he really did it, as in the funeral march of the Eroica, he produced an entity that always seems to me to have been previously written in heaven and then merely dictated to him.

There is a special place carved out in the cosmos into which this movement just fits, predetermined and perfect. Form is only an empty word, a shell, without the gift of inevitability.

A composer can write a string of perfectly molded sonata, allegro movements with every rule obeyed and still suffer from bad form. Beethoven broke all the rules and turned out pieces of breathtaking rightness.

Rightness, that's the word. When you get the feeling that whatever note succeeds the last is the only possible note that can rightly happen at that instant.

[33 : 00] In that context, then chances are you're listening to Beethoven. Melodies, fugas, rhythms, leave them to the Tchaikovskis and the Hindemiths and the Ravels.

Our boy has the real goods. The stuff from heaven, the power to make you feel at the finish. Something is right in the world.

There's something that checks throughout, that follows its own law consistently, something we can trust that will never let us down. We might not appreciate music to the same level that Leonard Bernstein can, at least not in this life, but we do know that the best of music captures something of transcendence.

They have a heavenly quality, whispers, rumors of God in them. In heaven, we're going to have the fullness of that.

And these songs aren't just generic songs. They'll be worship songs. It says in verse 3, they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders.

[34 : 28] No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who have been redeemed from the earth. Only the redeemed can sing this song because only the redeemed know God in a way that inspires eternal song.

The singing of this new song is a recurring theme throughout the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms. It's always in response to God's triumph over the enemies. after his deliverance of his people.

Some 3,500 years ago, after God split the Red Sea and delivered Israel from Egypt in Exodus 15, the people sang to him a new song. And the people of God have not stopped singing since then. Christians today still sing songs of worship written centuries ago, ancient times. Churches sing songs like Of the Father's Love Begotten, O Splendor of God's Glory Bright.

They're written in the 4th century A.D. by Aurelius Clemens Prudentius and Ambrose, respectively. We still sing as a local church the song Be Thou My Vision written in the 6th century A.D.

[35 : 40] by Dallin Forgeil. I don't know how to pronounce that Irish name. But we also sing new songs. Our musical history team carefully calls the large, the ever increasingly large body of new worship songs that are added to Christian copyright licensing internationally every single week.

And they try to introduce to us the most edifying, most stirring songs. And there will always be new songs to sing because God is infinite.

And his glory is inexhaustible. Don't you feel this? I feel this when I worship with you and I sing on Sunday mornings.

When you're worshiping God in song and as you think of who God is, as you think of his everlasting love and about what he has done to redeem us as his people, how he sent Jesus, his son, to die on the cross for our sins, how he saved us from our slavery to sin and death.

And as you're singing those songs, does it not feel like your heart's going to burst? Does it not feel like you need to shout at the top of your lungs and raise your arms to heaven?

[36 : 57] And does it not make you want to sing again and again and again? At the end of one of the songs we're singing this morning, I was just like, oh, I just want to sing that chorus again. I just want to sing that chorus again.

Because some things are too great to just talk about.

Because God is too great to just talk about. You have to sing. Well, in heaven, we'll get to do that. In the fullness of the presence of God, we'll get to sing to him right before his throne. And here in life, we could only sing so much before we get tired, we get emotionally exhausted before we lose our voices.

But in heaven, we will never tire. We'll get to sing. Finally, in a way, they'll give him the worship that he deserves, which is ceaseless praise, ceaseless worship.

[38 : 06] Because that's the kind of worship that he deserves. Any worship that ends at any time is not sufficient for the glory of God. And brothers and sisters, we're going to make a magnificent choir.

I look forward to that. Not only that, the redeemed people of God are virgins. Verse 4 has three sentences that describe what the redeemed are like.

Each of those clauses begin with these. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women for they are virgins. It is these who follow the lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as first puts fruits for God and the lamb.

I'll be brief here because I've already talked about some of these things. In addition to the idea of soldiers keeping themselves ceremonially clean during war, the fact that they are described as virgins captures the purity of the people of God.

