

More on the 144,000

Fred R. Coulter—May 17, 2000

I want to answer some questions concerning the bride and the guests and maybe a little bit concerning the 144,000. What I want to do is cover a little part concerning the 50th day harvest of the 144,000 and the great innumerable multitude.

Matthew 20:1: “The Kingdom of Heaven shall be compared to a man, a master of a house, who went out early in *the* morning to hire workmen for his vineyard. And after agreeing with the workmen on a silver coin *for* the day’s *wage*, he sent them into his vineyard. And when he went out about the third hour, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, “Go also into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.” And they went.... [This is interesting—isn’t it? One thing that we have to get rid of is the Gerald Waterhouse mentality that it’s all stacked up according to four-hour sermon. It’s not that way, because God is going to determine who will be where and what position. That’s all a part of this. So he didn’t tell them very much. He said ‘whatever is right, I’ll give you.’ So they went their way.] ...Again, after going out about *the* sixth hour and *the* ninth hour, he did likewise” (vs 1-5). He went out there at 6 a.m., 9 a.m., noon, 3 p.m.

“And about the eleventh hour [5 o’clock], he went out *and* found others standing idle, and said to them, “Why have you been standing here idle all the day?” They said to him, “Because no one has hired us.” He said to them, “Go also into my vineyard, and whatever is right you shall receive.” And when evening came, the lord of the vineyard said to his steward, “Call the workmen and pay them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first”” (vs 6-8). This tells us an awful lot—doesn’t it? As we will see, the whole parable tells us that God does not think like we think, especially if you ever belong to a union. This would be called the greatest ‘scab’ operation that they had ever come across.

“And when those who *were hired* about the eleventh hour came, they each received a silver coin. But when the first ones came, they thought that they would receive more... [This is judging by human standards—correct? *Yes!*] ...but each of them also received a silver coin. And after receiving *it*, they complained against the master of the house, saying, “These *who came* last have worked one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who have carried the burden and the heat of the day.” But he answered *and* said to them, “Friend, I am not doing you wrong. Did you not agree with me on a silver coin *for the day?*”” (vs 9-13). So this tells us what? That

God is going to do what He is going to do. He is going to reward whom He is going to reward, in the way that He is going to reward them. And that all of our complaining or comparing isn’t going to change it.

I know there are going to be some people who say, ‘How are you to say that we’re not going to be part of the bride?’ The truth is, Christ is going to determine who it is, and I’m sure God the Father is going to select the bride. Don’t you think so? Just recently I had a wedding, and I love weddings; weddings are my favorite thing! It was really a wonderful outdoor wedding. It was beautiful. Only thing, it was a noon and 95 degrees, so it was a little warm. But just as we started there was a breeze that came up and made it livable. I went through the ceremony and then we went on over where they were going to have the wedding supper. They had a wedding supper. I was sitting there and my wife was sitting there and we were enjoying everything. Here the bride and groom came in and they took the first dance. I thought, this is just exactly what the Bible is talking about. We’re here and we’re enjoying it. I was happy to have a part in doing the ceremony. But, there’s the husband and there’s the bride and all the rest of us are guests. I thought, that’s just the way it’s going to be in the resurrection. God is the One Who’s going to have to decide.

Verse 14: ““Take *what* is yours and go, for I also desire to give to the last *ones* exactly as I gave to you. And is it not lawful for me to do what I will with that which *is* my own? Is your eye evil because I am good?” So the last shall be first, and the first *shall be* last; for many are called, but few *are* chosen”” (vs 14-15). This almost sounds like what we read about in Job: That ‘you disannul My judgment that you may be righteous.’ That’s what they’re trying to do here.

Let’s look at Revelation 7—are not these the 144,000 from Israel? I think that’s very clear that they are different from the 144,000 in Rev. 14. Revelation 7 is approximately at the end of two full years of the 3-1/2 year tribulation—meaning that there’s 1 year and 6 months left. This, I believe, is the 50th day harvest that belongs to God. Here it gives no inclination of any reward at all—does it? Except that—after you get through the 144,000—then you come down here to the great innumerable multitude, ‘which no man could number’; and then it says:

Revelation 7:14: “Then I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’ And he said to me, ‘They are the ones

who have come out of the great tribulation; and they have washed their robes, and have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb.” So these here may very well be a good portion of the number of guests, because if they’re in white, then those are the wedding garments of the guests.” These are part of *the last*, which will probably be some of the first who are resurrected. That doesn’t mean that they’re going to be necessarily first in reward.

Revelation 11:3—let’s look at the very two *last*, the two witnesses. “And I will give *power* to My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and *the* two lampstands that stand before the God of the earth. And if anyone attempts to harm them, fire will go out of their mouths and devour their enemies. For if anyone attempts to harm them, he must be killed in this manner” (vs 3-5). This is going to be quite a thing.

I can just see it now: CNN news there with Christiane Amanpour and Peter Arnett out there giving the news. ‘Boy, did you see that? Fire came out of their mouth! And look, here are the ashes. And what are we going to do to stop them? They’re upsetting this thing of one-world government.’

