
Church in Campbell Weekly News

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LIFE-STUDY OF REVELATION MESSAGE 46 THE FIRSTFRUIT

In chapter twelve we have seen a clear vision of a universal woman bearing a man-child and confronting a great dragon. We all have been deeply impressed with this sign. In chapter thirteen we saw two beasts—Antichrist and the false prophet, both of whom collaborate with the dragon, Satan, to oppose God and to hinder the completion of God's economy. Following this, we have more crucial matters in chapter fourteen. Here we not only see the firstfruit (vv. 1-5), but the things that follow the rapture of the firstfruit (vv. 6-13): the preaching of the eternal gospel (vv. 6-7), the fall of religious Babylon (v. 8), the warning against the worship of the beast and his image and against the mark (vv. 9-11), and the martyrdom during the great tribulation (vv. 12-13). In addition, chapter fourteen covers the harvest (vv. 14-16) and the great winepress (vv. 17-20). Chapter fourteen has four main categories: the rapture of the firstfruit; the things following the rapture of the firstfruit; the harvest, which is the reaping of the majority of the believers; and the great winepress, which is the reaping of the evil people on earth. Thus, this chapter reveals how everyone living on earth at the end time will be dealt with.

I. THE FIRSTFRUIT

A. Firstfruit to God and to the Lamb-The firstfruit to God and to the Lamb mentioned in verse 4 are the ones of God's crop who mature the earliest. These early overcomers will be the first ripe ones in God's field. Hence, they will be reaped before the harvest as firstfruit to God and to the Lamb. According to verses 14 through 16, the harvest will be reaped later. This means that they will be raptured to the heavens before the harvest, just as the firstfruit of the good land was reaped and brought into the temple of God before the harvest (Lev. 23:10-11; Exo. 23:19). The events recorded in verses 6 through 13, all of which will transpire during the great tribulation (Matt. 24:21), indicate clearly and prove strongly that the first overcomers as the firstfruit in verses 1 through 5 will be raptured before the great tribulation and that the harvest in verses 14 through 16, which includes the majority of believers, will be raptured towards the end of the great tribulation.

B. A Hundred and Forty-four Thousand-Verse 1 says, "And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand." In the past many teachers have debated whether this number is literal or figurative. Some said that the number one hundred and forty-four thousand was not a literal number, and others said that just as the seven cities in chapters two and three are literal, so must the number one hundred forty-four

thousand be taken literally. This number should no doubt be an actual number, but with a symbolic meaning. Although the number one hundred forty-four thousand is literal, it has a spiritual significance, indicating that every living overcomer is a part of the completion of God's administration in the fulfillment of His economy for eternity. To be a living overcomer is a great matter. To be a firstfruit is to be for the completion of God's administration to fulfill His economy for eternity.

C. Purchased from the Earth-Verse 3 says that the one hundred forty-four thousand "have been purchased from the earth." This proves that they are no longer on earth, but had been raptured to the heavens. At the time of verses 1 through 5 the firstfruit are no longer on earth because they have been purchased "from the earth." They were purchased with the blood of the Lamb and have been taken away from earth to heaven.

D. Purchased from among Men-Verse 4 says that the firstfruit "were purchased from among men." This indicates that they are no longer among men, but are in the heavens.

E. Standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion-The firstfruit stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion (v. 1). The Zion mentioned in verse 1 is not the earthly one but the Zion in the heavens (Heb. 12:22). Those who stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion are raptured to the heavens before Antichrist's persecution of religion. After this rapture, Antichrist will persecute people and compel them to worship him. By this fact we know that the living overcomers are raptured before the great tribulation.

F. Having the Lamb's Name and the Father's Name on Their Foreheads-Verse 1 also indicates that the one hundred forty-four thousand have the name of the Lamb and the name of His father written on their foreheads. This is the designation of their being one with the Lamb and with the Father and of their belonging to Them. The name of the Lamb and the name of the Father written on the foreheads of these early overcomers is in contrast to the name of the beast written on the foreheads of his worshippers (13:16-17).

