

THE REVELATION

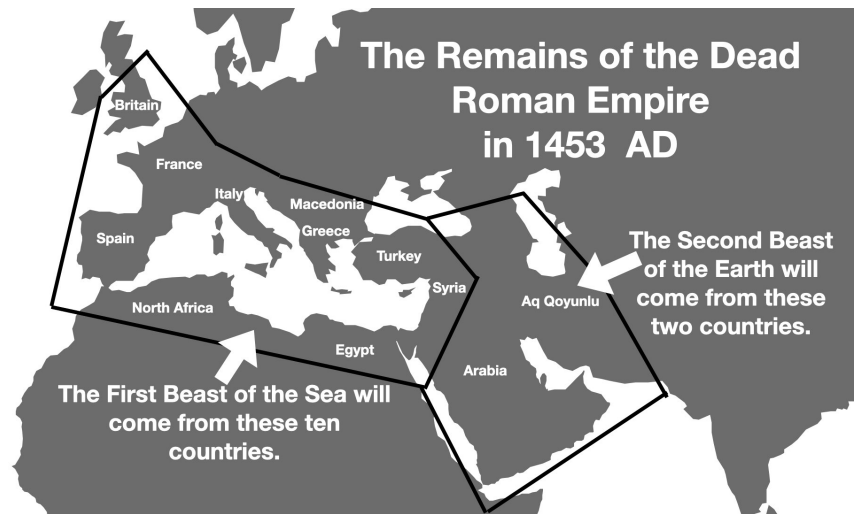
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Chapter 14:1-5

As a follow-up to Chapter 13, although the two *beasts* are presented as animals in the REVELATION, in reality, the *first beast* is the final world empire made up of the ten countries formed after the *Roman Empire* died. Those ten countries will have their own governments until they unite and form the *Revived Roman Empire*. It was not an animal; it was an empire that will be led by the final *King of the West*. The *second beast* was not an animal but a religious movement that was developed in two distinct confederations of tribes of Central Asia and Arabia that *presented itself as a religion of peace yet spoke the evil of Satan*. The *second beast* operated in the domain of the *first beast* and laid down the rules of life and commerce within the boundary lines of the new empire. It required the worship of the *first beast* and the *great red dragon*.

It also required the name or number of the *beast* to be worn on the forehead or the right hand in order to buy, sell, or trade with this new empire. However, the most important point to make at this intersection of study is that the two confederations of tribes of Central Asia and Arabia have held to the same religion adamantly since 630 AD. It is inconceivable to believe that those tribes that control Arabia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Turkey, and a small section of Russia will ever change their religion. Then, when that same religion begins to operate within the *Revived Roman Empire*, for all practical purposes, most of Europe, Asia Minor, Central Asia, and Arabia will all worship the same god. But this does not mean that the Arabian and Central Asia countries of today will be part of the *Revived Roman Empire*; they will not, but their religion will. To the north, Russia and its affiliates will not; to the east, India, China, and their affiliates will not; to the south, African tribes in general will not; neither will the countries of these two confederations. Only nations around the *Great Sea* will follow the *great red dragon*, the *first beast*, and the *second beast*. Later in the REVELATION, this *Revived Roman Empire* will be metaphorically called the *sea*. Even though the two original confederate nations of the *second beast* will follow the same religion, they will not follow the *great red dragon* or the *two beasts*.

After seeing the history presented of the *woman with child*, the *great red dragon*, the *beast* with seven heads and ten horns and the *beast* with two horns, John looked and saw the 144,000 Israelites. We met them for the first time in Seal Six (7:4-8). At that time, we were only told that they had been



sealed with the name of Jesus and the name of God the Father on their foreheads. Here we find them standing on Mount Zion.

(3) One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand (14:1)

Rev 14:1 Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

The Bible's first mention of Mount Zion was with King David's conquest of a Canaanite city controlled by the Jebusites (2 Samuel 5:6-10; 1 Chronicles 11:4-9). At the time, David's capital was in the city of Hebron and with the capture of this new location, David made it his new city in his seventh year as King of Israel. It is a mountain surrounded on three sides by deep valleys. It stands 2,510 feet above sea level. The Temple Mount to the north stands at 2,428 feet and is a full 100 feet lower of the City of Zion. But Zion is not the tallest mountain in the area. Across the Kidron Valley to the east is the Mount of Olives, which stands at 2,710 feet, a full 200 feet above Zion. Nevertheless, the Mount of Olives did not have the terrain surrounding it to provide the best protection and David chose Zion as the place for his town, which came to be known as the *City of David*. We know that city as *Jerusalem*. Throughout the centuries since David made it his city, Israel's city, nations upon nations have tried take it as their own capital. Some have been successful; others have not.

Looking down from heaven, John sees in this cast of participants in the tribulation the 144,000 Israelites "standing on Mount Zion" with the seal of Jesus and God the Father imprinted on their foreheads.

(a) Voice (14:2-5)

(i) Sound of the Many Waters (14:2a)

Rev 14:2a And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder,

The 144,000 Israelites must be special to the LORD. When John saw them, he heard a voice roaring "like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder." It sounded like the cascading of waters over the rocks of a fall or the rippling of thunder across the skies, John must have heard the sound coming toward him from a distance.

(ii) Sound of the Harpists (14:2b)

Rev 14:2b and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.

As the swelling of the sound came nearer to John, he realized that he was hearing the sound "of harpists playing on their harps." It was music! Beautiful music! Loud music! We must wonder if these harpists are the twenty-four elders playing their music in heaven. Remember what we learned about them in chapter five.