Verse 6: “These have authority to shut heaven so that no rain may fall in *the* days of their prophecy; and they have authority over the waters, to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they will. And when they have completed their testimony, the beast who ascends out of the abyss... [Satan and the man that he possesses] ...will make war against them, and will overcome them, and will kill them. This is just like with Christ. Satan thought he had it made when Christ was killed. But He [Christ] was resurrected and totally defeated him [Satan]. So here, *the beast* will think ‘we finally have it made, and we’ll teach them a lesson.] ...And their bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified” (vs 6-8).

Of course, the coming one-world religion is going to be nothing more than a re-warmed Egyptian version of the New Age religion. Did you know that Mormonism—when you read this book *Primitive Christianity in Crisis*—is nothing more than modern Gnosticism. When you read this it will ‘blow you away!’ The Gnostics believe that we were spirits up in heaven and that they had to come down and possess a human body. That’s a very basic tenet of Mormonism!

“Then those of the peoples and tribes and languages and nations shall see their bodies three

and a half days, for they will not allow their bodies to be put into tombs. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them... [When it talks about ‘all the world should see it’ it means they will see it! Today we understand that statement. I think it will be with television—no question about it!] ...and will make merry, and will send gifts to one another” (vs 9-10). I can just hear *the beast*: ‘Brethren of the world, they have finally conquered these two men who were disturbing and upsetting our wonderful one-world government. They have caused plagues! and killed people! and drought! and now they are dead! Let us celebrate; I proclaim a feast!’ That’s what’s going to happen.

“...because these two prophets had tormented those who dwell on the earth.’ Then after the three and a half days, *the* spirit of life from God entered into them and they stood on their feet... [Can you imagine that!? Can you imagine the breathlessness of all of the television reporters all breathlessly reporting this and all the cameras are there and then we have this discussion. They’ll have a rabbi and ‘what do you think of this?’ You can almost see the whole thing going on. And right when they’re talking about how good it is that they’re dead, all of a sudden—the cameras pointing on their bodies—see them rise up on their feet.] ...they stood on their feet and great fear fell upon those who were watching them. And they heard a great voice from heaven, say, ‘Come up here!’ And they ascended into heaven in a cloud; and their enemies saw them *rise*” (vs 10-12). These are the last two who are killed—who are what? *The first resurrected!* Perfect example of the ‘the last shall be first.’

“And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; and seven thousand men were killed in the earthquake. And the rest were filled with fear, and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming **immediately**.... [not just quickly] ...Then the seventh angel sounded *his* trumpet; and *there* were great voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and His Christ, and He shall reign into the ages of eternity.’” (vs 13-15). Here then is the resurrection. But just prior to the resurrection, the two witnesses—the last two—are raised first.

Matthew 20:16: “So the last shall be first, and the first *shall be* last; for many are called, but few *are* chosen.” Then we have this, the next section: Jesus was going up and He told them about how He was going to be betrayed, and so forth.

Verse 20: “Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons, worshiping Him and asking a certain thing from Him. And He

said to her, ‘What do you desire?’ She said to Him, ‘Grant that these my two sons may sit one at Your right hand and one at *Your left hand* in Your kingdom.’” (vs 20-21). You talk about a political move to make it good ‘for my two boys.’ But this has the same thing to do with the first and the last, only from a little different perspective. This time, instead of the first and last being the general laborers that were out in the vineyard, now here we have it with the 12 apostles. And Christ gives the lesson here:

“But Jesus answered *and* said, ‘You do not know what you are asking... [the two sons were right there. They wouldn’t want to march up and say, ‘Lord, give it to us, look how good we are. But, mom, you are so persuasive, why don’t you do it for us.’] ...Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and to be baptized *with* the baptism that I am baptized *with*?’ ... [He had just told them He was going to be crucified.] ...They said to Him, ‘We are able.’... [Of course, they didn’t know what that was. It’s kind of like a Marine recruit. ‘Are you able to go up and capture that enemy machinegun nest?’ *Yeah, I can!* Don’t even know what you’re saying; never been under fire.] ...And He said to them, ‘You shall indeed drink of My cup, and shall be baptized *with* the baptism that I am baptized *with*; but to sit at My right hand and at My left *hand* is not Mine to give, but *shall be given to those* for whom it has been prepared by My Father” (vs 20-23). So the Father is in charge of all of this—right? *Yes, He is!* Not just us as human beings, or just Christ alone.

“And after hearing *this*, the ten were indignant against the two brothers... [because they got there first. The other ten would have like to have gotten there first to ask—that’s what they were mad at. Just carnal, human, wanting to be the best, the greatest and all this sort of thing.] ...But Jesus called them to *Him and* said... [He’s giving the lesson here]: ...‘You know that the rulers of the nations exercise lordship [dominion] over them, and the great ones exercise authority over them” (vs 24-25). *Dominion* is ‘katakuriuo’—which is *downward*; and the other one is ‘kataxousia’—which is *authority downward*.]

