

The Bride Standing With the Lamb

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the importance of being a faithful disciple of Christ, preparing for the eternal union with Him as His bride.

Duration: 29:23

Scripture: Matthew 10:32-33, John 1:47, Romans 8:29, Ephesians 2:8-10, Revelation 7:9, Revelation 14:1, Revelation 14:4, Revelation 19:7

Topics: "End Time Prophecy", "Christian Living"

Description

The sermon delves into the symbolism of the 144,000 in the book of Revelation, contrasting them with the great multitude. It emphasizes the importance of being cleansed by the blood of Christ and having the name of the Father and Jesus on their foreheads. The sermon highlights the significance of living a life without lies or hypocrisy, following the Lamb wholeheartedly, and being prepared as the bride of Christ through righteous actions.

Transcript

Our theme has been the Church and the Bride of Jesus Christ. If you turn to the book of Revelation, there's a group called 144,000, and many people have wondered, who is this group of 144,000? Whenever you read Revelation, remember the first sentence. It's more clear in the King James Version that God sent and signified it by his angel to his bondservant John.

Revelation 1 verse 1, the last part. So that word signified means it was by signs that the Lord spoke to John, and right from the first chapter you see Jesus with his head, his hair white like wool. His hair is not actually white, and his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet is like bronze, and his sword coming out of his mouth.

It's obvious, it's a symbol. It's all signs, signs, signs, signs, right from the first chapter all the way to the end. Remember Revelation 1 verse 1 signified.

They're all symbols, symbols, symbols. So don't make them literal. So when you read 144,000, it's a symbol.

How is it a symbol? You read about in Revelation 14 verse 1, I looked and I saw on the lamb standing on Mount Zion, the lamb standing on Mount Zion with 144,000 having his name and the name of his father written on their foreheads. How is this a symbol? It's a symbol in the sense that in the previous chapters,

in Revelation chapter 7, you read of another group of people, Revelation chapter 7 and verse 9, a great multitude which no one could count. See the contrast.

144,000 can be counted, but here is a great multitude which no one can count. I don't know how many trillions of people there are there, of human beings from every nation, tribe, people, tongue, standing before the throne and the lamb, clothed with white robes, palm branches in their hands, all same people in heaven. How many? Trillions.

And they are saying our salvation is due entirely to our God and to the lamb. It's got nothing to do with us. It's all by grace.

And they've got nothing to boast about. Who are these? The angel asked and John said in verse 14, I don't know. He said these are those who come out of the Great Tribulation.

The only qualification is they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. Verse 14. They are cleansed from sin by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Nothing else. It's a great multitude. I think a great part of this multitude are aborted babies, many children who died in all the nations before they came to the age of understanding in all these 6,000 years of human history.

These are not referring to nominal Christians or half-hearted people who never get there. Many of these are, I believe, those little children and aborted, millions of aborted babies and in many, many nations and tribes. And there will be some from every tribe and tongue because most of these tribes and tongues, infant mortality is so high that every tribe and tongue will have somebody there in heaven who died before they came to an age of understanding.

From every, you know, it doesn't matter what religion they were or no religion. There were babies who died before the age of understanding. They are in God's kingdom.

But then there's another group in chapter 14 which is 144,000. We can say that was a number which cannot be counted. This is a number which can be counted.

That is the contrast. That is a huge group of people and this is a small group. And the qualification for that group was they were cleansed in the blood of Christ.

Every, you see, every child goes to heaven on the merit of Christ's blood. There's no other way. They don't go to heaven because they are innocent.

They go because the righteousness of Christ is attributed to them. They put to their account, just like it's put to our account. Justified means the righteousness of Christ is put to our account.

It's put to the account of those babies and they're in heaven. But the 144,000 is a small group that can be numbered. These people have another qualification.

They're not just washed in the blood of the Lamb. They've got a lot more than that. They've got the name of the Father and of Jesus on their foreheads.

Now this is in contrast to the followers of the Antichrist who, in just two verses earlier, chapter 13, verse 16, the Antichrist makes all the rich and poor and the great to take a mark. But he gives them an option.

You can have that mark either on your forehead, chapter 13, verse 16, or on your right hand, in your palm, where nobody can see it.

So when the devil tells people to be his followers, he gives them an option. You can either be an open follower of mine, the mark on the forehead, an open Satanist, an open atheist, an open one who's not ashamed to say I'm following the devil, or you can be a secret disciple of Satan. In the palm of your hand you've got the mark, but you go and sit in the church pretending to be a believer and pretending to love God, but you're an agent of Satan sitting there.

