

# Exegesis of Revelation 14:1-5

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<sup>1</sup>“I looked and behold, the lamb was standing on Mt. Zion and with him were the 144,000 with his name and the name of his Father having been written on their foreheads. <sup>2</sup>And I heard a sound from heaven that was like the sound of many waters and like the sound of great thunder. This sound that I heard was like the sound of harpists harping on their harps. <sup>3</sup>And they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living ones and the elders, and no one was able to understand the song except the 144,000 who have been purchased from the earth. <sup>4</sup>These are the ones who had not been defiled with women, for they are celibates. These are the ones following the lamb wherever he goes. These were purchased from humanity as firstfruits to God and the lamb. <sup>5</sup>And in their mouth no lie was found; they are unblemished.”

## Literary Setting:

Immediately prior to this passage, John has been given a vision that depicts the rise of the unholy trinity (The Dragon, the Sea Beast, and the Land Beast) and their subsequent assault on the church in chapters 12 and 13. The forces of evil were able to conquer and kill anyone who remained loyal to God and refused to take the mark of the Sea Beast. Despite having been sealed in chapter 7, the believers were allowed to suffer physically. In fact, they were told, almost nonchalantly, that if they were to be taken captive, into captivity they would go; if they were to be slain with the sword, with the sword they would be slain (13:10). This was a call for endurance on the part of God’s people. But why should they have to endure this? What would be their reward?

It is precisely that question that is answered in chapter 14. And in the first five verses, John sees a vision of the reward of the faithful. As Mounce states: “The detailed description of the beast and the false prophet in the preceding chapter was a somber reminder of what lay ahead in the immediate future. A note of encouragement is in

order.”<sup>1</sup> While scholars disagree as to when exactly the celebration in vv. 1-5 are to set to take place, for John’s readers, the chronology is not as important as the actual content of the vision. As Wall notes:

According to their cosmology, shaped by Platonic thought, what happens in heaven determines what happens on earth. In this sense, the future period of salvation’s history has already been determined by what has already transpired in the heavenly realm: the “eternal gospel” is not that God will triumph at some point in the indefinite future; but that God has already triumphed through the Risen Christ in the definite past.<sup>2</sup>

John’s readers are given the promise of joyous celebration that is to be theirs in direct contrast to the tyrannical reign of the Dragon and the Beasts over the “earth dwellers” (τοὺς καθήμενους ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς), a term John uses to refer to unbelievers. Noting this, Wall feels that every part of John’s account in 14:1-5 is a deliberate contrast to the reign of evil in chapter 13--oppression has been exchanged for liberation, evil for good, suffering for celebration: “By using contrasting images, John invites the rhetorical question—for whom is this experience of liberation a reality?”<sup>3</sup>

### **Commentary**

V.1) The first thing that John beholds is the Lamb standing on Mt. Zion along with the 144,000 saints who had been sealed with God’s mark on their foreheads in chapter 7. The fact that they are standing on Mt. Zion seems to argue for an eschatological gathering of God’s people. Though Mt. Zion referred to the present reality of the kingdom of God in Hebrews 12:22, the OT, John’s primary source of imagery in Revelation, spoke of Mt. Zion as an end-time sanctuary for Israel. “*Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a*

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<sup>1</sup> Mounce, Robert H. The Book of Revelation: NICNT. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids. 1977, p. 266

<sup>2</sup> Wall, Robert W. Revelation: NIBC. Hendrickson, Peabody. 1991, p.177.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid 178.

*canopy (Isa 4:5).*” Not only would Israel finally be safe, YHWH Himself would dwell with them: “*And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls (Joel 2:32).*” The concept of the Messiah gathering God’s people on Mt. Zion is even found in extra-biblical Jewish writings. According to Beale, 4 Ezra 13:25-32 and 2 Bar 40 speak of the “Son” and “Messiah” standing on “Mount Zion” at the end time judging the unrighteous and “defending” or “protecting” the remnant.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is most likely that v.1 is depicting the final confrontation between the people of God and the ungodly nations that will take place at the end of history.

