

# The Lamb & His People

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Date: 02 March 2008

[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn together to Revelation chapter 14. You'll notice in your ESV Bibles that the chapter is divided into three.

The first section is called the Lamb and the 144,000. The second section, the messages of the three angels. And then the third section is the harvest of the earth.

I've got three Sundays tonight, next week, and the third Sunday. And I'd like us to look at these three separate sections which describe three quite separate things, three separate scenes.

And hopefully try to draw something out of these sections for our instruction and for our benefit. But also for our practical use.

We must never ever have some kind of philosophical view of the Bible that bears no relation to real life. And I hope that in each time, each section that we go through, it will have a bearing on the way we live and the way we worship and the way we think and the way we act as the Lord's people.

[ 1 : 17 ] That's what God's word is for, is to give us instruction. And it's to fill our hearts and our minds, even in difficult passages like this. You'll see right away the contrast between chapter 14 and chapter 13 and 12.

We spent some time in the past few months on chapter 12 and 13, which describe, first of all, the dragon or the serpent in chapter 12.

In chapter 13, there were two beasts. And you know, right away, the more you look at the description of these beasts, you know that they are enemies of God who try to wreak as much havoc as they possibly can.

And to try and to prevent God from doing his work in the world and God from accomplishing his work of salvation. But in every case, they fail.

But that doesn't mean that it doesn't prevent the beasts doing a lot of damage and doesn't prevent, it doesn't hide the fact that they are hugely monstrous beasts, ugly beasts that frighten and that ought to frighten because evil is frightening.

[ 2 : 26 ] You'll notice, of course, of course, of course, of course, of course, of course, of course, of course, of course, of course, of course, of course, of course, of course. We tried to look at the first beast and what it represented. The second one was more deceitful. It worked by trying to deceive people away from the gospel and to persuade them to worship the first beast.

But now we come to another scene altogether. And it's as if, I believe it's not as if, it's the reality. It's the reality that in this monstrous description of the way in which evil has an influence on the world in which we live.

At the same time, God is ruling and we must never lose sight of that. There's all this huge contrast in the book of Revelation all the way through it between what's happening in the world and what's happening in heaven.

And the bearing that heaven has on the world and the effect ultimately that God will have on the world and that the gospel will have on the world. And that's why tonight that the book of Revelation is the gospel and that it reminds us time and time again that there is only one way to be saved.

And that is by trusting in the Lamb. The Lamb that we read about here who rules and reigns on Mount Zion. A completely different scene altogether.

[ 3 : 50 ] So, in this first section, I want us to look at the Lamb once again. And those who are with the Lamb. And what is taking place in the presence of the Lamb.

I want us never ever to lose sight. John doesn't want us to lose sight of that. And the Lord himself has given us his word in order that we keep in the forefront of our minds the destiny, the place that Jesus has prepared for his people.

I go to prepare a place for you, he said, so that I may come again and take you to be with me where I am, so that where I am, there you may be also.

So, it's no surprise that the description that John gives us in this first section is of Jesus, the Lamb of God, the Lamb having taken, we discover him in chapter 5, who sits in the middle of the throne that was slain, the Lamb that was slain, but is now alive again, that rules and reigns over the universe.

But he's not alone. There are 144,000 people with him. We've seen already what that number means. It is the complete number of the people of God.

[ 5 : 07 ] It's not a literal number. It is the number of completion. And God will not destroy this world until every last one. That doesn't mean that there are only going to be 144,000 in heaven.

We believe that there's going to be millions in heaven. Remember the description of heaven in Revelation chapter 7. That there were a number, a great multitude that no one could number.

You know, some people think of heaven as a small place and that hell is a huge place. I don't believe the Bible gives that information at all. It doesn't tell us exactly how many.

But it tells us, I believe, that heaven is a massive place with a massive number of people. And God will save a massive number. He has already done so. He continued to do so this evening.

Can you think this evening that people like ourselves are listening to the gospel in places? They're hearing it for the first time. They're discovering the truth of God. They're discovering Jesus Christ.

[ 6 : 08 ] And they're coming to trust in him. They know that this is, they're coming to see that this is the truth. And they're coming to follow him. And that one by one people are coming into the kingdom this evening.