Your interest is money and whatever you can grab with your hand. The mark is on your hand. But when it comes to the followers of Jesus, this 144,000, they don't have that option.

Their name must only be on the foreheads, that's all. Chapter 14, verse 1, not in the hand. You can't be a secret disciple of Jesus.

He was ashamed of me and my words in this sinful and adulterous generation. I will be ashamed of him before the Father and the angels. So these are people who are not ashamed to be known as disciples of Jesus Christ in their place of work, wherever they are.

They don't violate the law, but they're not ashamed to be known as disciples of Jesus Christ. There are many Christians who say they are born again, but in their place of work they wouldn't want other people to know that they are not ordinary Christians, they are radical disciples of Jesus Christ. They don't want people to know that, because it might affect their job prospects.

It may affect their, the benefits they get from their unconverted bosses at work. So they try to hide the fact that they are out-and-out disciples for Christ. They'd like to have the mark in the hand, but you can't.

It has to be on your foreheads. Symbol, remember, it's a symbol, signified. And then it says, they sang a new song, verse 3, which no one could learn, except these 144,000 who've been, and the word there is, redeemed from the earth.

Redeemed from the earth means they've got detached from earthly things. These are people who have been detached. The cords that tied them to earth are cut.

They are heavenly people, living on earth, but heavenly people. And they are not being defiled with women. Now the women, again, signified, remember, don't take them as literal women.

The women mentioned in Revelation are the daughters of Babylon, the harlot. Harlot women, spiritually harlots, that is. Those who claim to be the bride of Christ, but commit sin with the world.

It's like a girl engaged to be married to someone, but fools around with other men here, and claims to be engaged to marry Christ, but fools around with the world, and lives for the world. That is a harlot. See, a non-christian can never be part of Babylon, the harlot, because a non-christian does not even claim to be engaged to Christ as his bride.

No. They say, we've got nothing to do with Christ. Who are the ones who can be a harlot? Those who claim to be engaged to Christ, but their whole way of life on earth is just like anybody else in the world.

They live only for money, and pleasure, and honor. They're afraid to witness boldly about Christ, lest they offend their friends and relatives. They, in the midst of their unconverted relatives, they behave just like

them.

There's no difference. There's no, they're not like the light. They try to be like a light in the church, but when they go to the unconverted relatives, their light is hidden under the bushel, and nobody can see it.

This is not the 144,000. These are people who are bold, and so the women mentioned are the daughters of Babylon, the harlot, and they've not defiled themselves with spiritual prostitution, or spiritual harlotry. That means they were faithful to their divine bridegroom.

This is the bride of Christ. And they follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Now that's not true of the great multitude, which we saw earlier.

They were only washed in the blood of the Lamb. Many of them, as I said, were aborted babies and all. They never got a chance to follow the Lamb wherever He went.

Like the thief on the cross, people like that, who at the last minute saved people, who never got a chance to follow the Lamb wherever He went. I mean, if you ask the thief on the cross, you know, some people say, what does it matter? Finally, when you go to heaven, that's all that matters. No, no, no, no.

It's not like that. So let's take an example from the earth. Supposing a person says, I'm living on the earth.

It doesn't matter how I live, doesn't it? Whether you're a homeless man begging on the streets, or a king in the palace, both are living on the earth, but there's a world of difference in their way of life. It's equivalent to the spiritual equivalent of the homeless man who begs on the street, who says, I'm also in heaven. And the king in the palace, spiritually speaking, in heaven.

It would be a world of difference. Those who are faithful and those who are not. Those like the thief on the cross, if you ask him today, he's in heaven, no doubt.

If you ask him today, hey, you are a thief and a murderer. Aren't you happy that you're in heaven? He'd say in one way, yes. But boy, what regret I have that I can never show my love for the Lord.

I never got a chance to do that. Here I'm enjoying all the benefits, and here there's no opportunity for sacrifice. I never get a chance here in heaven to take up my cross every day and to show my love for God.

In the years I lived on earth, I never took that opportunity. That is going to be the regret of many people. You know, we had a great man of God in India.

I believe he was the greatest man of God India has ever produced. His name was Sadhu Sundar Singh. He died in 1929, the age of 42 or something.

A man who was converted from a non-Christian religion by a vision of Jesus when he was 15 years old. Radically converted, and he lived the next 27 years completely for Christ. Persecuted, almost tried to kill him.

But he used to say something, just like we say, like we tell people, once you die you'll never have another opportunity to receive Christ. He used to say, once you die, you'll never have another opportunity to take up the cross and follow Jesus. Quite another perspective.