“However, it shall not be this way among you; but whoever would become great among you, let him be your servant; and whoever would be first among you, let him be your slave; just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life *as* a ransom for many” (vs 26-28). Now, that all ties in with those who are going to be in the resurrection.

Matthew 22:1—and let’s look at the guests: “And again Jesus answered and spoke to them in parables, saying, ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is

compared to a man *who was* a king [God the Father], who made a wedding feast for his son [Jesus Christ], and sent his servants to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast; but they refused to come” (vs 1-3). The ‘king’ Who is God the Father is going to have the marriage and He’s going to select the bride—have to be.

“Afterwards he sent out other servants, saying, “Say to those who have been invited, ‘Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and the fatted beasts are killed, and all things *are* ready. Come to the wedding feast.’” But they paid no attention and went away, one to his farm, and another to his business. And the rest, after seizing his servants, insulted and killed *them*.... [just a summary of the life of the apostles] ...Now when the king heard *it*, he became angry; and he sent his armies *and* destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.... [Jerusalem 70_{A.D.}] ...Then he said to his servants, “The wedding feast indeed is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy; therefore, go into the well-traveled highways, and invite all that you find to the wedding feast.” And after going out into the highways, those servants brought together everyone that they found, both good and evil... [this is talking about people who are bad people and good people—not in the sense of *spiritually speaking* but just in their lives. Of course, both the bad and the good have to repent. It’s harder for the good to repent because they don’t see the sins that they have done.] ...and the wedding feast was filled with guests” (vs 4-10).

Here the parable breaks down a little bit. Obviously, this is referring to the first resurrection. But there is not going to be anybody in the first resurrection who is going to be there without the proper wedding garment. In order to show that you have to apply yourself and have to have the proper wedding garment, this is here in the parable. So when will those who do not prepare to be guests be cast into outer darkness? That will be the Lake of Fire at the end of the Millennium in the Great White Throne Judgment. In order for the sake of the parable to show it, it has to be combined here.

Verse 11: “And when the king came in to see the guests...” The ‘king’ being God the Father helps answer the questions:

- When we are resurrected will we see God the Father?
- Why not?
- Will we be spirit beings? *Yes!*
- Are we not His children? *Yes!*
- Would He not want to see His children just resurrected, born from the dead? *Yes!*
- Would we not want to see Him? *Absolutely!*
- As well as Christ? *No doubt!*

So this says He came to see them.

“...*he* noticed a man there who was not dressed in *proper* attire for *the* wedding feast; and he said to him, “Friend, how did you enter here without a garment *fit* for *the* wedding feast?” But he had no answer. Then the king said to the servants, “Bind his hands and feet, *and* take him away, and cast *him* into the outer darkness.” There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few *are* chosen” (vs 11-14).

Matthew 25:1—let’s hope we can understand this a little bit more. “Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be compared *to* ten virgins, who took their lamps *and* went out to meet the bridegroom.... [here we have the virgins and the bridegroom; before we had the guests coming to the wedding. This is obviously a different category of people.] ...And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. The ones who were foolish took their lamps, *but* they did not take oil with them” (vs 1-3). Now, you need to understand about the lamps. The lamps that they had were small, handheld and had a little wick that came out of the side. Olive oil was put into the middle of it and the wick would hang over the edge of it and give light. Obviously, if you only have oil in your little lamp you don’t have very much. So that’s why they should have some with them, to carry an extra amount to pour in there when they needed it.

“But the wise took oil in their vessels *along* with their lamps. Now when the bridegroom was gone a long time, they all became drowsy and slept.... [showing that they had their own individual problems.] ...But in *the* middle of *the* night there was a cry: ‘Look, the bridegroom is coming! Go out to meet him.’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, “Give us *some* of your oil, because our lamps are going out.” But the wise answered, saying, “No, lest *there* not *be* enough for us and *for* you. But instead, go to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.”” (vs 4-9). This is obviously showing that they did not have enough spiritual character in order to qualify as part of the bride.

“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came... [in a parable it can’t fit everything to the exact facts] ...and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast, and the door was shut. And afterwards the other virgins also came, saying, “Lord, Lord, open to us.” But He answered *and* said, “Truly I say to you, I do not know you.”.... [In this part He doesn’t say ‘depart into outer darkness’ and there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ***This does not necessarily show a loss of salvation, but this shows a loss of being part of the bride.*** The door to being the bride is shut! It

doesn’t say they won’t be in the Kingdom of God, but it does tell us they won’t be part of the bride.] ...Watch, therefore, for you do not know the day nor the hour in which the Son of man is coming” (vs 10-13). Now then, I think that’s the best understanding that I’ve been able to derive from this. In other words, these virgins by the virtue of the fact that *they didn’t exercise the spiritual character they should have had*, they in a sense disqualified themselves from the marriage. It doesn’t necessarily say that they sinned and lost what we would call the *spiritual virginity*, but it does show that they were very negligent.