Revelation 5:8-9 When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

The elders played their harps when the LORD was found to be the One worthy to open the seals on the *Book of Life*. And they sang along with their own harp music a new song about the LORD.

What a song it was! It told of the LORD's death which "purchased for God ... *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation." What the LORD did to purchase those whose names were sealed in *the Book of Life* must have included the 144,000 Israelites He sealed for this time in the story.

These same elders were playing their harps again, singing a new song, and they needed singers to join along and the 144,000 were there, ready to vocalize.

(iii) **Sound of the New Song (14:3)**

Rev 14:3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth.

The throne of God is in heaven and so are the four living creatures and even the elders. That is where they were created to be! But down on earth, spread across Mount Zion, John saw the 144,000 and he could hear them singing a new song that was written for them and them alone, a song for those whom the LORD had "purchased from the earth." The Greek word for "purchased" is *agorazo* and it means *to buy in the market place*. How did the LORD *purchase* these Israelites from the earth? He did it the same way and at the same time that He purchased all the rest of the saints of all time when He was slain on the cross at Calvary.

(b) **Virtue (14:4-5)**

(i) **Untainted (14:4)**

Rev 14:4 These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.

We must tread carefully to interpret this verse harmoniously with the rest of Scripture. Concerning these 144,000 men, when we read, "These are the ones who have not been defiled with women," it is quite easy to interpret here that a sexual relationship with a woman is, in itself, an act that defiles the man. But that thought is not in harmony with God's intent for women in the Scripture. The sexual relationship between a man and a woman in a proper God-honoring relationship is never one that defiles; rather, it is one that fulfills God's purpose for a relationship between a man and a woman with God's stamp of approval on it in every way. But to the contrary, when a man enters into a sexual relationship with a woman outside of marriage, for whatever reason, regardless of the excuse, it is an act of defilement in God's eyes. In this first part of the verse, these 144,000 Israelites have not had inappropriate relations with women in any way.

But the verse continues to say, "for they have kept themselves chaste." This phrase casts a whole new light on these 144,000 Israelites. "Chaste" is the English word for the Greek *parthenos*. It means these Israelites were *virgins*. Rarely are men referred to as *virgins* in the Bible. Those men and boys who took the *nazarite vow* were to be virgins all their lives, but we have very little explanation or instruction about that practice in the Scripture. Whether or not these were *nazarites*, they were Israelites who had never had a sexual relationship with a woman, 144,000 of them untainted by sin.

The passage continues to say, "*These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.*" Notice that John does not say they followed "the LORD wherever He goes." Although that is what John truly means in this passage, he uses an idiom to express his meaning. These 144,000 Israelites are the sheep

that faithfully follow the “Lamb” of God. It is their role and nature as sheep to follow a leader whether a shepherd or the dominant sheep of the herd. Sheep were never hard to care for when they knew their shepherd. They trusted their shepherd because they knew he would lead them to green pastures and lead them by still waters (Psalms 23). But that relationship took time, lots of time. Shepherds were with their sheep 24 hours a day. They were never afraid of their shepherd because he walked among them almost every hour of every day. Within the herd, a dominant sheep always exists. Shepherds can quickly identify that sheep; he is the one that all the other sheep eventually follow when the shepherd is absent. Shepherds learned hundreds of years ago that they could put a bell on the dominant sheep and then keep that animal next to him as they walked from pasture to pasture, and all the other sheep would automatically follow the sound of the *bell sheep* as they were grazing on their journey. For these 144,000 Israelites, the “Lamb” of God was their *Bell Sheep*, the one they followed faithfully wherever He led them.

The LORD had also purchased these 144,000 Israelites “from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.” When did He purchase them? Obviously, He purchased them when He died on the cross of Calvary but that is not really the question here. John is telling us that the LORD purchased them when He stopped the winds from blowing on the earth and sent the angel to seal them on their foreheads with His name and the name of God the Father. When did that happen? It occurred in the *sixth seal* just before the Church arrived in heaven (11:13d). We must be clear here; they were sealed but that does not mean they were saved. Had they been saved before the Church was removed from the earth, they would have been part of the Church and entered heaven at that time. They were only sealed and as we should remember, the locusts were not allowed to hurt them for five months (9:4-5). The whole Nation of Israel would soon follow the LORD and that would occur with the resurrection of the two witnesses, but when these 144,000 were sealed by the angel in *seal six*, they were just the “first fruits,” the best of the best of the first day’s harvest of the yearly crop. It always belonged to the LORD in Israel’s tradition as commanded by the LORD through Moses. But we must not forget, after the “first fruits” were presented to the LORD, the whole field still remained to be put into the storehouse. In this case, these 144,000 Israelites were just the beginning of all the souls of all of the Nation of Israel that were still to become sheep that “follow the Lamb wherever He goes.”

(ii) Unblemished (14:5)

Rev 14:5 And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.

Furthermore, these 144,000 Israelites were unblemished in two ways. First, “no lie was found in their mouth.” No false words had ever come from their mouths. They were truth tellers; they were never liars. They were also “blameless.” It is the Greek word *amomoi* and it was used to describe the requirement for the animals that were to be sacrificed to the LORD. Those animals had to be *without defect* and that is what the word “blameless” means. These 144,000 Israelites were *without defect* in every way having to live with but untainted by the *red dragon*, and the two *beasts*.