

## The Lamb and 144,000

### Revelation 14

**MPS** Jesus calls His people to faithful endurance and assures us of His love by judging sin and rewarding obedience.

**OBJ** Every person should believe in Jesus for salvation because of Four Words of Assurance for Faithful Endurance.

**INTRO** One of the greatest joys of parenting is watching your child grow and develop. They love to say, “Daddy / Mommy, watch me!” A child flourishes by the assurance of a parent’s love to develop a healthy understanding of themselves. In the same way, a husband / wife needs that regular assurance of their spouse’s love. A strong relationship is built by the little things we do to nurture the assurance of our love for one another. And so it is with God: we need the assurance of His love in our life to grow and mature in our identity as Christ-followers. And God is glad and ready to assure us of His love.

**TRANS** Revelation 14 concludes the interlude that began in chapter 12 by stark contrast to the war and turmoil of chapter 13. Chapter 13 was vicious, but 14 is victorious! We saw the worst, and here we learn that Christ is still the best! “Revelation 14:1–13 enables endurance to the end by showing the salvation of the redeemed and the judgment of the wicked.”<sup>1</sup>

**Jesus calls His people to faithful endurance and assures us of His love by judging sin and rewarding obedience.**

**OBJ** Four Words of Assurance for Faithful Endurance in Jesus.

**1. A Word of Victory.** READ Revelation 14:1-5

*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. <sup>2</sup>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, <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>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 firstfruits for God and the Lamb, <sup>5</sup>and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.*

**John sees standing on Mt. Zion the 144,000 with the Father’s name written on their foreheads.** Mount Zion as John sees here is part of “the heavenly Jerusalem.”<sup>2</sup>(Heb 12:22) The 144,000 refers to all the redeemed people of God, a reference to the same group we first identified in Revelation 7. A voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and loud thunder, like harpists playing their harps. If you’ve ever heard a harp play live you understand this description. It begins with simple strumming, but the longer the harpist strums the more the sound swells to fill the whole space in which it inhabits. **A new song fills heaven this is sung by all the attendants of heaven and only those redeemed from the earth can learn it.**

**The redeemed of God are the ones who will stand with Jesus on Mount Zion in Heaven.** We will bear the name of the Father and the Son to show His glory as we also declare it in singing. John provides **four descriptions of the singers.** The **first** is those “*who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins.*” John’s phrase denotes the purity of this group who is the promised bride of Christ awaiting the day of marriage. They had not given themselves to defiling relationships nor to worldly powers and priorities. Sexual immorality always defiles devotion to God, and confused priorities steals devotion. If there is any wave sweeping across the church today, it is these two defilements. Sexual immorality and compromise on Biblical, sexual ethics are two of the most common headlines for churches today. They defile devotion to God, stain character and conduct, and deceive by false teaching. **Those who sing heaven’s new song are pure in their devotion and worship of God.**

<sup>1</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), ed. R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 280.

<sup>2</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), 282.



John's **second phrase** describes the group as those who "*follow the Lamb wherever he goes.*" "Following Jesus is the opposite of idolatry."<sup>3</sup> A fidelity to the Lord characterizes God's people. Their loyalty is not divided between Jesus and other equal priorities of life. These people have set their life to seek first Jesus' Kingdom before all else. They don't pick and choose what they like or want to believe and ignore the rest. They don't twist His will to serve their wants, nor twist His words to fit their preferences or perversions. This group is distinguished as not simply using the right terms and phrases, nor merely performing the right acts, but truly following Him. They believe and trust what He said and live in obedience to what He has commanded. **Those gathered around the throne were marked by faithful obedience to Jesus Christ.**

John's **third phrase** notes that they have been "*redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb,*". God's redeeming power marked the lives of this group. They had been changed by Jesus Christ, not by their own power. They had been forgiven, set free, and now living for King Jesus. They offered themselves sacrificially to God, "set free from human entanglements"<sup>4</sup> to be sold out to Jesus. Nothing is more powerful than a life fully surrendered to King Jesus, no greater act of worship or word of testimony. **Those gathered around the throne lived sacrificially and God received them as an offering.**

John's **fourth phrase** notes that "*in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.*" This group was marked by truth and truthfulness. They were truth-tellers about God and Jesus, about sin and one's need for reconciliation to God, and that truth is found in the Bible.<sup>5</sup> This stands in stark contrast to the lying, deceiving, scheming, and blaspheming of the false christ and his prophet, and all who follow them. They refused to exchange the truth of God for a lie, to compromise truth or be deceived by the false prophet's signs. (Rom 1:25; cf. 2 Thess 2:11) They rejected ideologies, philosophies and theories that opposed and twisted God's Word. They refused to mis-handle scripture to justify human ideas about social issues of their day; like racism, economics, healthcare, education, sexual ethics and identity, self-care, fitness, mental/emotional health, "et cetera, ad nauseum, infinitude". They refused to invoke God's name to deconstruct Scripture so they could build a new reality in the likeness of created things to bear their own name, or pronoun. We should be clear about this, though, that their blamelessness was not about perfection, but redemption through Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup> Many today who claim to be God's people compromise truth in the name of love to make allowances for preferences and perversions. This is exchanging the truth of God for lies; it's not blamelessness but blame-casting and guilt-inducing and condemnation-heaping. People who worship the One who IS truth are marked, above all else, by truth that He has revealed in His Word. **Those gathered around the throne were people of truth who had not defiled themselves by lies and deception.**