G. Singing a New Song-Verse 3 says, "And they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who have been purchased from the earth." The one hundred forty-four thousand sing a new song before the throne, the four living creatures, and

the elders. Apart from the firstfruit, no one is able to learn this song, because no one else has the necessary experience. Songs always come out of experience. If you have no experience, you have nothing to sing about. Because the hundred forty-four thousand overcomers have specific and particular experiences of Christ, they can sing a song that others do not understand. Some Christians do not understand our songs. Although they may say that these songs are strange, we say that they are sweet and tasteful. Whenever we sing certain songs, we are beside ourselves. But those who do not have the experience do not understand what we are singing about. Only the experienced ones can learn to sing the song of the hundred forty-four thousand.

H. Not Defiled with Women-Verse 4 says of the firstfruit that they “were not defiled with women, for they are virgins.” Just as there has been a debate about whether the number one hundred forty-four thousand is literal or figurative, there has also been a debate regarding the understanding of virginity mentioned in this verse. According to this portion of the Word, all the one hundred forty-four thousand living overcomers are virgins. Some say that this virginity is literal, and others say that it is spiritual. The virginity here should be the virginity mentioned by the Lord in Matthew 19:11-12. However, the same principle can be applied to the sisters (1 Cor. 7:7, 34, 37). The principle of virginity is that we should not be defiled by anything earthly. If we take this only literally, then all the sisters will be excluded. But it is not right to exclude the sisters from being among the living overcomers.

You may be wondering about the difference between the overcomers in chapter twelve and the overcomers in chapter fourteen. In chapter twelve we have the man-child, and in chapter fourteen we have the firstfruit. In the messages on chapter twelve we saw clearly that the man-child is for fighting and defeating Satan. Hence, the man-child deals with the enemy. The firstfruit is not for fighting; it is for the satisfaction of God and the Lamb. God and the Lamb need enjoyment. We, the living overcomers, shall be the firstfruit to satisfy Their need for enjoyment.

We need to follow the principle in verse 4. This principle is that we, sisters and brothers alike, must keep our virginity, looking to the Lord that, by His grace, He would preserve us for Himself. We should be not only fighters, but also firstfruit, those who ripen earlier for the Lord’s satisfaction. We need to say, “Lord, for the sake of Your satisfaction, I want to ripen early. Lord, I don’t care for my rapture—I care for Your satisfaction. I want to be taken to the heavens to satisfy You. Lord, as long as I can satisfy You, it makes no difference to me whether I am on earth or in heaven.” This is the attitude of the living overcomers.

I. No Lie Being Found in Their Mouth-Verse 5 says of the firstfruit that “In their mouth no lie was found.” Lies are the expression and representation of Satan. The Devil is the father of all liars, and lies come out of him (John 8:44). That no lie was found in the overcomers’ mouth indicates that there is nothing of Satan in their expression. If we live a life of loving the Lord, then no lie or falsehood will proceed out of our mouth. Although I hate to say it, for years I have suffered the lies of genuine Christians. What a shame! In the Lord’s recovery there should be no lies and no falsehood in our mouth. When we say “Yes,” we mean yes, and when we say “No,” we mean no. If we cannot answer with a clear yes or no, we should not say anything. In such a case we should exercise our wisdom to say nothing, so that no lies nor falsehood would come out of our mouth. We have nothing to do with Satan, the liar and the source of the lies.

J. Without Blemish-Verse 5 also says that the firstfruit are without blemish. This indicates that they are without spot or wrinkle, but are perfect in the holiness of God (Eph. 5:27), absolutely sanctified to God and fully saturated with God (1 Thes. 5:23).

K. Following the Lamb Wherever He May Go-The one hundred forty-four thousand firstfruit “follow the Lamb wherever He may go” (v. 4). It is not that the Lamb follows us, but that we follow Him wherever He goes. We all must learn the lesson of following Him wherever He goes.

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Burdens for Church Prayers

- Pray for God’s economy present move: the increase and spread in Europe with many more golden lampstands.
- Strengthening of prayer in the church life on all levels: personal, husband and wife, vital group, church prayer
- Pray for the English-speaking testimony and gospel preaching on West Valley College campus.
- Pray for the burden of raising up next generation for building up of the body of Christ.
- For GOW training: Vital groups be raised up, attending prayer meeting, prophesying on Lord’s day by daily enjoying His word and pursue the truth.

Announcement

- Bible Reading Schedule of Revelations:

LD	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
13:11~18	14:1~5	14:6~12	14:13~20	15:1~8	16:1~12	16:13~21

- 1/15/2013 prayer meeting at br. Tai’s house, started at 7:45pm.
- 2013 International Chinese-speaking conference, 2/15 – 2/17, at Anaheim.