Are you in the kingdom this evening? Have you trusted in Jesus? Have you put your trust only in his death and in his resurrection? There's only one way, and that is to belong to the Lamb.

And so what we find in the first section is the description of the Lamb and those who are with him. In the second section, we'll look at next week, there are three sermons preached by three angels.

You can have a quick look at them if you want before next week. Three sermons preached by three angels. The first message is this. Fear God and give him glory. Because the hour of his judgment has come.

I'm going to see how necessary it is that God should bring about judgment. God is the God of perfect justice in the world. And if there is such a thing as perfect justice, then God has to execute that perfect justice at the end of the world.

[ 7 : 15 ] But it means that every single one of us, as someone who has been made in the image of God, is accountable to God for what we have done with him. That's the first message.

The second message is our relationship to the world in which we live and the effect that that world has upon us. And the world is summarized, the world which is an enemy of God is summarized in this word Babylon, which of course was a real place in history.

And it's very interesting to see the effect that Babylon has had upon and the place that Babylon has had in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament. The third of these sermons comes from the third angel.

And it's the longest of the sermon. And it's a warning if anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead and on his hand and so on.

But then the third section, and that will be three weeks from now, is the harvest of the earth. And of course, I think that's self-explanatory.

[ 8 : 20 ] It looks forward to the day when Jesus will come again and where there'll be a great separation between the people of God and the people who have refused to come to trust in Jesus.

One day, the opportunity will be gone and Jesus will create that separation between the two.

There's no surprise, again, in this third section because it relates to what Jesus has said in the parable, for example, of the wise and the foolish virgins, the great separation that took place when the bridegroom came.

So there's these three sections then I'd like us to look at just very briefly this evening. And it's quite clear who the focal point is, the lamb, and with him the 144,000.

Here is another description of heaven. Here is John being able to see amidst all the chaos and the fear and the uncertainty in this world that there is a place where there is a throne and where there is the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who sits on that throne.

And he is accompanied by 144,000. I want us to look at the description of those people we've seen before that 144,000 are people.

[ 9 : 46 ] But it's the number of completion. This is where God has completed his church. Every last one of them has been added to the number as is promised. And then and only then will God bring the world to a close and where the judgment will take place.

We'll see that a little bit more. But somehow or other, John is able to see forward. He's able to see that it's as if that number is already complete. God has already completed his promise.

And, you know, that's it tells us once again that God is always true to his word and will bring to pass everything that he has with such an assurance that it's as if it's already been done.

So God has promised that one day his purpose will be complete. Now, you know, that should have a huge effect on the way that we live as Christians. You know, we hear people talking about the day in which we live in, a day of small things, a day when not many people come to Jesus.

There are not many in our part of the world in any case. But we must always remember there are other parts of the world where hundreds and thousands and millions of people are where the gospel is having a great effect nationally amongst many, many people.

[ 11 : 09 ] And for whatever reason, our society in the West has turned us back upon the gospel. We must not give up on our witness in making Jesus known.

You don't know who Jesus is going to bring you into contact with, who's going to listen. For every 10 people that don't listen, there may be one that will. For every 100 people that don't listen, there may be one that will listen.

That one person must be brought in. And don't ever despise that one person who God is going to use you as just a small little component in the process to bring his purpose to completion.

I guess it's part of the society that we live. We want things now. We want everything fast. We want it immediately. And we get so many things now when we want it. We press a button and it's there. But that's not the way God works. God is in no hurry. And God works in people's lives. Very often taking years to persuade someone from being sometimes someone who is an atheist.

[ 12 : 25 ] Someone who has absolutely no thought for the gospel into his kingdom. There are many people tonight who started off being atheists. Who gave God no thought whatsoever.

As the time went on. Things happened. Events happened. And their minds were changed slowly and surely. And God has very often used. And God.

He often uses his people. You and I. Ordinary Christians. To play our part. In being a little component. In their salvation.

One by one. Those 144,000 will come in. And God will not stop until that number is absolutely complete.

