

1. The book of Revelation, chapters 4-22, are highly figurative and must always be explained in the light of the clear, non-figurative books. In these chapters the writer alternates between scenes of the terrible judgments of God on man and scenes from heaven. For example, the chapter before our text describes the dragon, Satan, and the beasts which arise out of the sea and the land, the Antichrist. Satan uses the Antichrist to mislead people and to cause them to blaspheme God. Lest the faithful Christians grow weary, God gives them a picture of everlasting life. We have an example of that in Rev. 14:1-5. Our text is an earthly picture of everlasting life.
2. Hebr. 12:2 says of Christ: "For the joy which was set before Him, He endured the cross and despised the shame." The joy of life in heaven lay before Him. Read the beautiful words about everlasting life at Jn. 14:1-4 which Jesus spoke to His disciples in the night when He was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. We, too, need to be reminded of heaven, our home. We are citizens of heaven. Php. 3:20.
3. Vs. 1 of our text reads: "And I saw and behold the Lamb standing on the hill of Zion." Zion was a part of Jerusalem. Later the term was used of the true children of God. For example, Ps. 48:11 says: "Let Mt. Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of Your judgments." Or the prophecy of Zech. 9:9, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem: "Tell the daughter of Zion, behold, your King is coming to you." See Mt. 21:5 for fulfillment. Or the prophecy at Is. 28:16 concerning Christ, the chief cornerstone: "Behold I lay in Zion a chosen, precious cornerstone, and whoever believes in Him, will not be ashamed." See I Pet. 2:6. But here in our text in Rev. 14 it refers to everlasting life. And the Lamb standing on the hill of Zion can be none other than Jesus. See Jn. 1:29. Also I Pet. 1:19.
4. What of the number 144,000? Read Rev. 7:1-17, another beautiful passage about heaven. The Lamb is mentioned in vs. 17. Vss. 5-8 tell us that each of the twelve tribes of Jacob have 12,000 in heaven. But this cannot be the literal tribes of Jacob because the name "Dan" is missing. Furthermore, there vs. 9 says that these 144,000 cannot be numbered and that they come from every nation, tribe, people and language. If they cannot be counted we cannot take the number 144,000 literally. Furthermore, if they are from every nation, tribe, people and language, they cannot be limited to the covenant people of the OT. Clearly the number 144,000 represents the complete number of the elect. Rom. 11:25-26 reads: "Hardening has come to Israel in part until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in and thus all Israel will be saved." The first "Israel" denotes the Jews as opposed to the Gentiles but the second time "Israel" means the full number of the elect, both Jews and Gentiles. Rom. 9:6 reads: "Not all those who are of Israel are Israel." Therefore, in our text the number 144,000 denotes the perfect number of God's elect.
5. We are told that these elect have Jesus' name and the Father's name inscribed on their foreheads. Jesus says at Lk. 10:20: "Rejoice because your names are inscribed in heaven." Our Lord tells us at Is. 43:1: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are mine." There you have it. All of this means that "God is mine and I am His."
6. Vss. 2-3 of our text picture the music of heaven in human language. It is a new song, a song of fulfillment and actual experience in heaven. Only the 144,000 can learn this song. Paul was snatched up to Paradise and heard unspeakable words which human tongue cannot speak. II Cor. 12:4. The best is yet to come. Last Sunday's text, Tit. 2:13, told us that we are "awaiting the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." Heaven is our home. Let us rejoice!

Sermon Outline on Rev. 14:1-3, Sunday after Christmas

Theme: THE BLESSED HOPE OF EVERLASTING LIFE IN HEAVEN

Introduction: Rev. 13 describes the terrible griefs of this world under the figure of two beasts and a dragon. They mislead many people with their lies and place their mark on them. Vs. 10 reads: "Here is the patience and faith of the saints." Christians can survive these terrible conditions in this sinful world. They have patience and faith.

I-Those who enjoy the blessed hope of heaven.

A-Our text describes them as the 144,000 who have the name of the Lamb and of the Father written on their foreheads. We learn about these 144,000 in Rev. 7:4-17. This number plainly represents the perfect number of God's elect from all nations, tribes, peoples and languages. They are a vast number that cannot be counted. These are *the* ones who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb of God. They have come out of great tribulation. God makes His dwelling with them. They don't hunger or thirst anymore. They do not suffer from cold or heat. Our text, Rev. 14:3, says that they have been bought from the earth. That reminds us of passages such as I Cor. 6:20 and 7:23.

B-These are the elect of God described elsewhere in the Bible. For example, Rom. 8:29-39. Because ^{God} chose them by His grace in Christ Jesus, He called them by His Gospel. They became believers. They knew that God was for them. They knew that God Who gave His Son for them could supply all their needs. They knew that no one could separate them from the love of God which was in Christ Jesus. Though they suffered much they knew that they were more than conquerors in all things. They could confidently speak the words of Rom. 8:37-39. Jesus once described these people thus: "My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me and I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will ever take them out of My hand." Jn. 10:27-28. Are you one of these who will enjoy the blessed hope of heaven? Do you repent of your sins and believe in Christ? If so, you are among those 144,000.

II-What they will do in everlasting life.

A-St. Paul tells us that he was once caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words which it is not possible for a human to speak. II Cor. 12:4. In other words, in our present condition in this life we cannot possibly understand what heaven is like. Not until we are glorified can we really know what it is like. That is why it is difficult to explain vs. 2-3 of our text. John said he heard a sound coming out of heaven as the sound of many waters and as the sound of loud thunder. He said he heard the sound as of cither-players playing their instruments. He says that he heard the 144,000 singing a new song before God's throne and the inhabitants of heaven. No one except the 144,000 could learn that song. What is that song? Wait until you arrive there. Then you will learn it.

B-Rev. 7 gives a picture of the activity of the 144,000 in heaven. They sing: "Salvation to our God Who sits on the throne and to the Lamb." The holy angels stood around the throne of God and sang: "Amen. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and glory to our God forever and ever. Amen." Read Hebr. 12:22-24. It is another description of the heavenly Zion. Just one more reference: At I Jn. 3:2 we read: "Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. But we know that when He (Jesus) appears, we shall be like Him because we shall see Him just as He is."

Conclusion: Meanwhile He says to us: "Be thou faithful unto death and

I will give you the crown of life." Rev. 2:10. Trust in your Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.