**Four qualities marked this group around the throne; pure, faithful, redeemed, and truthful.** By our life each one of us is marked for something. Robert Mounce states, "The destiny of every person is determined by the mark that person bears. When judgment comes there will be no room for ambiguity; people will have by their "mark" declared their master. For the believer it will be a time of joy and celebration as before the throne of heaven they sing the new song of their redemption."<sup>7</sup> **This first word of our assurance is a word of victory: those whose lives are marked for God will join in heaven's song of the redeemed. What "mark" is determining your destiny, what master does it identify: is your life marked for God or another?**

**OBJ A Second Word of Assurance for Faithful Endurance in Jesus is...**

**2. A Word of Warning.** READ Revelation 14:6-11

<sup>3</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), 283.

<sup>4</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 268.

<sup>5</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), 283–284. Hamilton states, "It means the redeemed tell the truth about God, about who the Messiah is, about how to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus, about why people need to be reconciled—we're all sinners! They tell the truth about where true revelation can be found—in the Bible. While the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet are constructing their alternative explanation of the world, of what deserves worship, and of how truth can be known, the redeemed are telling the truth. They are proclaiming the truth of the Scriptures and the good news of the gospel."

<sup>6</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), 284. Hamilton states, "The Bible never presents blamelessness as something that results from perfect obedience or absolute sinlessness. Blamelessness results from the gospel. Those who believe in Jesus, repent of their sins, and trust in his death on the cross to pay the penalty for their sins are blameless."

<sup>7</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 264.



<sup>6</sup>Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. <sup>7</sup>And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

<sup>8</sup>Another angel, a second, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality."

<sup>9</sup>And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, <sup>10</sup>he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. <sup>11</sup>And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

**Three angels sound a word of comprehensive warning.** The **first angel** proclaims the eternal gospel to all who dwell on earth, every nation, tribe, language, and people. This is a call to fear God and glorify Him, and by it the eternal purpose of God is set forth. This word goes forth to all who remain on earth but do not worship God to declare that God's judgment is coming but there is still time to repent and believe. A **second angel** declares that Babylon has fallen. Babylon represents "the wicked world system that rejects God and does as it pleases."<sup>8</sup> The fall has not yet happened, but this makes it certain to guarantee that it will, so this is a warning and a call to repentance. The **third angel** describes how those who identify with the beast will suffer under God's wrath, the full strength of it, and be tormented without rest by fire and sulfur. Those who imbibe the wine of Babylon's immorality will ingest the undiluted wine of God's wrath, with no rest from their torment. Sin is an infinite offense to God's glory, therefore the only just and right punishment is permanent and eternal. This word of triple warning is an assurance to "the martyrs under the altar (6:9–11) that God has not forgotten that violent death was the price they paid for their convictions."<sup>9</sup> This word counters the declaration of the false prophet that those who would not worship the false Christ would be killed, and that those who do worship the beast would suffer a much worse fate.<sup>10</sup> This warning goes out to all pagan worshipers and any others who are tempted to reject God. "God's wrath is not merely the outworking of impersonal laws of retribution built into the structure of reality, but the response of a righteous God to people's adamant refusal to accept his love."<sup>11</sup> [This word issues a final warning that that end is now very near and assures Christ-followers that Jesus will vindicate His holy Name.](#)

**OBJ** [A third word of Assurance for Faithful Endurance in Jesus.](#)

**3. A Word of Encouragement.** READ Revelation 14:12-13

<sup>12</sup>Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

<sup>13</sup>And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on."

"Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

**Verse 12 echoes another call for the endurance of the saints.** This is an encouragement for those still on the earth to remain faithful to the Lord and in obedience to His Word. This call for endurance reminds of God's promise, to focus on His eternal reward as a means of His sustaining power. Though saints may suffer persecution they will not experience God's judgment. Better to die faithfully than live wickedly; those who die faithfully rest eternally in God's care, while those who live wickedly enter an eternity of torment and suffering. And for those who have died, their good works go with them to be rewarded according to all they have done. Whether in life or in death, those who are in Christ Jesus, sealed by Holy Spirit, are secure by God's power for eternity. "In contrast to the wicked who are consigned to an eternity of restless torment (14:11), God's people will experience eternal "rest" from their labor of staying faithful in the midst of hardship (cf. 2 Thess. 1:7; Heb. 4:1–11; Rev. 7:14–17; 21:5–7). The basis of the reward is their faithfulness demonstrated by their deeds. Our

<sup>8</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), 285.

<sup>9</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 269.

<sup>10</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 272. "Verses 9–11 form a counter-proclamation to that of the image in chapter 13."