The church is also identified. If you'll notice here. They had his name and his father's name written on their foreheads. They are identifiable as belonging to the Lamb.

[ 13 : 26 ] That is an important identity. Our first identity, if you're a follower of Jesus, is God's. No one.

I remember someone saying once. It's possible to be a Christian without knowing it. But it's not possible to be a Christian without showing it. I heard that in this very pulpit.

Probably 40 years ago. It's possible to be a Christian without knowing it. But it's not possible to be a Christian without showing it.

And that's absolutely true. That's stuck with me. One of these things that's stuck with me. My whole life. How obvious Christians need to be.

And when they cease, when they fail to be obvious, it's because they're hiding their lamp under a bed. But if we are to live as God wants us to live, then our identity will be known.

[ 14 : 28 ] It's as if God's name is written all over it. It's as if we were going about with a t-shirt. Every day, I belong to Jesus. Except it's much more important than that.

Because people recognize it in the quality of the way that we live our lives. But the Father's name is written on their foreheads. Now, do you notice a similarity between this chapter and the last chapter?

The last part of the last chapter. Where those who followed the second beast, they had his name written on their foreheads and on their arm. They were identified with his mark because they were followers of him.

Instead of listening to God and Jesus, they would listen to the beast and they followed him. There can only be one or the other. Either we have the beast's name or we have the Father's name written on us.

We're identified either... We're always identified by the one that we follow. There's no middle ground. There is no no man's land.

[ 15 : 29 ] But what I want us to focus on in the last 10 minutes or 15 minutes or so is what the church is doing. The church is complete. The church is identified. But God's people are worshipping.

And I find the book of Revelation interesting, fascinating, not just in what it reveals to us, but in what it reveals to us of worship.

You find it on several occasions in the book of Revelation. We've seen it before in chapter 4. The four living creatures, each of them with six wings.

This is when John looks into heaven and he sees four living creatures, each of them with six wings. Angels. What are they doing? They're worshipping. Why are they worshipping? Because that's what they want to do.

They don't want to be anywhere else. They don't want to do anything else. And they're saying, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come. And then when he sees the elders, the 24 elders, they're falling down before him who is seated on the throne.

[ 16 : 33 ] And they're saying, worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power. For you created all things and by your will they existed and were created.

Chapter 5. They fell down, each holding a harp and golden bowls of incense. The prayers of the saints. And they're saying, worthy are you. They sang a new song saying, worthy are you.

To take the scroll and to open its seals. For you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God. From every tribe and language and people and nation you have made them a kingdom of priests.

And so on. Chapter 7. Here we have again the multitude that no one can number. What are they doing? They're before the throne serving God. Why? Because they want to be. They can think of no other place in the universe that they want to be.

Other than before the throne of God. Therefore they are before the throne of God and they serve him day and night. What are they doing? They're worshipping. And once again. In chapter 11 we read the same thing.

[ 17 : 33 ] They worshipped God. We give thanks to you. Lord God Almighty. Who is and who was. For you have taken your great power. And begun to reign. And so on. And here we have in chapter 14 again.

Want us to notice first of all. The impression. That this worship makes upon. John. He cannot but be impressed when he hears it.

Because he tells us. I heard a voice from heaven. Like the roar of many waters. That's the first description. There's three descriptions. The first one is. It's the roar of many waters.

Secondly. It's like the sound of loud thunder. You know what that's like. Just as we know what the roar of many waters is like. Something majestic. Something wonderful.

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.

[ 18 : 36 ] In other words. What they're doing is worshipping. Now. Here's what I want to say this evening. What goes on in heaven. Is foreshadowed.

By what goes on. In earth. On earth. And when. As we come once again. To remember that. The activity that goes on in heaven. Is worship.

Continuous worship. Unbroken worship. That is foreshadowed. By. The worship. Which takes place. At this side.

Of eternity. And I want us. To remember that there is a relation. Between. The two of them. The two. The two places. First of all. When John.

Talks about them being. Singing a new song. That's not the first time. That we read about the new song. We read about it. In chapter five as well. So when he says that.

[ 19 : 34 ] No one could learn that song. Except the church. And his completion. We know. Something of what that song is. From chapter five. And verse nine. They sang a new song.

