

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Revelation: God's Revelation To His Servants Today On Events About To Occur

Part IV: "The Things Which Shall Be Hereafter": Events After The Rapture Of The Church

C. The Great Tribulation Period, Revelation 6:1-19:21

5. A Second View Of The Great Tribulation Guiding Us To Avoid Group Idolatry, Revelation 11:1-19:21

e. God's Guidance For His Servants To Stay Faithful To His Word Amid Great Opposition

(Revelation 14:1-20)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

After our worship service last Sunday, some of our Church members spoke with me in Fellowship Hall about their concerns regarding the spiritual opposition I as a pastor or we as a Church body face or might face in the future:

(1) They reported how "the city of Houston" had "issued subpoenas demanding a group of pastors turn over any sermons dealing with homosexuality, gender identity or Annise Parker, the city's first openly lesbian mayor. And those who fail(ed) to comply could be held in contempt of court." (Todd Stames, FoxNews.com, October 14, 2014) The members asked if I had heard of this matter, and what it might mean as a precedent for me and our Church.

(2) The members then shared how "a Vatican document said on Monday (October 13, 2014) that homosexuals had 'gifts and qualities to offer' and asked if Catholicism could accept gays and recognize positive aspects of same sex couples." (Philip Pullella, "Vatican Proposes Dramatic Shift In Attitude Towards Gays, Same Sex Couples," [Reuters] huffingtonpost.com, October 13, 2014). The members wanted to know if I had heard of this development in the Vatican, and wondered if it might lead to pressures for me or our Church to compromise our moral stance as well.

(3) The members also recalled past personal trials I had faced in this ministry, and they tried to encourage me.

(4) Later, as I studied Revelation 14:1-13 for this sermon, I saw **God** had a message for *all* of us on this issue!

Need: *Accordingly, we ask, "With the spiritual opposition pressures today's messengers of God and local churches face or may yet face against their staying faithful to the Lord, what would God suggest?!"*

- I. **We learned from Revelation 13:11-18 that in the Great Tribulation, Satan's false prophet will cause all the world's people to receive the antichrist's mark on their bodies to be able to buy or sell or be killed.**
- II. **God will have put His seal on His 144,000 servants so they might evangelize the world in order to keep them alive amid this threat (Rev. 7:1-8; Ezek. 9:4-7), but they will still face great Satanic opposition.**
- III. **For our insight, Revelation 14:1-20 shows how the 144,000 will stay faithful to God amid such pressure:**
 - A. John saw Christ the Lamb stand on Mount Zion with the 144,000 who had God the Father's name on their foreheads, a preview of the Messianic Kingdom, Rev. 14:1. They will learn and sing a "new" song, recalling Psalm 40:2-3 where God put a new song in David's mouth of praise to the Lord for His salvation, a song causing onlookers to revere and trust the Lord, Rev. 14:2-3a. The 144,000 will tell the angels and the Church, the 24 elders, what no other saints can testify due to the greatness of the trials they had overcome, Rev. 14:3b.
 - B. Just *what* the 144,000 will have *done* to *stay faithful to God amid such great trials* is clarified in Rev. 14:4-5:
 1. They will have *trusted in Christ to be redeemed as the firstfruit believers of that era*, Revelation 14:4c.
 2. They will have *not compromised with unbiblical error*, Rev. 14:4a KJV: the claim that they "were not defiled with women; for they are virgins" *figuratively* refers to **spiritual purity**, for throughout Revelation, the word *porne* for "harlot" (Ibid., p. 700), the **opposite** of "virgin" (*parthenos*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 632), signifies **spiritual corruption**, Theol. Dict. of the N. T., v. V, p. 836.
 3. They will have *been subdued by Christ under trial to follow Him wherever He led*, Rev. 14:4b: opposite heeding Satan's men, Christ will have caused them "to be led in submission to" (*hupago*, Abbott-Smith, A Man. Grk. Lex. of the N. T., 1968, p. 456) **Himself** by what is stated in **Scripture** [as we saw before, Rev. 19:13]. Christ will have used their intense trials fueled by a Satan-empowered antichrist and false prophet to drive the 144,000 to heed His Word to obtain God's peace in such trials, Psa. 119:107-112; Isaiah 26:3.
 4. Fourth, the 144,000 will *herald God's pure truth to the world opposite Satan's deceptive error*, Rev. 14:5.
 - C. The **message** the 144,000 will have proclaimed is clarified in Revelation 14:6-13 (as follows):
 1. At Rev. 14:6a, 8a, 9a KJV, three angels fly "in the midst of heaven," the "*mesouranema*," i. e., "'at the zenith', of the sun," high noon (Ibid., Arndt & Ging., p. 509), the highest point above earth to reach the most people, so Rev. 14:6a thus introduces the message the 144,000 will give to the **entire** lost **world!**
 2. That message is threefold (as follows): (a) First, they will preach: "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come, and worship" the Creator God, Rev. 14:6b-7. (b) Then, they will critique

the world ecumenical "Babylon the Great," warning it will be destroyed for deceiving the nations to adopt its vile compromises that have deceptively enraged men against Bible truth, meaning they should come out of it, Rev. 14:8; 17; 18:4. (c) They will also warn the world that if anyone worships the antichrist or his image or receives his mark on his body, he will end up in hell, being tormented forever, Rev. 14:9-11.