Once you die, you'll never have a chance to accept Christ. The only thing you're going to heaven. This man says, once you die, you won't get a chance to take up the cross and follow Jesus.

How will you show your love for him? In heaven where everybody's praising him, you're also going to say, yes Lord, I'm going to follow you? It costs nothing. It's here where Christ is unpopular, where the way of the Lord is dishonored. This is where you can prove your love for him.

And that's where the 144,000, they followed the Lamb wherever he went. They've been purchased as firstfruits to God. And listen to this, no lie was found in their mouth.

When they were born, the Bible says in Psalm 58, every child is born telling lies. But these folks had so cleansed themselves from the spirit of lying that they got from Adam's flesh, that by the time they came to the end of their life, there was no lying in their life. There was no hypocrisy in their life.

No lying means no hypocrisy. What you saw was what they were. What you saw on Sundays in the church was exactly the same when they were at home with their wives on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, all exactly the same when they were in their place of work during the week, exactly the same when everybody else was having a road rage on the busy roads.

They were witnesses for Christ there. There was no difference. They were the same here and there.

There was no lie in their life. That didn't happen automatically. They cleansed themselves.

They cleansed themselves. They had road rage just like everybody else in the beginning, but they saw it as something wrong for a Christian, that if Jesus were driving a car, he wouldn't get furious with the car in front. He would be patient, and they decided to be like that.

That in the place of work, even though there were crooks on the left and right, they decided to be upright. There was no hypocrisy. If you caught them by surprise somewhere, they were what you saw in church.

They were just the same. This is the mark of the bride of Jesus Christ. They're not specially holy on Sunday.

Their language is not specially holy on Sunday, or in the church, or with other believers. Their language is just as pure and holy when they are in the midst of unbelievers, in their place of work, on the roads, or anywhere, and people irritate them, call them the devil, whatever it is. There is no lie in their life.

What you see is what they are, all the time. That's a very small number. So people say, you mean to say there are only 144,000? I say, I'm surprised that there are 144,000 who cleanse themselves so much that they've come to this life, because there are very, very few people about whom Jesus can testify, like he testified about Nathanael.

There is a man without any guile. There is a man without any lying, and Nathanael was not even converted. What Jesus was saying is, what you see in Nathanael is what he really is.

He's not pretending to be holy here, and something else in private. I've often thought of that when I read about Jesus saying that about Nathanael. Behold a man in whom there is no guile in Luke and John chapter 1. And I read some of these statements of Jesus, and I say, Lord, can you say that about me? Can you point to me and say, there is a man in whom there is no guile.

Oh Lord, I'll do anything if you can say that about me. I want it. The commendation that Jesus gave to Nathanael.

I don't want any commendation saying the greatest saint on earth or anything. Great preacher? No. There is a man in whom there is no guile.

There is a woman in whom there is no guile. You can be like that. Maybe you can't preach like me, but can't you be a person without guile? He doesn't say these 144,000 great preachers are healers.

No, no, no, no. Gifts are not even mentioned. Gifts are not going to be important when you stand before the Lord.

It's your life, the way you live, that's going to be important. The Father said, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased when Jesus had not exercised any gift of the Spirit. Never healed anybody, never preached, never cast out a demon.

The Father said, I'm happy. What did he see? His life. Teaching us that it is your life that's going to determine everything in the final day.

So this is the 144,000, and I want to encourage you, persevere to be in this number. What type of church should you join and be a part of? I'll tell you. A church that encourages you to be like this.

Where every time you go to that church and you listen to the Word of God and you meet the people in that church, they challenge you to be like this. Wholehearted, radical, sacrificial, following the Lord. That's the only type of church I want to be in.

That's the only type of church I want my children to grow up in. Because I know that that's what will matter in eternity. And, you know, it's like, churches are like the many buses.

Here there are not so many, but in Bangalore, in India, there's not so much private transport. Most people don't have cars. So there's got to be a lot of public transport, buses.

And there are so many buses traveling all across Bangalore's 1,000 square miles or something like that. Different, different directions. So you go to a bus station, there are so many buses.

This bus is going here. This bus is going there. This bus is going here.

It's all marked there. Some are big, some are small. And a sensible man, he doesn't look for the big bus or the nicely painted bus.

He looks for the bus which is taking him to his destination. So if you're a sensible person, you look for a church that's taking you to the destination. You want to go to.

Not a big church or a fancy church. Not a bus where there's a lot of musicians. No, no, no.