But let me tell you this. The new song. Is not only to be found. In heaven. The new song. Has begun here. In the world.

See your natural inclination. Is to sing. Is to think that we won't learn. That new song. Until we get to heaven. And it will be entirely related. To heaven itself. Not true.

Not according to the Bible. We've just sung. Sing a new song. To the Lord. We've just been singing it. This side of eternity.

Here as we sit. In church. We're singing a new song. What did we sing in Psalm 40? He. Put a new. After. He listened to my cry.

[ 20 : 30 ] And took me from the fearful pit. And from the mighty clay. And after he set my feet. Upon a rock. As a consequence. Of what he did. In my life. Through the gospel.

Through the Lord Jesus Christ. Of the change. That he brought about. In my life. What was the consequence? He. Put. A new song. In my mouth. Our God.

To magnify. The new song is here. It's present. It's in our hearts. It's in our mouths. It ought to be there. And it's a consequence. Of our being saved.

In Jesus Christ. In other words. Whereas I might. One day. Beforehand. In my past. Have gone through. The motions. Of worship.

It's only. When I've come. To. To. Know Jesus. As my savior. That I have sung. As I have never. Sung before.

[ 21 : 27 ] It may be the same words. The same psalm. But beforehand. I just sung it. Because everybody else. Was singing it. And I made sure. I sung it. As low as possible. As quietly as possible.

Just to go through. The motions. Have you been there? Maybe you're here tonight. And that's exactly. The way it is with you. You go. You come to church. Because it's a habit. But that's not. What worshiping is. If you come in that door. Just out of habit. And I'm not discouraging you. In any way. I would encourage you. To come to church. Do you know.

If you're not a Christian. I'm not telling you. Not to come to church. I want to see you in church. But you know why. Because it's in church. That we hear.

God's word. And faith. Comes. By hearing. That's what the bible tells us. So being in church. Is the right place to be. But. Being in church.

[ 22 : 22 ] Is not enough. We have to hear. God's word. And receive the gospel. And come to faith. In Jesus. And when we come. To experience.

That new life. In Jesus. Then. We sing. As we've never. Sung before. You know. I used to. I've seen it. So many times. In my. Thirteen years. In the ministry.

It's amazing. What you see. From the pulpit. And I've seen this. So many times. I'm not saying that. Everyone is like this. But I've seen people. Who have. Started coming to church.

And when this is singing. Their lips are zipped. Then as time goes on. You see them beginning to move. And then you see them.

Beginning. To move even more vigorously. And within a matter of months. You see them looking. And they're. They're riveted. And they're singing.

[ 23 : 18 ] And you know. You know. God is doing something. In that person's heart. And it's not surprising. When that person. Begins to come to a prayer meeting. And begins to tell people. That. That they've changed.

Their lives have changed. Because. And because. God has put. A new song. That doesn't mean. He's changed the words. It's the same song. That they were singing. But it's new. Because God says.

Behold. I make. All things. New. And that doesn't mean. That singing. Makes you a Christian.

Either. Some people are just. Naturally. Interested in singing. So that's what I'm saying. It doesn't. It doesn't.

It doesn't apply. To everyone. And yet. It is. One of those marks. Some people can't sing. They find it very difficult. To sing. I know. I'm not trying to generalize.

But. But. Nevertheless. This new song. Is something. I believe. We can sing it. Even if we can't sing. Because it's in our hearts. And in our minds. And we're expressing to God.

[ 24 : 14 ] The love that we have discovered in him. And we're telling him how great he is. Because he has first loved us. You know.

It's amazing. The whole thing about singing. Is really quite a. It's. It's. When you think about it. It's a particular human quality. It's been around. In every culture. In every society.

From the. From the very first. I believe it's a quality. That was given to. Human beings. In order. To praise God. And to express. And that. Give emotional expression.

To what he means to us. And of course. As we know. In the world that we live in. It's used like every other art form. To give expression. To emotion. You get love songs. How many love songs. Are there. In the world. That express. A love a man has for a woman. Or a woman has for a man. And there are thousands of them. Even today. The most popular subject.