This verse is not referring, as I've said before, to literal male virgins, but to all of God's holy people, men and women, married and single, who have maintained their undivided devotion to God and to Jesus despite the persecution of the beast.

[39 : 25] The description of God's soldiers as virgins is especially appropriate because later on in Revelation 19, 7 to 9 and Revelation 21, 2, they will be called collectively the bride of the lamb, clothed with fine linen, bright and pure, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

We'll be a bride as bride should be. This is why in 2 Corinthians 11, 2, Paul describes his ministry to the Corinthian church this way, I feel a divine jealousy for you since I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

The church is a virgin bride because they have not defiled themselves with the passion of Babylon's sexual immorality as it says in verse 8. They have not succumbed ultimately to the temptation of the great harlot that we see in Revelation chapter 17.

This is not speaking of physical virginity but spiritual virginity. Are you a spiritual virgin for Christ? Revelation 21, 8 is crystal clear as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars.

Their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur which is the second death. If there is any unrepentant sin in your life, turn from it today.

[41 : 11] Confess it to another believer, another brother or sister in Christ in the church this week. Find accountability and take decisive steps to cut it out of your life because it's a matter of life and death.

Because if you don't, you will not be counted among the 144,000 virgins of Christ. But if you repent and you trust in Jesus, no matter what you have done, maybe you are not only not a virgin but you've been so promiscuous.

But no matter what you have done, if you repent and you take hold of Jesus in faith, he will prove to you to be a strong redeemer. And that's what we see in verses 4 and 5.

These have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the lamb. And in their mouth no lie was found for they are blameless. The idea of first fruits comes from one of the three major pilgrimage feasts that the Jews, the Israelites celebrated in the Old Testament called the feast of harvest of the first fruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field.

It says in Exodus 23, 16. This feast came at the beginning of the harvest season. And according to more detailed instructions found in Leviticus 23, Numbers 20 to 29, Deuteronomy 16, this feast began when the sickle is first put to the standing grain.

[42 : 51] And after the first fruits of the harvest are harvested, then the sheaf of the first fruits were to be waved before the Lord as an offering. Because of the observance of this feast, the first fruits, first fruit offering comes to represent the portion of the harvest that belongs specially to God.

God. This is why I, this is possible. Some people think that the 144,000 are called first fruits because it's only the initial harvest.

And there will be later harvest of more believers. Some people argue that. I don't think that's the case because these are those who have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb.

I believe that represents all of God's elect, all of God's people because they are specially set aside for him. And I think the rest of the harvest that is to come is not the more of God's people but of the judgment harvest, the winepress of God's wrath that we see in the rest of chapter 14.

This is confirmed by the fact that in the Old Testament, for example, in Jeremiah 2, verses 2 to 3, all of God's people at the time are called the first of his harvest, first fruits, in contradistinction to the pagan nations.

[44 : 18] A related concept is the idea of the firstborn, which is also used to describe all of God's people in the Old Testament, not just a part of them, in contradistinction to all the other pagan nations.

The idea of first fruits and firstborns are explicitly connected in Nehemiah 10, 35 to 37, Psalm 78, 51, Psalm 105, 36, they're referring to the same idea.

As James 1, 18 says, of all of God's people, once again, of his only will, God brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

That's what all of us are and all of God's people are if we belong to Christ, his special set-aside chosen portion. And we are the special first fruits that belong to God, not because of our own merit, but because God has purchased or redeemed us, as it says twice in this passage, in verse 3 and verse 4.

The same word, redeem, though translated slightly differently, is used in Revelation 5, 9 to say that the Lamb ransomed people for God by his blood from every tribe and language and people and nation.

[45 : 38] Once again, this proves that the 144,000, the first fruits, refer to all of the redeemed. We are soldiers, singers, virgins, and first fruits that belong especially to the bride.

A copying power is only for everyone but also for all of the Saans. Now, this is the bigger thing. This is the largest gift that you treasured home free from God! Because of your life, it has a victory right now. Golden glass and golden glass! Sometimes, again, it is under point of Sermon.

Once again! I want,■■■■! But what people do that happen carefully, to anda, to woe-diufeuss does