

Revelation 14:1-5

"Learning From Future Followers Of Jesus"

On your way to Rev 14, stop off at **1st Cor Ch 10** (Vs 1-11). Why did God record all the faults & frailties, the sin & backsliding of His people in the past? Why are the shortcomings of Saul placed on the big screen of the scripture for all to see, or the downfall of David, or the waxing & waning of Israel's wilderness wonderings? **Why do we get a 1st class ticket to witness the sin of Samson or the greed of Gehazi? Is it so we can revel in the fact that those guys were some real losers & totally failed & we're so glad that we're not like that? Uh, no!**

They're not made a public spectacle so as to make us feel better about ourselves, but rather Paul tells us that we have these things recorded for us that we might *learn* from them, they were written for *our admonition* or *our exhortation*, so that we might not repeat their mistakes. **We get to benefit from their life lessons, we get to see where the choices that they made lead to so that we might not be repeat offenders. Because by nature we would make many of the same mistakes, we would follow similar paths of sin & God says, "Hey, look at these guys & learn from these guys that you might not be repeat offenders."** We will at times hear the phrase repeated something to the effect of "Those who will not learn from the past are destined to repeat it." So we do well to take the things that our forefathers of faith have failed in & learn from them so that we might not falter in like manner.

Now that's not to say that we learn only of the negative, we also see the victory of Nehemiah, the humility of David, the power of God on behalf of those who will be found faithful through Moses & the prophets. We see how Abe believed God & it was accounted to him for righteousness & even so we learn that it's by grace through faith in J.C. that we are accounted as righteous. Time would fail us to speak of all the life lessons that we learn through the examples given to us in times past via the scripture.

But what we see today is that not only can we learn from saints & patriarchs of the past, we can also learn from future followers of Jesus.

If you're a note taker (a margin etcher) I've broken down these 1st 5 Vs in 3 simple sections. (I don't know why at times I go through outlining phases & other times I don't, it's just the way I roll ☺). In **Vs 1** we have **"The Stand"**, embedded w/in that stand we see safety & security, how Christ is our shield & our strong tower. In **Vs 2-3** we have **"The Song"**, it's a symphony of sorts, the harpists playing, the 144,000 singing & finally in **Vs 4-5** we have **"The Sanctity"** or the separation, the model of a life led in holiness bringing honor & glory to God.

Vs 1-5

For as interesting & insightful as Ch 13 was w/regard to the A.C. & the false prophet overall it's a pretty dark chapter. You see the A.C. usurping authority, demanding to be worshiped as God, the whole world buying the lie. **You see the false prophet causing people to worship the A.C. & causing an image of him to be built which calls for people to worship him & demands the execution of all who won't. He takes total economic control causing everyone to receive a mark on the right hand or on their forehead so that no one can buy or sell apart from it.**

By the time the Ch ends it's pretty dismal, pretty depressing & can leave one wondering if there's any hope, is there any light at the end of the tunnel. Ch 14 answers a resounding "Yes".

Now we've mentioned in the past the phrase known as "prophetic telescoping", how that decades, or centuries or even more can at times flash past you w/the drop of a comma when it comes to prophecy. How that prophecy doesn't seem to always give much respect to the time space continuum in which we live. We've also noted that the book of Rev isn't always written in a linear or chronological fashion. Here in the 1st 5 Vs of Rev 14 we have a small example of just that. John jumps us forward a few yrs from the previous Ch to show *to us & share w/us the fact that God is still in control, that Jesus will still rule & reign & righteousness & the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as waters cover the sea...*

Then we'll snap back (in Vs 6, next time) to the tribulation period w/what will be real time events happening concurrently w/the issuing of the mark of the beast.

But for now John draws our attention to "the stand", where the Lord is seen standing on Mt Zion (the holy city of Jerusalem) preparing to usher in His millennial reign, notice.

Vs 1

In the NKJV we read "a Lamb" if you have a different version perhaps it reads "the Lamb" the reference of course being "The Lamb of God" J.C. who has taken away the sins of the world.

& There He is standing on Mt Zion, that place of which the bible declares He will return, from which He will rule & reign for 1,000 yrs from Jerusalem. Amongst other places we read in the 2nd psalm **"Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion."**¹ & Here we see Him standing on that hill & w/Him are 144,000 having His Father's name on their forehead.

¹ The New King James Version. 1982 (Ps 2:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

You remember the 144,000 don't you? We 1st met them back in Ch 7. They were 12,000 men of each of the 12 tribes of Israel, heaven's special forces (if you will) the "sealed team", untouchable as far as the enemy was concerned having received God's seal on their forehead. Here we get to see what that seal is, it's God's name. He puts *His* name on *their* lives.