Aside from the issue of this passage’s chronology, there is the issue of this passage’s geography. Is the celebration on Mt. Zion located in heaven or on earth? Scholars are divided on this issue.<sup>5</sup> Beale feels that the presence of the Lamb supports a Heavenly Zion due to the fact that all of John’s other references to the Lamb place him in heaven.<sup>6</sup> However, in light of the OT prophecies regarding Mt. Zion, an earthly locale is not out of the question. Wall argues, probably correctly, that John is using a geographical reference as a theological idiom. “His use of Mount Zion probably refers here to the historical and eschatological (rather than a spiritual and existential) fulfillment of God’s promised restoration of true Israel.”<sup>7</sup> Though Mt. Zion is seen in John’s vision as a geographical setting, it is symbolic of a theological truth that believers in John’s day can

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<sup>4</sup> Beale, G.K. Revelation: NIGTC. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids. 1999, p.732

<sup>5</sup> Osborne, Beale, Mounce, and Morris see it as a heavenly vision while Aune, Johnson, and Ladd see it as an earthly event at the actual Mt. Zion.

<sup>6</sup> Beal 732

<sup>7</sup> Wall 179

appreciate—those who are sealed by God will stand with him in triumph and safety as the nations are judged.

As noted above, the 144,000 in this verse are the 144,000 from the tribes of Israel who were sealed in chapter 7. The fact that they are from the tribes of Israel doesn't mean that they are ethnic Jews or that their number is literally 144,000. In chapter 7 immediately after John heard their number and their tribes he turn and saw that they were a vast multitude, which no one could number, from every nation, tribe, people, and language. The significance of the numbering lies in its depiction of an OT military census. John saw God's people in chapter 7 as an army and that is their function here as well. There remains, however, some debate as to whether this army represents the church universal or a particular group of martyrs whose death will result in the conversion of the nations.<sup>8</sup> While the idea of the 144,000 being martyrs is theologically justifiable, the fact that 144,000 are seen in chapter 7 as innumerable and are spoken of in 14:3 as 'purchased from the earth,' it is more likely that they represent the entire body of Christ whenever they appear in John's vision.<sup>9</sup> It must be noted, as Mounce observes, that further significance of the number is to show that not one has been lost despite the conquering of the beasts.<sup>10</sup> As we will see shortly, the thing that "distinguishes these 144,000 from the rest of the human race is something very simple. They are able to learn a song."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For the universal church view see Beale, Keener, and Osborne. For the martyrs view see Caird, Reddish, and Bauckham.

<sup>9</sup> Beale sees the 144,000 as "the totality of God's people throughout the ages, viewed as true Israelites." He goes on to state that the name and seal are marks of genuine membership in the community of redeemed, without which entry into Zion is impossible. Therefore, entire community of redeemed, not just part. 733-735

<sup>10</sup> Mounce 268

<sup>11</sup> Michaels, Michaels, J. Ramsey. Revelation: IVP New Testament Commentary Series. InterVarsity, Downers Grove. 1997, p.168

The image of God's people being marked on the forehead comes primarily from Ezekiel 9:4 where it depicts spiritual protection of the faithful remnant. Earlier in Rev. 3:12, Jesus promised to write he and his father's name on the faithful members of the church at Philadelphia. This happens in chapter 7, and later in v. 22:4 God's servants bear the name of God and the Lamb on their foreheads. While various meanings of the mark have been put forth<sup>12</sup>, its primarily identifies the Lamb's army as opposed to those who have allied themselves with the Dragon and the Beasts.<sup>13</sup> It serves as a vivid contrast between the two camps: the earth dwellers have the name of the beast (in the numerical form 666) written on their foreheads while the soldiers of the Lamb have ὄνομα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ written on theirs. It must also be pointed out that the believers' seal consisting of the names of the Lamb and of God "further extends the major theme of the book, the oneness of the Father and the Son."<sup>14</sup>

V. 2) John next hears a φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. Many have translated φωνὴν as 'voice' because elsewhere in Revelation voices sound like ὑδάτων πολλῶν καὶ ὡς φωνὴν βροντῆς μεγάλης (1:15, 19:6). However, since the φωνὴν includes the sound of harps, which accompany the 'new song' in v.4, it is better to render it simply as 'sound.' The onomatopoeic phrase κιθαρῶδων κιθαριζόντων ἐν ταῖς κιθάραις αὐτῶν resembles Hebrew syntactical construction whereby the verb and the direct object are the same word (i.e. הָרָאָה גִּדְּלָהּ חֲטָאָה חֲטָאָה Ex. 32:30). Wall sees the mentioning of rushing waters and harps as being melodious<sup>15</sup>, while Osborne sees it as a boisterous

