

21. Purity in God

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In the forests of northern Europe and Asia lives little animal called the ermine, known for his snow-white fur in winter. He instinctively protects his white coat against anything that would soil it.

Fur hunters take advantage of this unusual trait of the ermine. They don't set a snare to catch him, but instead they find his home, which is usually a cleft in a rock or a hollow in an old tree. They smear the entrance and interior with grime. Then the hunters set their dogs loose to find and chase the ermine. The frightened animal flees toward home but doesn't enter because of the filth. Rather than soil his white coat, he is trapped by the dogs and captured while preserving his purity. For the ermine, purity is more precious than life.

How do we handle our purity in Christ Jesus? This is the question we have to ask ourselves every morning. Do we compromise our faith for the sake of convenience? Or do we watch pornography on internet or magazine or TV for the sake of entertainment? Do we back down from what we believe in Jesus for the sake of not being left out from "In-crowd"? I cannot answer that for you, nor you can answer it for me.

A. THE LAMB AND 144,000

Revelation 14:1-3 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. 3 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

In chapter 7, we read about twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel who will go throughout the world preaching the Gospel. Although they will be targets of antichrist's persecution, here in the middle of the Tribulation, we see not 143,999 witnesses, but 144,000. In other words, they all make it through.

The 144,000 are standing with Christ on Mount Zion, but which Mount Zion – the heavenly one or the earthly one? I personally believe that this is the heavenly Mount Zion, and that the scene anticipates the establishment of His kingdom when He returns to earth. But some commentators believe that it is the earthly Mount Zion.

Hebrews 12:22-24 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

Please note that they have their Father God's name written in their foreheads. Not Bs for 'Baptists,' not As for 'Assembly of God' not Cs for 'Calvary Chapel.' God doesn't care about denominations, nor He created them. Selfish and prideful Christians did.

B. THE IDENTITY OF THE 144,000

Revelation 14:4-5 These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. 5 And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

The 144,000 were not sinless in their earthly lives, but they were without deceit and fault with regard to their testimony for Christ.

These 144,000 are blessed. They speak of Jesus with authority. They have the Lord on their minds constantly. They have a redemption song in their heart personally. They see the Lamb's directions very clearly. It's all built and based on the fact that they are virgins spiritually and physically – people of purity.

Over the years, I have noticed that when people go through trials and tribulations, one of two things inevitably happens. Either their faith ignites and burns bright, or their faith is quenched and burns out.

Burning out or burning bright, which will it be? Apostle John's flock in Roman Empire was commanded to annually declare the lordship of Caesar. Failure to do so resulted in a loss of their livelihoods economically or the loss of their very lives physically as they were burned as candles or fed to lions by the thousands. Because some of his congregation would be tempted to give in and burn out under such pressure, apostle John was given a vision of 144,000 whose faith would not falter even in the overwhelming persecution of the Great Tribulation.

How about you? The trials you are facing is pushing you away from God or making you running toward to Him and cling onto Him? By the way, did I say that no one can make you to walk away from God? Not even satan? Not even all the pressure in the world? Only you and I, individually, decide either getting close to God or walking away from God.

C. TOLD BY ANGELS

1) Judgement is coming!

Revelation 14:6-7 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth--to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people-- 7 saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

The 144,000 have been the infantry. Now here comes the air support: angels. During the present age, the angels are not privileged to preach the Gospel. That responsibility has been given to God's people like you and me. While the nations will fear "the beast" and give honor to him, this heavenly messenger will declare to them to fear and honor God alone. It is a reminder that God is the Creator and He alone deserves worship. This is not the Gospel message as we know it. Rather, it is a message of "Natural Theology" by an angel.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

All creation bears witness to God's existence as well as to His power and wisdom.

The evolutionists do everything within their power to make their theory as a scientific fact to the not-informed-general-public. I was at a debate between a creation scientist vs. an evolution scientist at U of A a couple years ago. While the creation scientist showed an evidence after evidence of the creation fact by God, the evolution scientist threw many fancy words that each word has 20 letters and nobody could pronounce them. Yet he could not come up with one single shred of convincing evidence for the evolution theory.

The reason for the evolution belief is to deny the fact that there is one true God and we are accountable to Him. So, they are denying His existence as if it will make Him to go away. The evolution theory is practically a religion to them and they are believing and following it.