[ 25 : 10 ] For any song. Is love. Of course. It's ironic. Isn't it? The very people. Who sing those songs. Are often people themselves.

Who know very little. Of true love. They've forsaken their wives. They've. Cheated on their wives. And yet. They have the gall. To sing to us. About how. The merits. Of true love. That's not true love. At all. You'll only discover.

What true love is. When you come to discover. The love of God. In Jesus Christ. That's where. Love. Lasts. That's where love. Exists. In faithfulness.

And love and faithfulness. Have to go together. It's quite ironic. Isn't it? So don't put your faith. In songs. That. That break your heart. But it is quite strange. That you get songs.

[ 26 : 07 ] About. You'll find songs. That go back. In the history. Of this culture. To where people. Lost loved ones. In the war. In the highland. Clearances. And people who have left.

The island. Having to go to America. And never having the chance. To come back. You'll find that all of that. Being expressed. In song. In many. Many. Varieties. And.

It's a. It's a. It's a. It's a. It's a. It's a. Human. Feature. That's a. Very precious. Human. Feature. We must never despise it.

It's like everything else. There are good songs. And bad songs. Not all songs are wrong. But there are wrong songs. And there are good songs. But. This kind of song. Is completely different.

This song. Can only be sung. by those who have come to know Jesus as their Savior. And the effect that it has on the Apostle John is absolutely stunning.

[ 27 : 08 ] It's a profound effect. It's like thunder. It's like the noise of many waters. It's like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.

And I'm afraid I really have to take issue with those who believe that this is a proof that we should be using harps in worship. That's not a proof at all because everything, as we've seen in Revelation, is symbolic.

So if you're going to take this as a proof, then we might as well have incense as well because there's incense in chapter 5. You can't take that as a proof. Whatever the merits or the demerits of the argument are, then you cannot take this as a proof.

But what it tells us is this, that our singing ought to be thunderous. Do you not agree? Do you not agree that our worship on this side of eternity ought to foreshadow?

We're singing about the same object. The Lamb is the same Lamb this side of eternity as He will be in the next world, in heaven.

[ 28 : 16 ] The Lamb doesn't change. And yet, why is it that we, and I count myself among us, are so lethargic when it comes to worship?

Worship is the greatest activity that we can ever be engaged in as human beings. You think of human beings in all their greatness and what we have achieved in this world.

We've created computers. We've created air travel. We have built the most magnificent buildings, monuments to the expertise of mankind.

And yet, amidst everything that man has created and done and achieved, there is nothing greater than when he worships.

Because that is what we have been created to do. And yet, it's so difficult for us, isn't it? It's so difficult for us. Even Christians, even people who are followers of Jesus, it's so difficult to, for one thing, because Satan gets in the way.

[ 29 : 28 ] It's one of these things that Satan wants to destroy. He knows the impact that true worship can have in this world. Worship is not something that we need to close the doors and lock all the windows and make sure we keep everyone else out.

Worship is one of the most powerful testimonies of the reality of the gospel. I believe that someone should be able to come in that door and just by the sheer atmosphere of the way in which we are singing our hearts out to God and in which we are gathered as one people to listen to his word, I believe that they should be able to go out that door and say, there is something profound and life-changing about what these people are doing.

And it's us that spoil it. And I'm talking to myself as well. We spoil it as well because we allow things to come in that shouldn't be there, that stand between us and God.

You see that these people, there's nothing between them and Jesus. They have unbroken, unspoiled fellowship with Jesus. Now you might say, well, we'll never have that this side of eternity. That doesn't mean we shouldn't try. That doesn't mean we shouldn't make every effort to make our worship as pure and as unbroken, as unspoiled as we possibly can and to make the most of it because we're worshipping the same God.

[ 30 : 59 ] It's no coincidence that John says, I looked and behold. Some people think that word is an old-fashioned word that shouldn't be there. The ESV has deliberately put it in.

I believe importantly. Behold. Stop what you're doing and look. And that's what we need to do every time we come into the presence of God.

Stop what we're doing and look at God. I often wonder sometimes what would happen if God were to make himself known to us in some visible form as we gather to worship.