Let’s answer the question concerning the firstfruits—1-Corinthians 15:20: “But now Christ has been raised from *the* dead; He has become the firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep.” We know that this is the first of the firstfruits by several things:

1. God says in Exo. 34 that you are bring the first of the firstfruits unto the Lord.
2. By the wave sheaf offering that was elevated on the Wave Sheaf Offering Day, that that signified Christ ascending to the Father to be accepted as the firstborn from the dead.
3. Christ is the first of the firstfruits

“For since by man *came* death, by man also *came the* resurrection of *the* dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. **But each in his own order...**” (vs 21-23). There is an order to the resurrection. Part of what we have of the order that we saw is the ‘last shall be first and the first shall be last.’ If Adam and repented and made it—is He going to be the last one resurrected? *I don’t know!* But the ones who are going to be the very last to be resurrected are those who are alive when Christ returns. 1-Thess. 4 says that ‘they which are dead in Christ **shall rise first**. Then we, which are alive, will be caught up in the air together with them and meet the Lord in the air.’ Now, *meet the Lord in the air* can also have the meaning: *for the meeting with the Lord in the air*. So there’s an order.

Let’s go to James 1:18—we are called *firstfruits*. All those in the first resurrection are called *firstfruits*. Christ is called *firstfruits*. Christ is the first of the firstfruits. Now, let’s look at the rest: “According to His [God the Father] own will, He begat us by *the* Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all His created beings.” Now that means of His creation, meaning those of us who are created in Christ Jesus. That’s what it’s referring to. So, we are called *firstfruits!* Christ is also called *the firstborn*—isn’t He? Rom. 8:29: ‘that He should be called the firstborn among many brethren.’ We are also called *the Church of the Firstborn* (Heb. 12).

Let's go back to Revelation 14 and let's see concerning 144,000 here. The distinction between this and the 144,000 in Rev. 7 becomes very clear when we analyze all the differences. What is said of the 144,000 in Rev. 7 is that they are 12,000 from the 12 tribes of the children of Israel. It lists Joseph and it lists Manasseh and it does not include Dan—that's because of the prophecy that 'Dan will wait for his salvation.' Revelation 14:1: "And I looked, and I beheld *the* Lamb standing on Mount Zion... [That's what we are to come to—the Church of the Firstborn (Heb. 12)] ...and with Him one hundred *and* forty-four thousand..."

Now, when you look at Revelation 7:9 with the innumerable multitude and the 144,000: "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one was able to number, out of every nation and tribe and people and language, was standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and *holding* palms in their hands." You have to have the white robes in order to be a guest—correct? *Yes!* This is probably indicating that these were all guests. They stood before the throne—that is out around before the throne.

"and they were calling out with a loud voice to Him Who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, saying, 'The salvation of our God *has come*.' Then all the angels stood around the throne, and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, 'Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power and strength *be* to our God into the ages of eternity. Amen.' And one of the elders answered *and* said to me, 'These who are clothed with white robes, who are they, and where did they come from?' Then I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' And he said to me, 'They are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation; and they have washed their robes, and have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason, they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple; and the one Who sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall not hunger any more, nor shall they thirst any more; neither shall the sun nor the heat fall upon them, because the Lamb Who *is* in *the* midst of the throne will shepherd them, and will lead them to fountains of living waters; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'" (vs 10-17).

Let's come back and compare that with the 144,000 in Revelation 14:2: "...and with Him one hundred *and* forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. Then I heard a voice from heaven, like *the* sound of many waters, and like *the* sound of great thunder; and I heard *the* sound of lyre players playing their lyres.

And they were singing a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders. And no one was able to learn the song except the hundred *and* forty-four thousand, who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins; they are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They were purchased from among men... [leave out 'being' and 'the' (*KJV*) because that's not there in the Greek] ...*as* first fruits to God and to the Lamb... [Now, since we are called *firstfruits* what category are these?]; ...and no guile was found in their mouths; for they are blameless before the throne of God" (vs 2-5).

Let's go back and let's analyze this a little bit more.

- **firstfruits:** These were redeemed from among men—not the children of Israel. Can be any race of people or whatever.
- **firstfruits unto God and the Lamb:** Christ is called *firstfruits*, so we know He's the first of the firstfruits. Can we say then that if this 144,000 represents the bride—are these the next category of firstfruits—because it says, 'everyone in his own order.'
- **all of the rest** in the first resurrection will be called *firstfruits*.

So, we have three categories of *firstfruits*:

1. Christ
2. The bride next
3. All the rest after that

I think if we put the Scriptures together properly we can see how that will be. Let's look at this a little bit more:

Verse 3: "...who were redeemed from the earth... [Again, showing that it's from all nations. This is differentiating it from the children of Israel.] (v 4): ...These are the ones who were not defiled with women..." What does it mean to be defiled with women? Who are the women who defile the saints of God? That's another way of asking the question.