<sup>12</sup> Barclay lists 5 primary meanings of the mark/seal in the ancient world: ownership, loyalty, security, dependence, and safety. 134-135

<sup>13</sup> Beale feels that the 666 on the foreheads of beast's followers connotes their incompleteness in achieving the divine design for humanity. 733

<sup>14</sup> Osborne, Grant. Revelation: ECNT. Baker, Grand Rapids. 2002, p.526

<sup>15</sup> Wall 179

celebration.<sup>16</sup> (Aune deems vv.2-3 a later addition to the text<sup>17</sup>—a conclusion with little, if any, textual evidence for such an addition.) The fact that the sound originates from heaven, “clearly distinguishing between Mount Zion and heaven”<sup>18</sup> leads many commentators to view this as an earthly celebration rather than a heavenly one. While this is possible, it should be noted that if John were to witness a heavenly celebration on a heavenly Zion, to him the sound would still appear to be coming from heaven.

V.3) The sound that John hears is the sound of the new song being sung by the ‘144,000 who had been purchased from the earth.’ Commentators differ as to the source of the song—some seeing it as sung by God<sup>19</sup>, others taking angels as the source.<sup>20</sup> However, there no good reason to think that those who have never been redeemed are teaching such a song to those who have.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the Psalms<sup>22</sup>, the ‘new song’ is a hymn of praise for the fact that YHWH has delivered his people as a call to the saints to put their trust in him completely.<sup>23</sup> This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 4 hymns in the book of Revelation and as Osborne observes, there is a natural progression in the four hymns: 5:9 celebrates the purchase of people by the blood of Christ; 14:2-3 celebrates the victory of the saints over the beast; 15:2-4 celebrates the justice of God in the final judgment plagues; and 19:6-7 celebrates the messianic wedding feast.<sup>24</sup> Isaiah prophesied of an eschatological celebration,

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<sup>16</sup> Osborne 526

<sup>17</sup> “This entire section appears to have been inserted by the author into a larger, perhaps truncated, version of a traditional unit that dealt with the Messiah’s appearance on Mount Zion, followed by the decisive defeat of his enemies and the gathering of his people.” Aune 806

<sup>18</sup> Aune 803

<sup>19</sup> Barclay 137

<sup>20</sup> Johnson 537

<sup>21</sup> Morris, Leon. The Revelation of St. John. Tyndale, London. 1969, p.176

<sup>22</sup> See Psa. 33:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:9, 149:1

<sup>23</sup> Osborne 527

<sup>24</sup> Osborne 526

complete with singing and taking place on Mt. Zion, by those who had been ‘ransomed of YHWH’ (Isa 35:10)<sup>25</sup>. No doubt the ‘new song’ John hears in ch.14, in conjunction with the other three hymns in his Apocalypse, is the final fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy.

Noting that this is the only place in Revelation where a song is mentioned but not quoted, Aune feels that the fact that the author does not provide a transcript of the new song suggests that since he is not part of the 144,000, he himself cannot understand the song.<sup>26</sup>

This is an argument from silence that is not forced upon us by the text. Osborne is probably more accurate in stating that the reason the new song can only be learned by the 144,000 is because it is the highest worship in heaven and therefore, can only be sung by those victorious heaven-dwellers who have overcome the deceptions of the false trinity.<sup>27</sup>

If John were to record the words, anyone who read his account, even τοὺς καθημένους ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς would be able to learn the song without having experienced its contents.

Looking back to the previous chapters, we can now see that believers who could not purchase anything because they didn’t have the mark of the beast have now been purchased “by the blood of the Lamb and bear his mark. The redeemed community is a worshipping celebrating community that learns the new song of the new age.<sup>28</sup> Caird puts it quite eloquently when he says, “For this song would be compounded of agony and groans, transmuted by the mysterious power of the Cross into the harmonies of heaven.”<sup>29</sup> Caird p.179

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<sup>25</sup> cf. Isa. 42:10

<sup>26</sup> Aune 808-809. Aune does correctly observe that ‘οἱ ἠγορασμένοι ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς’ could either mean ‘purchased from all parts of the world’ or ‘redeemed from the place of unbelief.’