If Christ were to, and I say this with all reverence, if Christ were to walk in that door and take the front position here, not one of us would have one single distracting thought.

There wouldn't be any temptation to think about other things, to look at our watches, to wonder what we're going to do tomorrow, to make plans for tomorrow, to remember what we did yesterday, to go into some fantasy world.

[ 32 : 05 ] Every single one of us, me included, we would be kneeling and worshipping and gazing on the face of Jesus. Listening to every word he said, hanging on every word, dying to hear the next one that would come out of his mouth.

Let me ask you this. Then why are we not doing it? Just because we can't see him doesn't mean he's not here.

God has promised, his word says, I am there in the midst of them. God is here this evening. What impact does that have on the way in which we come in that door and in the attention that we give to him and what he has done and his word?

What impact does that have? I would love to think that every day in the week you would think, oh well, it's four days to Sunday.

No, it's three days to Sunday. And in our minds, we would be preparing ourselves. I know we can worship every day. We can worship by ourselves. We worship privately.

[ 33 : 22 ] I know that the place that that has, a very important place. And yet there's something, I said this last week, there's something about the gathering together of God's people that God always intended to be a feature of his church.

Why? Because it foreshadows what is going to take place one day in perfection in heaven. That doesn't mean to say that we should settle for a defective worship here in this world.

Aren't we lazy? Are we not all lazy about the way in which we worship? Do we not have just such a terribly low view of what we're doing when we gather here on a Sunday or on a Wednesday or on a Thursday?

Is it not the case that we do it more out of routine, more because it's proper, rather than because we say to ourselves, oh, I long to be with my brothers and sisters in Jesus.

I want to gather with them. And when I sing those great words, I want to sing from the very bottom of my heart and from the very depths of my being. And I want to give glory to the Lord for all that he has done for me.

[ 34 : 32 ] Is he not worth it? That's what worship means, by the way. Worship means worth-ship. Worship is all about how much is God worth.

That's what it is. Now, it's not a matter of just how we sing. How we sing is hugely important. I cannot imagine John being anything other than trembling with excitement as he listened to the 144,000, the complete church of Jesus, worshipping, giving it all to the Lord Jesus.

But worship is everything that we do here. Do you know that worship begins the moment you come in the door when you're putting your money in the plate? That's part of worship. What we're saying to God is here is my offering.

Here is my contribution to the work of God. I give it in love. I give it cheerfully. I give it deliberately. I'm giving it to the work of God.

And it's part. You know, we don't have to have a plate outside the door. Nowadays, you can pay towards the church by PC banking or whatever. You can send a check in the post.

[ 35 : 44 ] And yet, you have a plate at the door. I believe it's really important to have the plate as an expression of what the Lord means to us and how we are giving of our substance, not in order to be saved, but in order to thank the Lord for what he has done for us.

We come together and we join together in prayer. And we hope, we pray for things which we can all join together in and say amen to. And we sing words that God has put in our mouths that express the glory and the majesty of God.

And we hear his word explained to us. What can be better than that? What could be a greater, more important occasion in the week than to come and to do all these things and to meet with God and to gaze upon his glory in Jesus Christ.

The glory of God, more than anything else as far as we are concerned as sinners, is at Calvary. Where God has spoken his word to us and he has said to sinners like ourselves, come and trust in this lamb and follow the lamb and discover in the lamb what God has done for lost sinners like ourselves.

[ 37 : 13 ] I hope we'll be able to continue that next time. Let's pray. Our gracious and eternal God, we pray that you will impress upon us the nearness of your presence this evening in such a way that that will cause us to tremble just as Gideon trembled as he met with the angel and he discovered all of a sudden that he had met with God.

What an impact that made upon his life. Like Jacob discovered, when he discovered he had been looking at the face of God. God is in this place.

We ask, O Lord, that that will have a huge impact on us and that we will come, if we have never come before, to trust in you and to do what you have asked us to do, to place our confidence, to take our sins and to bring them to Jesus.

Because if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So, Lord, take us from this place and give us encouragement as we face another uncertain week. Give us the strength to live as your people in this week. And, Lord, never let us forget you for one moment. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.