But here's what I want to point out. How many did God seal? 144,000, now here they are at the end of the tribulation, preparing to usher in the millennial reign of Christ & how many made it through? "126, 843, it was brutal but the majority endured & escaped the hand of the enemy..." Is that what your bible says? It's not what my bible says. As much as Jesus is the Lamb of God we also realize that He's the Good Shepherd (John 10); & having begun 144,000 He ended w/144,000, not even 1 was lost. What does the bible say? *"that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;"*² Jesus said, *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."*³

Even as God preserved Noah & his family through the flood, & kept Shadrach, Meshach & Abed-Nego from the fire, He will preserve these 144,000 through the fiery trial of the Great Tribulation.

Now here's where it gets personal. You can believe me when I tell you that Christ is able to keep you too. Regardless of what fiery furnace is before you, whatever flood overwhelms you, whatever hour of trial may be upon you, in the words of the apostle Paul, *"for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day."*⁴ Question: have you committed your life to J.C.? If so take confidence in the fact that He is able to keep that which you have committed to Him (namely your life/salvation) until that Day.

Now this is where God's sovereignty and man's freewill meet & shake hands isn't it? Because God in His faithfulness preserved them; but equally true is the fact that they made a choice to stand for righteousness, to maintain a life of holiness in the midst of the single darkest & trying time of what will become world history.

² *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Php 1:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Jn 10:27-30). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (2 Ti 1:12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

They found refuge in Christ. He was their safe place, their strong tower, their shield, their fortress, the One in Whom they placed their trust. Even so you & me, we are to trust in the Lord w/all our heart, to lean not on our own understanding, in all our ways we're to acknowledge Him & then we will discover that He has been faithful all along the way to complete the work He began in us.

He never said that He would keep us from trying times. He said that He would strengthen us & keep us in the midst of those trying times. He said, *"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."* *Is 41:10* & Again, *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;"*⁵ That's not to say you won't be tried, it is to say you won't be consumed by the fire but rather you'll be *refined* by the fire & in the end you'll come through as gold because God is able to keep that which you have committed to His trust.

He placed His name upon them, He identified Himself w/*them*. Just as when you come to Christ He places His seal upon you, the Holy Spirit of promise (Eph 1:13) demonstrating His identification w/*you*, His promise to see you through, His ownership of *you*. A seal demonstrates ownership; & the bible is clear that we are not our own, we've been bought w/a price, (& that being the shed blood of J.C.) therefore we're to glorify God in our body & in our spirit which are His. We've been set free from the bondage of sin that we might become slaves of righteousness (Rom 6).

God has placed His seal upon us, He identifies Himself w/*us*. It seems to me the question should be do our lives identify w/*Him*? Can people tell by the way we conduct ourselves that we belong *to Him* and walk intimately w/*Him* following after Him?

Vs 2-3

From "the stand" to "the song". John hears the voice of many waters, (think of Niagara Falls, a sound of power, of strength & authority), like the voice of loud thunder, perhaps the voice of God Himself (Rev 1:15, 4:5) uttering well done good & faithful servants. We don't know, but then heaven & earth seem to collide as the accompaniment comes from heaven & the worship ascends from earth (again don't forget we're on the threshold of the millennial reign here so heaven & earth are brushing together here).

⁵ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Is 43:2-3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But the elders are playing their harps (the Greek word is the word from which we get our word “guitar” so don’t think of a harp in the classical sense). & They sang as it were a new song, a song that only they could sing because it represents the experience that only they have gone through. The angels can’t sing their song, the church can’t sing their song. It’s their song.

Even as the church has a song that only we will sing: “You are worthy to take the scrolls & to open its seals; for You were slain, & have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe & tongue & people & nation, & have made us kings & priests to our God; & we shall reign on the earth.” It’s a song indigenous to our relationship w/God, & even so they will have a song that only they can sing. Even as Isaiah declares, *“So the ransomed of the Lord shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness; Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”* Isaiah 51:11

2 Things & we’ll move on. #1 Every now & then we can get our eyes off of the plan of Christ for *our* lives & begin to look at the tune that He’s written for someone else. We can want our lives to be like theirs, or look like theirs. **Now certainly we want to learn from one another, that’s called discipleship. But too often rather than simply gleaning from one another we want what they got, or we envy their place or position. We want to learn “their song” as it were, but it’s a song that only they can sing. God has a song that only *you* can sing, no one else has your life, learn the life lessons He has *for you*.**

Leave the book of Rev & turn to **John 21** Vs 18-22. Here Jesus begins to give Peter some insight into his “song” his path, notice. (Read 18-22)

Peter & John were close buddies, but they would walk 2 very different paths. Jesus was saying, “Peter, your song is for you, & John’s song is for him. Don’t worry about or concern yourself w/another person’s life, focus on what I have *for you*.”

The scriptures are full of these kinds of examples. God has a specific plan for you that you do well to embrace. It will have more freedom than some, less than others, more difficulties than some, less than others, but we err when we compare ourselves amongst ourselves. We’re to focus on Christ & be careful to follow Him...

The 2nd thing I want to point out is that though heaven may’ve laid down the instrumental tracks *for* them, & the angels & the elders may be enjoying the praise that comes *from* them, it’s only before an audience of 1 that they bring their praise.

Even as we join together week after month after year as 1 big chorus yet our worship ascends before an audience of 1.