Revelation 17:1: "And one of the seven angels who had the seven vials came and spoke with me, saying to me, 'Come here; I will show you the judgment of the great whore who sits upon many waters; with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.' Then he carried me away in *the* spirit to a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast that had seven heads and ten horns, full of names of blasphemy. And the woman *was* clothed in purple and scarlet, and *was* adorned with gold and pearls and precious stones; *and* she had a golden cup

in her hand, filled with abominations and *the* filthiness of her fornication; and across her forehead a name *was* written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (vs 1-5). So, it could be ‘mother Babylon’ or any one of her ‘daughters’ that can defile the saints.

So these 144,000 of Rev. 14 were never defiled by false doctrines—the false doctrines of the churches of this world. These are ‘they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes.’ It says then, ‘Christ and the bride say...’—let’s go to Revelation 22; this is a summary of what goes on during the Millennium.

Revelation 22:17: “And the Spirit [Christ] and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who thirsts come; and let the one who desires partake of the water of life freely.” This is Christ and the bride. Everything in the Millennium will flow from Christ and the bride. Who will it flow to?

Revelation 20:6: “Blessed and Holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection... [that’s a blessing upon all] ...over these the second death has no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

We also know from Matt. 25 that there will be those who will be reigning over cities. We know also from Jesus explaining about who’s going to sit on the 12 thrones of the children of Israel that it’s going to be each one of the apostles. They will be kings. Here we have priests. We will reign as kings and priests with Christ. But the 144,000 are with Christ wherever He goes, whereas those who will be priests will be wherever Christ sends them to be priests. So it’s a little bit of a different situation there.

(go to the next track)

Let me clarify something here, Revelation 14:4: “These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins...” That means from the time of baptism.

2-Corinthians 11:1: “I would *that* you might bear with me in a little nonsense; but indeed, do bear with me. For I am jealous over you with *the* jealousy of God because I have espoused you to one husband, so that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds might be corrupted from *the* simplicity that *is* in Christ. For indeed, if someone comes preaching another Jesus...” (vs 1-4). That’s after you’ve been baptized then you believe in a different form of Christ, then you’re really not believing in the true Christ. These

were the false apostles coming and teaching false doctrines. In believing these false doctrines and following these false doctrines then those who were once virgins lose their virginity—*spiritually*. But they can repent and still be in the Kingdom of God.

Is the 144,000 a literal number? or a symbolic number? If you have a symbolic number then what does that mean as a literal number? We have 144,000 literally of the children of Israel—those who are sealed. Then we have the ‘great innumerable multitude’—which no one can number. So, how would you say there could be a symbolic number with the ‘great innumerable multitude’ because there’s no number. I would be more inclined to think that the 144,000 is a perhaps a literal number. How is God going to choose that? Well, He alone knows!

Will there be other virgins that were just slovenly, who are still going to be in the Kingdom of God? *Yes! We had the parable of the Ten Virgins.* But the door to the wedding, for them to be part of the bride, was closed. It doesn’t say they were excluded from the Kingdom of God. They just couldn’t be part of the bride.

Let’s clarify something else regarding the classes of the firstfruits:

1. Christ the first of the firstfruits
2. then the seven church harvest—represented by the seven churches (Rev. 2 & 3)—they are firstfruits
3. the 144,000 of Israel
4. the great innumerable multitude
5. the 144,000 of Rev. 14

So you have five categories altogether, and five is the number of grace. There may be something to that, but that helps substantiate what we covered in 1-Cor. 15: ‘Christ the firstfruit and after that those who are His at His coming, but every man in his own order.’ So how Christ is going to order that out we don’t know.

Let’s look at Revelation 2 & 3 and we will see that these seven churches represent:

1. The seven churches that were then
2. The projection of the Church down through history
3. The attitudes of Christians any time during any period

—and some of us can identify with several of the churches with our various attitudes as we have gone through our Christian life. So, it’s awfully hard to say exactly where each person belongs. In that sense, it is good from the point of view that God is the One Who is going to make the decision and salvation is by faith. Salvation is not knowing which category

you are in. **Salvation is by faith!** And I think we can trust God to know what He's doing, and we can trust God that **to be in the first resurrection in any category is a blessing!** It says in Rev. 19, 'Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' So it's all a blessing! What it does do, it shatters some of our carnal approaches to who we may think we are, lest we pull a Job and *tell God who we are!* And God tells us we're not who we say we are, but **'you are who I say you are!'** Let's look at the seven churches:

Ephesus: they're commended for their works. Revelation 2:2: "I know your works, and your labor, and your endurance [patience], and that you cannot bear those who are evil; and *that* you did test those who proclaim *themselves* to be apostles, but are not, and did find them liars." Some people get mad when you do that. We still do that today—don't we? *Yes!*

Someone said, 'Take me off your mailing list because of what you say about Herbert Armstrong, and that if anyone doesn't agree with you well then, you'll have nothing to do with them.' No! That's not the case, brethren. I wish there were 10,000 faithful ministers. Just think what could be done. I've tried working with other ministers, only to be beat up, knocked down, mailing list stolen and the whole works. I'd be happy to work with any minister. But I'll tell you one thing I will not do: ***I will not compromise or play politics to please anybody.*** If we do not please Christ, then it doesn't matter who else you please—all bets are off! Paul said, 'If I please men I should not yet please God.' And he wouldn't even give one minute to any man to come against what Christ had revealed to him. And he should not! So likewise, I'll just take the same attitude that Paul had. Be glad to work with any man, but don't come and steal from us. Don't come and take brethren. Don't come and have your own personal thing. I don't set myself up as some big thing. I just want to teach the Word of God and serve and love the brethren. I don't want people to look up to me as some big mucky-muck, because I'm not. But in handling the Word of God, I won't contenance one minute people twisting and turn the Word of God.