Which is taking you to your destination. And the destination you want to get to is to stand with the Lamb on that day, having become like Him. Romans 8 29 says, God predestined, gave us a destination beforehand to become like Jesus Christ.

I don't have time to share everything here, but you go to YouTube and please listen to this message I preached a couple of Sundays ago. Here in right here. Just write Zach Poonen, our destination is

Christ-likeness.

And listen to that one hour message. Find the bus that will take you to that destination by the shortest route. That's what you do when you take a bus on earth.

I want to get there as quickly as possible. The shortest route. And I don't want to end up somewhere else.

I don't look for a big bus or a painted bus or a musical bus or any such thing. I look for the bus that's going to my destination. That's primary.

Whether it's painted nicely or that's big or small, whether there's music inside or not, makes no difference. Is it going to take me to my destination? We are so sensible when it comes to these earthly destinations. What about something more important? Our spiritual destination to become totally like Christ, to be part of this.

That is the church which the Lord is going to welcome to be His bride one day. One last verse. I promise to close at 5 30.

Revelation chapter 19. We are not the wife of the Lamb yet. We are the bride.

We're only engaged. The marriage is coming. And we read about the marriage in Revelation 19 verse 7. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to God for the marriage of the Lamb has come at last.

And listen to this. His bride has made herself ready. She was in a church that encouraged her every Sunday to get ready, that challenged her every Sunday to be ready for the marriage.

And so, because she made herself ready, she was given fine linen, bright and clean, which is not the righteousness of Christ. No. That we are given as soon as we are born again.

Justified, clothed with the righteousness of Christ. This is different. It says here, these are the righteous actions of the saints themselves.

You say, hey, I thought there were no works in Christianity. There are works. These are the righteous acts of the saints, which is her dress.

So you ask me, what is the dress of the bride in the day of the marriage? I'll tell you. Her own righteous actions. Does she have the righteousness of Christ? Yes.

That's given to all believers, including those aborted babies. But they're not in the bride. These are those who have themselves done righteous actions.

Those who denied themselves on earth and sought to please the Lord. In other words, Ephesians chapter 2. This is what I call the no works but works verse. No works but works.

Have you seen that verse? No works but works. No works in the foundation, but plenty of works in the superstructure. Ephesians 2, 8 and 9 and 10.

By grace, you have been saved through faith, not of yourself. It is not as a result of works. Foundation, zero works.

But once you're saved on the basis of no works, but the free gift of God, forgiveness through faith, then we become his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for a lot of good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them now. So that's what I call no works but works. That's like saying, in this building, there are no doors and windows in the foundation.

You all agree? But plenty of doors and windows in the superstructure. So in the Christian life, no works in the foundation, but plenty of works in the superstructure. The tragedy in Christendom is today, people say no works in the foundation, no works in the superstructure.

No doors, windows anywhere in the superstructure. That's crazy. Read Scripture carefully.

No works when it comes to free forgiveness, but plenty of works which God has already planned that you should walk in them, but there's no guarantee that you will walk in them if you're not wholehearted. I'm very thankful that when I was 21 years old, God told me one thing, I've got a plan for your life. I had already made my plan.

I was joined the Navy to go up to the top of the Indian Navy, and God said, he's got a plan for my life, and I said, it's probably different from my plan, but I said, Lord, I'm sure your plan is better than mine. I don't know what it is, but I want your plan, and he never showed it to me except day by day by day in all these more than 55 years since then. It was like the pillar of cloud day by day.

You ask the Israelites in the wilderness, where are you going tomorrow? I don't know. Where will you be next year? I don't know, but right now we are here. Where are you going to go tomorrow? I don't know, but will you show us tomorrow? That's how God has led me in 55 years.

Plenty of works, but only shown day by day. He doesn't give us a route map for the whole journey. It's not like a GPS that shows us, this is the way you go all the way.

Every day I want to say to every one of you, if you have received Christ, salvation is free without any works. Your works are like filthy rags in God's eyes if you want to justify yourself, but once you're saved and you're justified, I want to say God's got a plan for your life where every day of your life has been planned. Whether you fulfill that plan or not depends on whether you take up the cross every day and die to yourself and say, Lord, I want your will.

Then you can fulfill his will and when you come to the end of your life and you look back, there's a song which I love to sing, I'll bless the hand that guided, I'll bless the heart that planned my life when I'm thrown where glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land. The hand that guided and the heart that planned. Submit to it today.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we have only one life. Help us to make full use of it, everyone here.

And bless us, Lord, and challenge us by everything we heard today and prepare us for the sessions tomorrow as well. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

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