<sup>27</sup> Osborne 527

<sup>28</sup> Boring 168

<sup>29</sup> Caird, G.B. Caird, G.B. The Revelation of Saint John: Black’s New Testament Commentary. Hendrickson, Peabody. 1999, p.179

V.4) The phrases οἱ μετὰ γυναικῶν οὐκ ἐμολύνθησαν, and παρθένοι γάρ εἰσιν are seen by the majority of scholars as the most difficult phrases in this passage, and possibly even in the entire book. Is John claiming that only men will be purchased from the earth and join the Lamb in heavenly celebration—and only virgins at that? Commentators have offered three basic interpretations of this verse:<sup>30</sup> 1) The 144,000 are to be seen as literal male virgins<sup>31</sup>, 2) the 144,000's celibacy is seen as symbolic of spiritual purity<sup>32</sup>, 3) the 144,000 are the Lamb's end-time army and are seen as obeying Holy War regulations.<sup>33</sup> Barclay takes the phrases literally, stating that the passage does not read as if it were metaphorical.<sup>34</sup> However, he realizes that a literal interpretation puts this passage in conflict with the rest of the NT, which teaches that marital sex is not defiling or sinful. He is forced by his literal interpretation to conclude that οἱ μετὰ γυναικῶν οὐκ ἐμολύνθησαν, and παρθένοι γάρ εἰσιν were originally marginal notes added by an ascetic copyist that found their way into the text itself.<sup>35</sup> However, not only does this conclusion lack any textual evidence, but it also fails to take into account the sexual symbolism of the rest of the book, as well as Scripture in general. Beale points out that if 144,000 is a figurative number for completeness, why should not the mention of "virgins" also be figurative in like manner?<sup>36</sup> He and other scholars point to the frequent use of sexual immorality to portray spiritual idolatry whereas virginity portrays

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<sup>30</sup> Osborne notes that some have seen this verse as a contrast to the angels in Gen. 6:1-4 who defiled themselves with women. (Osborne 529). Besides not being widely held, this view assumes that Gen. 6 depicts supernatural beings having sexual relationships with human women. However, many scholars (including this author) do not see this as a correct interpretation Gen. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Barclay holds this view.

<sup>32</sup> Examples of commentators who hold to some form of this view are Osborne, Beale, Mounce, Aune, Ladd, Morris, and Wall.

<sup>33</sup> Caird, Bauckham, Boring, Michaels, Keener, and Reddish all put forth this interpretation.

<sup>34</sup> Barclay 138

<sup>35</sup> Ibid 140-141

<sup>36</sup> Beale 739

spiritual purity. John, they claim, is picking up on the theme of Israel being pictured as a virgin in the OT<sup>37</sup> and the church likewise spoken of in the NT.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, according to Osborne, the παρθένοι are “those who refused to participate not only in immorality but in worldly pursuits of all kinds. With the imagery of the bride of the Lamb in 19:7-8 and 21:2, the idea of the virgin bride would make a great deal of sense.”<sup>39</sup> Beale agrees and sees the idea of celibates as part of a picture of those who have not had illegitimate intercourse with the “great harlot” in 17:1.<sup>40</sup> Wall agrees with a figurative interpretation, noting that γυναικῶν are to be associated with the evil women in Revelation, i.e. Jezebel in ch.2 and the Prostitute ch.17.<sup>41</sup> Noting the masculine παρθένοι, Michaels feels that reason they are seen here as male is because they were seen back in ch.7 as “sons of Israel.”<sup>42</sup> He then states, “corporately they are seen as female because they will be the Bride of Christ. While strange to us, Revelation echoes Galatians 3:28 “no longer male nor female for all are one in Christ Jesus.”<sup>43</sup> The notion of παρθένοι being figurative is undoubtedly correct, however other scholars see a different kind of symbolism in the phrase. Since the 144,000 were first seen in a military manner in chapter 7, the idea of their not being ‘defiled with women’ comes from the fact that in wartime, soldiers in the Israelite army were to abstain from sex or else they would be unclean.<sup>44</sup> Since the idea of holy war is prominent in the Apocalypse, and especially since the war against the saints

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<sup>37</sup> 2 Kings 19:21, Isaiah 37:22, Jeremiah 14:17, 18:13, 31:4