- D. Then, God in Rev. 14:12-20 contrasts the blessing of those who heed the 144,000 versus those who do not:
1. First, Rev. 14:12-13 urges men to be willing to die for rejecting antichrist's mark, for they will rest from that labor and valuable work that follows them into eternity for glorious reward, Matt. 13:43; Dan. 12:3.
 2. In vast contrast, Rev. 14:14-20 describes the dreadful fate of those who reject the Gospel of the 144,000:
 - a. The Rev. 14:14a "Son of man" on a cloud with a golden crown represents Christ in His return to earth at His Second Coming in the clouds of heaven, cf. Matt. 24:29-30; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 965.
 - b. He holds a sickle to harvest the lost, and an angel from the heavenly temple calls to urge Him to harvest the earth in judgment for the profaning of God's Jerusalem temple by apostate unbelievers Rev. 11:1-2; Rev. 14:14b-16. At Christ's Second Coming, all the still unbelieving on earth will be hardened against Christ, so they will be slain and sent to hell with its eternal torment, cf. Matthew 24:36-41 with 13:41-42.
 - c. Rev. 14:17-19 reports an angel with power over fire came out of heaven's altar to cry for another angel from the heavenly temple with a sharp sickle to gather the earth's vine clusters as its grapes were ripe. The angel thrust his sickle into the earth, gathering its vine, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. Since the antichrist will have also later profaned the temple (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15), and his followers will join him to make war at Armageddon against his foes from the East and North (Dan. 11:44-45), they will all die in a violent battle: the blood will either splatter up or flow as high as a horse's bridle for 184 miles outside the city of Jerusalem, Revelation 14:20 ESV, fn.; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.
 - d. Thus, if one in the Great Tribulation is slain for trusting the Gospel of the 144,000, not only will he have a far better eternal destiny, he will **still** have a **better** end in **this** life than one who does not heed the truth!

Lesson: *God's 144,000 Great Tribulation era messengers will stay faithful to Him in the face of great opposition by trusting in Christ for salvation, by not compromising with error in following Christ via His Word to find God's peace amid persecution and by preaching faith in the true God versus the worldwide false ecumenical Babylon the Great or Satan and his antichrist and false prophet, for the price of rejecting this truth will be eternal torment in hell. The 144,000 will add that though one may be killed for heeding Him, God will eternally greatly bless him, and God reveals that not trusting that Gospel will lead to a violent untimely death anyway, followed by eternal hell.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ to be saved, John 3:16. (2) As God's servants, may we not compromise with unbiblical error, but follow God's leading in His Word to find His peace amid trials and keep heralding the truth!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

We now illustrate how this Revelation 14 message applies to the issues raised in our sermon introduction:

(1) On the Houston pastors issue, Scripture calls pastors not to get involved in "civilian affairs" so they can fulfill their ministry of the Word, 2 Timothy 2:4 NIV; 1 Timothy 4:12-16. The Houston pastors conflict was created by their violating this order to lead a political coalition to block a Houston City Hall ordinance (Ibid., Stames), which action incited the mayor's reactionary reprisal. I will thus stay busy in God's Word versus leading political coalitions!

However, while thus Biblically serving the Lord, if the government were to order me to submit my sermons to it for its approval, I will respectfully refuse to comply with the order. 2 Timothy 4:1-2 reveals I answer to God for my ministry of the Word, and Acts 5:27-29 calls every believer to obey God over man.

(2) On the Vatican's possible future softening of its stance on morals and how it may influence other groups to soften their stances or lead to new laws requiring all religious groups to soften their moral stances, since Scripture's moral stance has not softened, neither will I soften mine! I would hope our Church would not soften its stance, either!

(3) On the issue of personal trials I have faced or might yet face in the ministry, much as how He will disciple the 144,000 in their enormous trials to come, God has sovereignly led me for decads through trials to submit, *hupago*, to His every Biblical directive so as to trust in Him resulting in knowing His perfect inner peace (Isaiah 26:3). Even nowadays, nearly every time I start to study Scripture for some lesson or sermon I must give in this ministry, God by His Word directs how I am to apply it in my own walk to be rewarded with His inner peace on some issue of concern!

May we trust in Christ as Savior for salvation, and as a body follow our Lord as He guides us to submit to His shepherding through His Word.