So let's not be confused. We sing together, but our praise is for only 1, God alone is worthy of all power & blessing & honor & glory & it's to Him alone that we bring the offering of our praise & our worship...

Vs 4-5

"The Stand", "The Song", "The Sanctity...", the sanctification unto God & the separation from the world.

Now where it says that they weren't defiled w/women, for they are virgins; don't be confused into thinking that being single is more spiritual or that sexual relations w/in marriage are somehow dirty; neither of those things are true. God created the sexual relationship between a man & his wife & the book of Hebrews spells it out, the marriage bed is undefiled (Heb 13:4).

2 Things to consider here. #1 Paul acknowledged the ability to remain single is a gift from God & not very many of us have it. Meaning that the 1 who is single is able to focus solely on the things of the Lord & how to please the Lord while the 1 who is married is worried about providing for his family, pleasing her family etc.

Also concerning times of great persecution Paul said that it would be better if possible to remain unmarried. You might not be tempted to deny Christ if someone held a gun to your head, but if they held a gun to your child's head, or your spouse's head you might find it much more difficult. In Matt 24 Jesus issued a "woe" unto those who were pregnant or nursing during this time; it will just be incredibly hard on families during this darkest most trying time of world history. This 144,000 remained single, single minded on God's mission throughout this time.

The other thing to point out is that they remained pure (not only physically) but spiritually. This is a time whereby tremendous pressure to compromise will be in play on multiple levels. Yet they loved not the world nor the things in the world. They didn't commit what the bible considers "spiritual fornication" which is the dividing of our heart or giving the allegiance of our heart to anything or anyone other than Christ. They didn't bow before the beast, they didn't worship his image, they stayed true to Christ.

Purity; both physically & spiritually (of course 1 can feed into the other) is an important trait in being useful to God. Write it down, look at it later 2 Tim 2:15-22. God likes to use clean vessels to do His honorable work. I have a vessel in my bathroom by the toilet, it's plastic & it holds the brush that cleans the toilet. I don't consider that a vessel of honor & I won't give you a drink out of it should you come to my house.

But in my cabinet I have all sorts of clean vessels; I'll fill them w/water that's clean & you can drink from them & be refreshed. God is the same way, He will cause clean & living water to fill up & flow out of His vessels that are clean that others might drink & be refreshed. God wants to use our lives, but it's imperative that we be clean, washed by the blood of the Lamb & leading lives set apart from the world, holy unto Him.

You might underline this next phrase, "The are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes." Remember that Vs we looked at earlier? John 10? Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, & I know them, & they follow Me." Narrow it down & say it in a sentence, "The essence of the Christian life is found in *following* Jesus." Notice "Wherever He goes". Be it into green pastures, beside the still waters, or through the valley of the shadow of death; His rod & His staff comfort us, we will fear no evil for He is with us...

Everywhere Jesus went the call was the same, "Follow Me", take up your cross & "follow Me", "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me." We, like they (the 144,000) do well to have the testimony of being the ones who follow the Lamb *wherever* He goes.

They were the "First fruits" to God; the 1st fruits represent the 1st of a harvest which is to follow. Multitudes will follow Christ from the earth into the millennial reign, these guys will be the 1st in line. They are the 1st fruits, the sealed out of the great tribulation who will undoubtedly be used to bring *salvation* to amounts yet untold...

Vs 5

Their lives are marked by honesty (in contrast to Satan's agenda to deceive), purity & integrity. "No deceit" & "w/out fault". W/out blemish having been born again & made new through faith in J.C.

This idea of being w/out blemish was one of the concepts behind an acceptable sacrifice. You don't give to God that which is broken, or marred, a cast off of sorts. You give Him your very best; that's what God did for you; He offered Christ, the Lamb w/out spot, w/out blemish, no fault found in Him; that you might be redeemed, called out of the world to be found faultless by faith in Him.

Jesus was the spotless Lamb & it's His work in you that makes you faultless as well. Did you realize that your testimony before the throne will be "w/out fault" as well? When Jesus presents you before the throne you will be found w/out fault... Hard to believe isn't it? That the power of the blood of Christ shed for you.

So (child of God). May we learn from these future followers of J.C. & may we take our stand *in* Him, sing as it were a new song *before* Him, & lead lives set apart *to* Him...

*“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you **faultless** Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.”⁶*

Prayer Points:

Father may we have ears able to hear You & hearts eager to yield to You today. We thank You for the testimony of Your word through which we are able to learn be it from those in the past, or those followers yet future. We want to take these things to heart & learn what it means to be pleasing to You, to take our stand in You, to be set apart *to* You. We praise You for Your faithfulness & we are persuaded that You are able to keep that which we’ve committed unto You until that Day...

If you’ve not committed your life unto the Lord than I want to give you an opportunity to place your trust in Him even now. Jesus wants to wash you clean, to forgive you of your sin & make you new. If you’re willing to turn from your sin & to trust in Him everlasting life can be yours right here and right now...

⁶ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Jud 24–25). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.