What we're going here, we're trying to understand some difficult to understand Scriptures—wouldn't you say? *Yes!* Maybe not everything we have here is exactly correct yet, but what we're doing, we're thinking it through, comparing the Scriptures, looking at the Scriptures to try and have it so we can understand the Word of God even more. There is nothing wrong with that at all. That's something that we should do. If we find ourselves wrong in anything, we'll change. If someone finds

something I'm doing wrong, I shouldn't do or say something I shouldn't say, let me know and I'll correct it—no problem with that. But I don't want the brethren to be beaten up, and I don't want to be beaten up—and I've been beaten up enough. I fought the hierarchy in Worldwide from 1972 on, and it was really a tough situation. I've seen what they did to each other and to the brethren, and that should never be. Yet, we called ourselves 'the church of brotherly love'—right? Everyone wants to be a Philadelphian. We'll look at that one in just a minute. But it's very obvious that not everyone can be.

Verse 4: "Nevertheless, I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love." What is losing your first love? That's not just being excited at knowing the Truth when you first come to it. The 'first love' is ***loving God with all your heart, mind, soul and being!*** That's what they lost. How could they lose it? Could it be from negligence? Could it be letting in some idolatry? *I don't know, but they lost it!*

So He says: "Therefore, remember from where you have fallen... [He considers this a great sin] ...and repent, and do the first works..." (v 5). So we can conclude from what we have here that those who did this—and lost their first love—probably have defiled their garments. Probably have lost their *spiritual virginity* from baptism. If they repent and do the first works, they can be restored. The question is: Will they be part of the bride of Christ? ***That is God's judgment!*** But if we look at it from Rev. 14, we could say that these have defiled themselves with women.

Smyrna: This one there is no correction at all, no calling to repentance. Verse 9: "I know your works and tribulation and poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy of those who declare themselves to be Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast *some* of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life" (vs 9-10).

No correction! They didn't submit to any of the false things that came along—whether it was persecution by the Jews; whether it was persecution by the pagans; whether it was the inquisition by the Roman Catholic Church. They didn't give in to any of it. So they kept their *spiritual virginity*.

Pergamos: Really got themselves in trouble—Pergamos and Thyatira—wow! It's self-explanatory here. They have the doctrine of Balaam. They also have the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. They ate things sacrificed unto idols.

Verse 16: “Repent! For if *you* do not *repent*, I will come to you quickly, and will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.” Here Christ has to fight against His own church here. Notice, Pergamos is right where Satan’s capital is. When you are so close the things of Satan it is awfully hard to not inculcate some of those practices into your daily way of doing things. That’s what happened! We’ve had some of that today in this form. Not exactly, but some, with the demise of Worldwide Church of God going clear into Sunday-keeping. But we’ve had some of it within the ministry in teaching that they bring out a lot of things of psychology instead of preaching the Word of God. So that’s getting so close to the world that you look at the things that the world has which are good and you bring in that and equate that with righteousness of God. The goodness of this world comes from which tree? *The tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. It is good. It can do good things, but it doesn’t equal the righteousness of Christ. We’ve seen that!

Thyatira: Perhaps the best and the worst all combine together here. It says, Verse 19: “I know your works, and love, and service, and faith, and your endurance, and your works; and the last *are* more than the first. But I have a few things against you, because you allow the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants into committing fornication and eating things sacrificed to idols” (vs 19-20). There it is right there. Most of those from Thyatira, even in repenting, could not be considered virgins after they were baptized. It’s talking about their condition after they were in the Church, because the message was to the Church at Thyatira. So it’s not before they were in the Church, but after they were in the Church.

Sardis: I do an in-depth study in *The Seven Church Harvest*. It was really quite a revealing thing. Revelation 3:1: “And to the angel of the church in Sardis, write: These things says He Who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works, *and* that you have a name as if you are alive, but are dead.... [This is probably the worst spiritual condition. This is worst that lukewarm! At least lukewarm you’re still alive. Here you’re a corpse with a pulse.] ...Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die. For I have not found your works complete before God. Therefore, remember what you have received and heard, and hold on *to this*, and repent. Now then, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you shall by no means know what hour I will come upon you. You have a **few** names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with Me in white because they are worthy. The one who overcomes shall be clothed

in white garments; and I will not blot out his name from the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” (vs 1-5).

They just make it by the ‘skin of the teeth.’ I don’t even know if we can say ‘skin of the teeth.’ But only a ‘few’ are going to make it. When you go through and you look at these things and you ask the question: How much does our choice count in all of this? *Everything!* As far as our responsibility is concerned.