<sup>11</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 273.



actions reflect who we really are."<sup>12</sup> Encouragement fills us when we remember God's truth to pour His power into our heart, that we might live in the strength of courage that only He can give. [Jesus' call to endure is the promise of His power for endurance, knowing that whatever you go through, He will sustain you and He will reward you.](#)

I am struck at how Christians are comforted even at the idea of death because what awaits us is incomparably more glorious than this life. What a stark contrast: those who suffer under judgement beg and plead for, and seek out death to escape their suffering, but death escapes them, while those who believe in Jesus have no fear of death because we know our eternal hope in Christ Jesus awaits, and that in our physical death will be our great reward for eternity!

#### **OBJ** [A fourth and final Word of Assurance for our Faithful Endurance in Jesus.](#)

#### **4. A Word of Judgment.** READ Revelation 14:14-20

*<sup>14</sup>Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. <sup>15</sup>And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe." <sup>16</sup>So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped.*

*<sup>17</sup>Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. <sup>18</sup>And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." <sup>19</sup>So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. <sup>20</sup>And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.*

**Revelation 14 concludes with the final judgement.** Jesus comes on a white cloud with a golden crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. A sickle is the instrument of harvest, a symbol for judgement. An angel comes out of the temple and makes the pronouncement to swing the sickle and reap, for the hour has come to harvest the earth. Jesus swings the sickle and harvests the earth. In the second account another angel comes out who also has a sickle. The angel who had the authority of the fire (Rev 8:5) calls to the one with the sharp sickle to swing it and gather the grape clusters. He swings the sickle and gathers the grapes, throws them into the winepress of the wrath of God where they are trodden outside the city, and blood flowed as high as the horse's bridle for 1600 stadia. And with that God's final judgment is done. These images show the final judgement of the whole earth. No, this judgement has not yet come but it is no less certain than if it had already occurred. God promised it, and He will fulfill it. Both accounts are judgment of the wicked. The first account shows the whole earth is judged, while the second shows what happens to those who are judged. The double harvest points to the severity. "Joel 3:13 describes the earth being harvested, and Revelation 14:14–20 declares that Joel 3:13 will be fulfilled."<sup>13</sup>

Jesus' promise to judge wickedness is the Christian's assurance that we can rest in Him, knowing that what is not right will be made right, and those who are His will be secure when the righteousness of His name is vindicated. Trusting in Jesus' perfect justice means knowing He will judge all wickedness sets us free now to labor for justice now because He will bring perfect justice. We are also set free to not have to right every wrong, to let go and not hold grudges that make us bitter, to not lose hope and become overwhelmed when wickedness seems to win today. The most perfect of all justice that we should give first priority to is walking in the light of His truth and bearing a faithful witness to His forgiveness. [Christians receive assurance in judgment because Jesus is our perfect justice; He bore God's wrath against sin for us, paid our penalty for sin so that by faith in Him there is no more guilt to be vindicated but only peace with God.](#)

[Jesus calls His people to faithful endurance and assures us of His love by judging sin and rewarding obedience.](#)

**ASSURANCE** There are two right responses to this passage. First, this passage tells us that we must make a decision to know who we will be identified among. Being identified with Jesus Christ is not "by default". One must place their faith in

<sup>12</sup> J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 198–199.

<sup>13</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), 293.



Jesus to repent of sin and follow Him in obedience. **Have you placed your faith in Jesus, repenting of your sin to follow Him by faith in obedience?**

Second, we must recognize the importance of assurance of our salvation that God provides. Assurance may be the most neglected aspect of our salvation. We often feel ashamed for needing it, but God is never ashamed to respond in giving it. Our need for assurance from God in our salvation is the fuel for our faith tank. We talk about “relationship” or “intimacy” with God but feel guilty when we sense our greatest need for it. God doesn’t. He remains ever-ready to lavish His love on you, to absolve your doubt, to quench the thirst of your need, to calm the anxiety of your fears, to cool the heat of your anger for vengeance, to warm the coldness of your heart from isolation and straying. Assurance is as much an important part of our faithfulness in following Jesus as any other.

Assurance is essential for our walk with God, knowing that the One to whom our whole life is lived in sacrifice for is faithful and true, worthy of our living sacrifice. Assurance is what happens when we gather with God’s people in worship, fellowship in community, and serve together on mission as we share life together. Assurance is what happens when we sing the truths of God’s Word and the gospel, when we encourage and counsel one another, and when we pray for one another. No one would fault a child for wanting to hear “I love you” from a father or mother, or a husband/wife from their spouse. Yet, we feel guilty when we need and want to be reminded of the Father’s love for us. The person who is not interested in assurance from God is the one who has ignored the wrath of God. And the one who has ignored the wrath of God, is the one who is being overtaken by the allure and the deception of the Evil One and worldliness, because the empty heart will not remain empty, but will worship one or the other. Assurance is as critical and essential an aspect of the Christian life as any other. God never grows weary of lavishing His love on His children! (1 John 3:1)

**CLOSE** Anchor your faith in the assurance of God’s love. When you sense that you are weak and your faith is frail, never feel ashamed to seek out the love of the Father and His assurance of your salvation in Christ. He waits with arms stretched-wide and a tear-laden smile to lavish His love upon you, His child.

**Do you need to know the Father’s love today, to be assured that you are His, that He knows and cares, and loves you?**