<sup>38</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:2

<sup>39</sup> Osborne, 529

<sup>40</sup> Beale 740

<sup>41</sup> Wall 180

<sup>42</sup> Michaels 170

<sup>43</sup> Ibid 171-172

<sup>44</sup> cf. 1 Samuel 21:5. The Qumran community also held to this standard for their end-time army code. We find in 1QM 7:1-6 that only men 25 years old or older will be permitted to be part of God’s end-time army and that if they have not “cleansed their ‘spring’ on the day of battle” they will not be allowed to go down with the army, “for the holy angels are together with their armies” and “no immodest nakedness will be seen in the surroundings of all their camps.”

was so prominent in chapter 13, this idea of celibacy most likely refers to Israelite military regulation.<sup>45</sup> Boring agrees with the military metaphor and even links the notion of celibacy to the Levitical regulations for those serving as priests, stating that since John pictures the church as the army of God and as priests, it is therefore pictured as a community of chaste ‘virgins.’<sup>46</sup> It is most likely that the references to celibacy refer to both spiritual purity and the notion of an end-time army preparing for battle. Both of these themes are prevalent throughout John’s apocalypse. As Keener states, “a spiritual celibate set aside for God cannot sleep with the world ‘on the side’ and remain qualified for God’s triumphant army.”<sup>47</sup>

Not only are God’s people pictured as a spiritually pure end-times army, they are also referred to as οἱ ἀκολουθοῦντες τῷ ἀρνίῳ ὅπου ἂν ὑπάγῃ. This is a clear reference to Jesus’ words in John 10:4: “*When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.*” This following not refer to following the Lamb as it wanders around heaven; it refers to the Lamb’s followers following him in his suffering. Caird feels that the best commentary on this verse is John 13:36: “*Simon Peter said to him, ‘Lord, where are you going?’ Jesus answered him, ‘Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.*” Peter could not follow at that time because “Jesus was going to that death which was the salvation of the world and the glorification of the Son of Man... Only when on the Cross he had drawn all men, Peter included, into unity with himself, could Peter follow him on the road to self sacrificing love.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Osborne 529

<sup>46</sup> Boring 169

<sup>47</sup> Keener 380

<sup>48</sup> Caird 179

Not only are the 144,000 seen as a celibate army who followed the Lamb wherever he goes, they are also seen as ἀπαρχὴ τῶ θεῶ καὶ τῶ ἀρνίῳ. The notion of ‘firstfruits’ can mean two things: 1) the 144,000 are the first wave of martyrs whose deaths will bring about the salvation of many more<sup>49</sup> or 2) the 144,000 are the firstfruits of the new creation.<sup>50</sup> Reddish claims that the 144,000 are the first fruits, the first of the offerings to God and the rest of the redeemed will complete the offering.<sup>51</sup> Caird agrees, and feels that the sacrificial language implies that they are to win “an innumerable host of converts.”<sup>52</sup> This would mean that while the 144,000 represent the whole church at the time, in the end their numbers will increase significantly. While not completely implausible, this view doesn’t seem to fit with the concept in chapter 7 of the 144,000 being synonymous with the entire host of the redeemed. However, if in chapter 7 the multitude is seen as the final result of the 144,000’s ironic victory through martyrdom, then there is no inherent contradiction.

Picking up on the reference in James 1:18 to believers as ‘firstfruits of creation,’ other commentators see the 144,000 marking the beginning of the new creation in Christ.<sup>53</sup> Beale notes that the language of firstfruits in the OT is used to describe the first and best of one’s produce being offered to YHWH. The rest of the produce after the firstfruits was considered “common or profane, and so now the redeemed are specially set apart from the rest, which are unclean, common, or profane.”<sup>54</sup> Barclay agrees stating: “Each individual Christian is a foretaste of the time when all the world will be dedicated

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<sup>49</sup> Caird, Bauckham, and Reddish are advocates of this interpretation.

<sup>50</sup> This view is held by Beale, Osborne, Barclay, and Ladd.

<sup>51</sup> Reddish 275

<sup>52</sup> Caird 188

<sup>53</sup> Osborne 530 cf. Beale 744

<sup>54</sup> Beale 744

to God; and the Christian is the man who has consecrated and dedicated his life to God.”<sup>55</sup> By this interpretation, the 144,000 are the best and finest that the world has to offer. In light of the next verse, this view is more likely accurate.