Laodiceans: We beat up Laodiceans long and often and hard and difficult. But being lukewarm, talking back to God. Verse 17: “For you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’... [sounds a little bit like Job—doesn’t it? *Talking back to God!*] ...and have need of nothing’...” And it’s all taken away; it is all gone!

They are so bad they are ‘vomited out of the mouth of Christ. Christ is outside knocking on the door to get in. They can repent! They can receive salvation! They can sit in the throne of judgment as Christ sits in the throne of judgment! But they have to become zealous.

Philadelphia: Let’s compare that to the 144,000 (Rev. 14)—and the church of Philadelphia comes as close to describing Rev. 14 and the 144,000 there, with the exception that we have to also do as Christ did in commending Smyrna—that they had no faults before God.

Verse 7: “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia, write: These things says the Holy One, the One Who *is* true; the One Who has the key of David, Who opens and no one shuts, and Who shuts and no one opens.... [We always like to look to the open door, but there’s a time when God shuts it. I think we’ve lived in the time where God has shut the door of radio and television as an effective way of reaching people. He’s going to open another door, and when He does we have to be prepared and be ready, whatever it may be. Christ will have to open the door for any one of the seven churches here, but in particularly for those who really love God, He’s got to open the door. Why?

Verse 8: “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no one has the power to shut it because you have a little strength... [here is a small church; little strength] ...**and have kept My Word**... [no other church is commended of really keeping the Word. If you’re going to keep the Word, that means you have to:

1. you have to have it—correct?
2. you have to know it—how do you keep something that you don’t know? *You can’t!* ...and have not denied My name.”

That's a little different than with Pergamos: Revelation 2:13: "I know your works and where you dwell, where the throne of Satan *is*; but you are holding fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days in which Antipas *was* My faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells." So they only held on as long as they had Antipas as their leader. After that everything went to 'hell in a hand-basket' to Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which this book *Primitive Christianity* does an excellent job of bringing out what that really means.

Revelation 3:9: "Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan..." Who is the synagogue of Satan? *Combines the economics, the religious and the political affairs of this world*, who control the world. We are living in a time when that synagogue of Satan is coming to the fore again, like it never has. (Sermon: *The Beast that Was and Is Not, and Yet Is*) I think we will understand it even more clearly and that we are living in those times.

We can just say that those of the synagogue of Satan are rewarded by Satan. How does he reward them? What did he promise Christ if He would worship him once? *The whole world!* So those who control the world and the world establishment—in banking, in religion, and in politics—are all a part of the synagogue of Satan with all of their followers and all of their subordinates with them. And those who truly are a part of the synagogue of Satan, worship Satan directly, and get their orders directly from him.

We are in a struggle, brethren. We are in a fight for the Word of God. We are in such a position today that we can no longer say 'look it up in your Bible, read it in your Bible.' Now we've got to tell them, 'look, before you can even look it up in the Bible, you'd better make sure you have the right Bible. You may not find it in the one that Satan has perverted through Wescott and Hort and through the *New International Version* and through the *New American Standard Bible*—and some of the others. I mean, it's a horrendous thing that they have done to it. That's all part of the synagogue of Satan.

"...who proclaim themselves to be Jews and are not, but do lie—behold, I will cause them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.... [Christ loves His whole church, but there is a special love that God has for the Philadelphians. Why? *Because they love Him!* That's why! And you can't love the brethren truly unless you love God first! You can have a social club. You can get along with each other, you can like each other, you can be desirous to be in each other's company, but to truly love the brethren with

the love of God, that's got to come from God. It has to come from God.] ...Because you have kept the word of My patience...[twice He says, 'you have kept My Word, have not denied My name' (v 8)] (then He says): ...Because you have kept the word of My patience... [in spite of the synagogue of Satan, in spite of anybody else around, in spite of the consequences that come to you, in spite of what you go through, you stay faithful and keep the Word of God.] ...I also will keep you from the time of temptation which *is* about to come upon the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly; hold fast that which you have so that no one may take away your crown" (vs 9-11). Showing that there is a battle, there is a fight, but you're having to fight against all the odds that are coming. Someone is trying to take your reward, take your crown.

Notice how closely this ties in with Rev. 14, more than any other, v 12: "The one who overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall not go out any more... [follow Christ wherever He goes] ...and I will write upon him the name of My God... [which Rev. 14 says] ...and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven from My God; and *I will write upon him My new name.*" The bride always what? *Takes the name of her husband, which is a new name.*

Since there have always been Philadelphians down through time, out of these kinds of Christians are these going to be part of the bride of Christ? Of all that we have examined of the firstfruits: being the seven churches, being the 144,000 of Israel, the great innumerable multitude, and the 144,000 of Rev. 14, this attitude here ties in more closely with Rev. 14. So the anything we can say is, the parallel is very close. But, lest we get carried away with categorizing things ourselves and saying 'he is, he isn't; she is, she isn't; we are, they aren't'; we'll just say it is all in God's hands and let Him take care of it. And when it comes time for the resurrection, we'll all find out then—won't we? And regardless of what it is, we're all going to be happy about it. The whole goal is to be in the Kingdom of God and receive eternal life.

