

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and
strength and honor and glory and praise!

Revelation 5:11-12

Heaven's Worship

with Pastor Steve

Worship and Redemption

These were redeemed from among men being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

Revelation 14:4

We come to yet another portrayal of the 144,000 servants of God, standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion, which gives a vivid description of the true worshipers of God. Two characteristics stand out in this portion of Revelation 14:4. One is that these servants were redeemed from among men. The second is that these worshipers were firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

It is impossible for a person to become a true worshiper of God unless that person has been redeemed. The Greek word for redeemed used in this scripture passage means "to go to market, purchase, or buy." No one is born into this world as a child of God. They are God's creation but not his child. Everyone is born with a sinful nature that is against the laws of God. All have sinned and fall short of his glory. The only way one can be redeemed is by the blood of the slain Lamb that is standing on Mount Zion with these 144,000. John begins The Revelation with this declaration.

John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. . . .

Revelation 1:4-6

Both Paul and Peter address this issue of redemption in their epistles.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree)

Galatians 3:13

. . . knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

1 Peter 1:18-19

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth (the market place if you will), lived a sinless life, died a sinner's death, bore our sins on the cross and with his blood purchased our souls for the Father. The first step to becoming a true worshiper is to acknowledge his work on the cross for the forgiveness of sin and allow the Father to take possession of our life. Our lives are not our own, we have been bought at a price. We have been redeemed from among men and are first fruits to God.

In referring to the 144,000 as first fruits, John again taps into knowledge of his readers. John, himself being Jewish, was also aware of the concept of first fruits. In the Old Testament we read of several feasts which God commanded the nation of Israel to observe. One of those feasts was the Feast of Harvest. It was also known as the Feast of Weeks and Day of First Fruits. Later the early church referred to it as Pentecost because it occurred fifty days after Passover. During the feast Israel was to

offer the first fruits of their wheat harvest as a free will offering to the Lord (Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10).

Firsts have always been important to God. Not only was Israel commanded to offer the first of the grain produce but also their flocks and vintage. They were also commanded to consecrate their first born males to the Lord. Solomon reflected God's heart when he said, *Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first fruits of all your increase. . . .* (Proverbs 3:9) God, through the prophet Jeremiah, referred to Israel as *the first fruits of His increase. . . .* (Jeremiah 2:3)

The Apostle Paul, in writing to the churches he helped to establish, refers to the early converts as first fruits of his labor (1 Corinthians 16:15; Romans 16:5). James portrayed all believers as first fruits when he wrote, *Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.* (James 1:18) Once a person allows the redeeming work of the blood of Jesus to take affect in his life he becomes a first fruit of Christ's labor. Such were the 144,000 and such are the true worshipers of God.

The Greek word for first fruits used in the New Testament means "a beginning of sacrifice." Paul wrote, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.* (Romans 12:1) A sacrificial life is characteristic of those who have been redeemed and have becomes first fruits to God. Only those who practice sacrificial living become true worshipers.