V.5) The final thing John notices about the 144,000 is that οὐχ εὐρέθη ψεῦδος in their mouth and that they are ἄμωμοί. Throughout the OT deceit and lying are held in utter contempt, whereas truthfulness is seen as one of the highest virtues.<sup>56</sup> Aune points out that ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτῶν οὐχ εὐρέθη ψεῦδος is a semitic idiom for telling the truth. And by the late 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple period, God was associated with truth and Satan with lies.<sup>57</sup> Zephaniah prophesied concerning God’s end-time people: *“those who are left in Israel; they shall do no injustice and speak no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue. For they shall graze and lie down, and none shall make them afraid (Zeph. 3:13).”* John’s vision is the fulfillment of this prophecy and it further illustrates how the followers of the Lamb are imitators of their leader, for in Isaiah’s prophecy of the suffering servant, we are told that he suffered *“although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth (Isa. 53:9).”* Beale feels that what is in mind here is not merely general truthfulness, but the saints’ integrity in witnessing to Jesus when they are under pressure from the beast and the “false prophet” to compromise their faith and go along with the idolatrous lie.<sup>58</sup>

God’s end-time army is also called ἄμωμοί. This term is used both to describe sacrifices offered to God as well as ethical or moral blamelessness.<sup>59</sup> Because ἄμωμοί

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<sup>55</sup> Barclay 142

<sup>56</sup> cf. Psalm 32:2, 40:4

<sup>57</sup> Aune 823

<sup>58</sup> Beale 746

<sup>59</sup> For sacrificial nuance cf. Num. 7:88, 28:19, 28:31, 29:13, 1 Pet 1:19, Heb 9:14

can have both meanings, scholars differ as to its meaning here.<sup>60</sup> Noting the term's sacrificial connotation, Beal claims that ἄμωμοι is referring here not to absolute moral perfection but to innocence with regard to the world's verdict of guilt rendered against the saints, which he argues is the main point of Isa. 53:7-9.<sup>61</sup> Boring, likewise sees neither of these statements as a moralistic description of the church's piety. Rather, their refusal to lie means their resistance to the idolatrous propaganda of the false prophet, the master of the lie, "blameless" is the "character of a sacrifice, as their martyr's deaths were understood to be."<sup>62</sup> However, it must be noted that when used of believers in the NT, ἄμωμοι uniformly means ethically blameless.<sup>63</sup> This leads other scholars to conclude that in this passage the 144,000 are without moral blemish. Anticipating anti-perfectionist arguments, Osborne clarifies: "Of course, this does not entail absolute perfection but rather a total walk with Christ and an absolute commitment to God, in keeping with its use elsewhere in the NT."<sup>64</sup> The view that ἄμωμοι is a description of the moral state of the 144,000 finds much support elsewhere in the NT. However, it is clearly a sacrificial term as well. In fact, the latter use gave rise to the former. Therefore in John's vision, the 144,000 are portrayed as a sacrifice without blemish precisely because no lie is found in their mouth—they have kept themselves from being tainted by the seductions of the earth-dwellers and have overcome the persecution unholy trinity by living lives that are wholly devoted to the Lamb and refusing to compromise in any way. This may be hard for the modern Christian reader to understand due to the prevalence of

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For ethical/moral meaning cf. Psalms 118:1, Proverbs 11:20, Ephesians 1:4, 5:27, Philippians 2:15, Colossians 1:22, 2 Peter 1:19, and Jude 1:24.

<sup>60</sup> Beale, Boring, and Reddish see it as symbolic purity while Osborne, Mounce, and Aune opt for literal moral blamelessness.

<sup>61</sup> Beale 747

<sup>62</sup> Boring 168

<sup>63</sup> Mounce 271

<sup>64</sup> Osborne 531

sin among those who claim to follow Christ. Nonetheless, in John's vision that is what we are confronted with.

### **Conclusion:**

Revelation 14:1-5 is primarily a depiction of the hope that all Christians can cling to, specifically those who are being persecuted for their obedience to Jesus and their refusal to play by the rules of an ungodly society. John presents his readers with a vision of the eschatological celebration that awaits everyone who belongs to the army of the Lamb. Though they have suffered greatly under the tyranny of Satan and his minions, they will burst forth in ecstatic praise of their Lord who delivered them safely to Mt. Zion, keeping them pure and unblemished by his presence among them. However, for someone who has not been purchased from the earth by the blood of the Lamb the content of this celebration will remain a mystery and they will suffer the judgment portrayed in the rest of the chapter.

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