

## Who are the 144,000 of Revelation 14?

Through the power of God's Holy Spirit, God has give His people deeper understanding of His Word. In the days of Herbert W. Armstrong we were given insight into the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Not many people on this earth understood, and still don't understand, what Christ taught regarding this tremendous truth. Since the death of Mr. Armstrong in 1986 many within the Church stopped listening to Christ, and have leaned towards the teachings of men void of Christ's direction.

Church of God members have always been taught that the Bible interprets itself, and to believe the Bible rather than men. Of course, we must only follow men as they follow Christ and what He is revealing from His Word - the Holy Bible. With this said, we must be mindful of the fact that the events that had to take place after Mr. Armstrong's death were not revealed to him. Many took it for granted that no more truth would be restored after Mr. Armstrong's death, yet we know that we are told to "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). We must be honest and realize the Mr. Armstrong did not know it all. He could not have foreseen what was to come after his death – and God allowed that for a special reason. God wants to see who we will follow: a man or God and His Truth which is provable from the Word of God!

One tremendous truth which God revealed since 1986 is the identity of the 144,000 of Revelation 14. Rev.14:1-5 is a prime example of how people do not really grasp what is written because of pre-conceived ideas. Let us take a look at the following scripture and understand, maybe for the very first time, what God states about the 144,000:

"And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on Mount Zion, and with him a hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads"... "These are they, which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being *the Firstfruits* unto God and the Lamb" (Rev. 14:1-4).

These verses plainly state that the Firstfruits are made up of 144,000 people. After the Holy Spirit was given to one hundred and twenty people on the Day of Pentecost after Christ was resurrected, Peter gave a stirring message which moved many and they "...gladly received his word and were baptized" (Acts 2:41). And after that, "...the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved" (vs. 47). We also read that after Stephen was put to death a great persecution ensued and the Church was scattered abroad. "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). With so many people coming into the Church during those times and in the following years, could it be possible that only 144,000 will be the Firstfruits unto God?

A grave warning given

Inspired of the Holy Spirit, Paul gave the Church a grave warning of what was to come:

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim.4:3-4). Over the last years many have fulfilled this prophecy, as happened during the preceding Church eras. *Many* have turned away from God and His word (Gal.1:6). Paul states in verse 10 that even ministers would fall away bringing tragic consequences on the people of God. Many did not remain faithful and did not "endure to the end" (Matt. 24:13).

How many of the thousands called out since the beginning of the Church have remained faithful to the end? Church history proves that some did (Rev. 2), but many did not! We must ask ourselves: How many have held fast to *God's truth* during this final Laodicean era? How many are willing to receive and accept deeper understanding and truth which God has communicated to His people since the death of Mr. Armstrong? We must consider these questions deeply because our eternal life is at stake!

“And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with Him *a hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads*” (Rev. 14:1). What is meant by the words; “.. the Father's name written in their foreheads”? Notice what is said in the book of Ephesians chapter one:

“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:13-14). Furthermore, Acts 5:32 adds the following: “And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him.” Notice also John 17:11: “And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are”. The Father's name has been given to His begotten children through baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit. All those who were baptized, had hands laid upon them and received the Holy Spirit belong to God! By continuing under the authority of God, not denying His name, and being obedient to Him will result in us having the Father's name written in our forehead as part of the 144,000 mentioned in Rev. 14:1.

Read Rev. 14:1-3 again: in verse 1, the Lamb represents Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:36; Rev. 14:10; Rev. 22:1, 3 etc), Mt. Zion is referring to Heaven and not the physical mountain in Jerusalem. Notice: “For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burns with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them anymore...But ye are come unto *Mount Sion*, and unto the city of the Living God, the *Heavenly Jerusalem*, and to an innumerable company of angels” (Heb. 12:18-19, 22). Furthermore, Rev. 14:3 states that the 144,000 were singing before the throne of God.

If we let the Bible interpret itself we see that the Mount Sion spoken of, where Christ and the Firstfruits are standing, is in Heavenly Jerusalem. Here is a vision of the 144,000 Firstfruits with Christ at the throne of the Father in heaven. The first resurrection has occurred and the Firstfruits have been born again as spirit beings into the Family of God. The dead in Christ are raised from their graves, immortal, and those that were still alive were changed into spirit composition and they together were taken to Heaven to be married to Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:7). Rev. 14:5 again confirms that they are in heaven: “...they are without fault before the Throne of God.” Jude 24 confirms this belief.

“And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps... and they sung as it were a new song before the THRONE and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth” (Rev. 14:2-3).

This future event will take place while standing “in His Presence”. Rev.15:1, 6 begin to reveal when this will take place: “And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues: for in them is fill up the wrath of God...And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues...” Verse 2 confirms this occurs before the last plagues are poured out. “And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire;

and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his mane, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God". This last portion of scripture demonstrates that the Laodiceans, who were not found to be faithful were not taken to the place of safety, and therefore had to go through the horror of the Great Tribulation where finally many will repent and be killed to prove themselves to God. Notice what God's Word states in Rev. 12:11: "And they overcame him [*Satan*] by the blood of the Lamb and by the Word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death".

Revelation 14 and 15 state that the Firstfruits will be standing before the Throne of God. They are with the Lamb (Jesus Christ); the wedding is about to take place. What a tremendous future we have if we remain faithful and submissive to God and Jesus Christ. We must be getting ready for this most auspicious occasion (Rev. 19:7). There will only be 144,000 who make up the Bride of Christ. Now we have been given undeniable proof from the Word of God. We now know how many Firstfruits there will be. The question is: Will your name be amongst them?