- God is the One Who's going to give the reward.
- God is the One Who's going to pick the bride.
- Christ is the One Who's going to marry the bride.

And if we can be there as guests, why I'm all for that! It says, 'Blessed and Holy is he that is called to marriage supper of the Lamb.'

So, this will at least give us something to think on; give us something to study more into; and we don't want to get carried away with anything, and treat what we have had: now we have something new and we can beat everybody over the head with, because that's not correct. Whatever we understand comes from God. When we try and understand these things, and the understanding that comes from God will then lead us to change any of our understanding in the future, then we'll, by all means, change—no question about it! I don't want to be in a category of holding onto any teaching or doctrine which is incorrect.

But let's understand this: *The knowledge of this does not change your salvation*—does it? *NO!* In other words, it gets right back to the same thing that we covered in Matt. 20 when we started. When Christ told the mother of John and James, the sons of Zebedee, 'You don't know what you're asking for and it's not Mine to give, but the Father's.' So here the Father has to make the decision—doesn't He? All we can do is look at it and say the most we can come to is, these Scriptures give us a little better understanding and some indications of what God is going to do. That's the most that it can do for us. If we try and make any more out of it, then we'll get carried away with our own self-importance. We don't want to do that at all, and we certainly don't want to pull a Job and walk up and tell God what to do. That didn't work then and it won't work now!

The longer that I have been in the Church the more that I understand that *there is really literally nothing that we haven't received*. Everything comes from God! And the most important thing we need to concentrate on—let's go to 2-Corinthians 10—here's the most important thing, brethren, and this is the greatest tool for overcoming.

2-Corinthians 10:1: "Now I Paul am personally exhorting you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. On the one hand, when present with you I *am* base; but on the other hand, when absent I am bold toward you. But I am beseeching *you* so that, when I am present, I may not have to be bold with the confidence with which I intend to show boldness toward some, who think that we are walking according to *the flesh*.... [and 'walking according the flesh' is *according to human reason, human rational, human ideas and things like this*. Or as Paul was fighting: *philosophy* (1-Cor. 1).] ...For although we walk in *the flesh*, we do not war according to *the flesh*" (vs 1-3).

And as I mentioned concerning psychology and psychological methods of overcoming: No, you don't do that! Here's the way we overcome: "For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to *the* overthrowing of strongholds...

[and this is the battle we have to keep at] ...casting down *vain* imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and **bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ**" (vs 4-5). That's what we have to work on; that's the most important thing!

Why? *Because in your mind is where sin begins*, and your mind and your thoughts of self and importance and all of the things of the world to puff up the self, then are idols before God. Meaning that *anything that you think that you understand or know or can do earns you salvation or earns you something or makes you more special than someone else becomes and idol*. For us to proclaim that we are Philadelphians and anyone who is not with us is not a Philadelphian—look, we don't know! That would be an imagination, a thought exalting itself against God! So when thoughts like that of self-exaltation or thoughts that come along of sin or whatever it may be, you're to grab that thought, bring it into captivity and cast it down and bring your mind into obedience to Christ! This is what we need to do. I don't know about you, but I have a struggle with my own mind! Just like Paul did! That's why it's important that we keep our perspective in this.

Verse 6: "And having a readiness to avenge all disobedience, whenever your obedience has been fulfilled.... [Wow! That's quite a statement—isn't it? How do you fulfill your obedience? *Everything that you do starts in your mind!*] ...Are you looking at things according to their appearance? If anyone is persuaded in his *own* mind that he is Christ's, let him reconsider this concerning himself; for exactly as he *is* Christ's, so also *are* we Christ's" (vs 6-7). And that's what we really need to keep in mind.

Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 20:1-15
- 2) Revelation 7:14
- 3) Revelation 11:3-16
- 4) Matthew 20:16, 20-28
- 5) Matthew 22:1-14
- 6) Matthew 25:1-13
- 7) 1 Corinthians 15:20-23
- 8) James 1:18
- 9) Revelation 14:1
- 10) Revelation 7:9-17
- 11) Revelation 14:2-5, 3-4
- 12) Revelation 17:1-5
- 13) Revelation 22:17
- 14) Revelation 20:6
- 15) Revelation 14:4
- 16) 2 Corinthians 11:1-4
- 17) Revelation 2:2, 4, 9-10, 16, 19-20

- 18) Revelation 3:1-5, 17, 7-8
- 19) Revelation 2:13
- 20) Revelation 3:9-12
- 21) 2 Corinthians 10:1-7

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Exodus 34
- 1 Thessalonians 4
- Romans 8:29
- Hebrews 12
- Revelation 19
- 1 Corinthians 1

Also referenced:

Book: *Primitive Christianity in Crisis* by Alan Knight

Sermons:

- *Seven Church Harvest*
- *The Beast That Was, Is Not, Yet, Is*