The day will come when everyone who have lived on the face of the earth will declare that Jesus is Lord. Whether they are believers or not, it will come to the point, all human beings must admit that Jesus is God and He is in charge over everything. At that time, there won't be a some slick sorry excused ACLU lawyers who want to find a loop hole in the Scripture. Because there won't be one. It is better to declare Jesus as your Savior and Lord now willingly than later being forced and end up in hell.

2) Babylon is fallen!

Revelation 14:8 And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

'Babylon' is the world system of 'the antichrist,' the entire economic and political organization by which he rules.

When we are told that Babylon has led all nations into fornication, the main idea is spiritual fornication - the worship of other gods. However, we are never surprised to see spiritual fornication accompanied with literal immorality.

3) Escape God's wrath!

Revelation 14:9-11 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

Nowadays getting tattoo is 'in'. But that cannot be compared with receiving the mark of the beast. I don't see anywhere in the Bible for those who have tattoo will go to hell, but those who receive the mark of the beast will.

No one will "casually" or "accidentally" take the mark. The connection between worshipping the beast and taking the mark will be clear enough. In their eyes it may not seem like much more than a mere pledge of allegiance and devotion to the antichrist and his government.

Those who worship the antichrist are forced to drink the wine of the wrath of God in full strength. Jesus willingly took the cup of the Father's wrath that we deserved. Here, the enemies of Jesus have no choice - the cup of wrath is due them finally.

It is by individual's choice to condemn him or herself by not believing Jesus. God did everything and more to give eternal life to everyone.

John 3:17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

The Jehovah's Witness and Mormons declare that there is no literal hell. From what we just have read, it is clear that hell is a literal place and it is for eternal. In fact, Jesus taught more on the subject of hell than on the subject of heaven. You don't want to find it out in person.

D. THE BLESSED ONES IN THE MIDST OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Revelation 14:12-13 Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. 13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

We can easily contrast these saints with the continual torment of the wicked. God wants to encourage His people to be steadfast in times of trial, focused on the reward awaits them in eternity.

E. REAPING THE EARTH'S HARVEST

Revelation 14:14-16 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." 16 So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

While winning lost souls to Christ is sometimes pictured as a harvest, this image is also used of God's judgment. God permits the seeds of iniquity to grow until they are ripe, and then He judges.

F. THE WINEPRESS OF GOD

Revelation 14:17-20 Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. 18 And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." 19 So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

The grape harvest is often a picture of judgment in the Bible. Actually, Scripture portrays three different "vines."

1) Israel was God's vine. – Joel 3:13

Israel was planted in the land to bear fruit for God's glory. But the nation failed God and had to be cut down.

2) Christ is the Vine and believers are branches in Him. – John 15

3) The world system is a vine, “the vine of the earth” in contrast to Christ, the heavenly Vine. And it is ripening for judgment.

The wicked system – Babylon – that intoxicates people and controls them, will one day be cut down and destroyed in “the winepress of the wrath of God.”

Today, God is speaking to the world in grace, and men will not listen. One day, God will speak in wrath. The unbelievers will drink the cup of wrath of God because of their own choice.

In ancient times, a battle area extending one thousand six hundred furlongs which is approximately 200 miles, was incomprehensible, but not in modern warfare. But this vivid, powerful description shows how complete the judgment of God is. Revelation 14 is the perfect answer to Revelation 13. At the end of Revelation 13, it almost seemed like satan and the antichrist might win. But Revelation 14 shows who is really triumphant, powerful, and in control: God, not satan.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) Spiritual purity must be maintained in our walk with Christ.

Whether it is another god, or a shiny car, a spouse or children, anything to replace Christ in our hearts is an idol. God will not compete with anything in our hearts.

2) Physical purity is essential in our walk with Christ.

Immorality and idolatry are very much connected. You start with one, and pretty soon you will end up on the other side.

From seems-so-innocent internet pornography to full blown adultery, they all lead us to compromise our walk with Christ. It must be stopped.

3) Take this as a warning from God: The things that please our carnal desire are stepping stones to a backsliding life.

It is a warning that “the easy way” is really the hard way, that to “go along with the world” means to go away from God.