

144,000 Study

Fred R. Coulter—December 3, 2011

Let's look at something concerning the face-to-face {see Bible Study by Michael Heiss, Dec. 3, 2011}. Let's come to John 1, and this is going to show and demonstrate the unity between the Old and New Testament. This also then establishes Christ in His position with God the Father in exactly the same way that face-to-face with Moses, face-to-face with Israel, or Jacob.

John 1:1: "In *the* beginning was the Word... [He was there before the beginning. Have to be, because we're told in Colossians that 'all things were created by Him.'] ...and the Word was with God..." Now, the word for *with* is 'pros' meaning *toward*. This actually is conveying to us that they were face-to-face—'pros.'

Face is called in Greek 'prosopon.' We're going to see something that is really interesting in the Greek. It conveys in the English as well, but this also helps us to understand how important that it is face-to-face. I do agree with what Mike said concerning email/texting. That is screen-to-screen; that's not face-to-face. I suppose if you have one of those cameras on your computer that you could be almost face-to-face.

2-John 12: "I have many things to write, but I do not wish to *convey these things* to you with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face in order that our joy may be *completely* full." *Face-to-face* in the Greek is this: 'prosopon-prosopon'—*face-to-face*. Tie in one other thing with this, as Mike brought out about being face-to-face and looking at each other and being able to eyeball each other. You've heard that expression, too—right?

What did Jesus say concerning the eyes? '*The eye is the light of the body.*' If the light be in you—that is righteous or good—that's what to be expected. But if the light that is in you is darkness, what did He say? '*How great is that darkness?*' That's where you get the term *evil eye*. Some people look evil.

It's like this police chief was giving a little talk to some of the kids in school, and he showed them some pictures of the most wanted. The chief of police said, 'We want to catch this fellow' So the little kid named Albert came up to him afterwards and said, 'Why didn't you keep him when you had him and took the picture?' When you were face-to-face, you should have kept him.

The 144,000 of Revelation 7:

What is the difference between the 144,000 of Rev. 7 and the 144,000 of Rev. 14? I think we'll find it very interesting. Since this event of the sealing of the 144,000 occurred approximately 18 months before the end—the end being the end—do the 144,000 receive salvation?

Revelation 7:1: "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth... [I have yet to figure out where the four corners of the earth are on a globe. I can figure North Pole and South Pole, but the other two I can't figure. Someone said, 'Well, the Devil's [Bermuda] Triangle in the Atlantic and then the equivalent of it over near the Orient.' Maybe, I don't know. But there are also magnetic anomalies in those areas as well.] ...and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to damage the earth and the sea, saying, 'Do not damage the earth, or the sea, or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.'" (vs 1-3).

Why can none of us be the 144,000 or Rev. 7? *We're already converted! We're already sealed with the Spirit of promise* (Eph. 1:13). *We're sealed!* These are sealed with an angel doing the work. Why is that? The answer is simple. *There are no ministers around to baptize them, no ministers around to lay hands on them!* They're in captivity. These are the children of Israel.

Verse 4: "And I heard the number of those who were sealed: one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of *the* children of Israel." Who are this group of 144,000? *They're from the children of Israel, the twelve tribes!* It tells us.

Notice v 5 starts out with Judah. That ties in with Zech. 12, where God says *that He will save the tents of Judah first*, that is of the twelve tribes, at the end. So, they're listed first. You can go through, 12,000 from each one. I am sure that that is a special category that God has and they will be able to help administer beginning with the Kingdom of God when Christ and the saints return.

Verse 9: "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..." Where are they? *It shows they're going to be converted!* No one's going to stand before the throne of God until the resurrection takes place. So this shows that they are going to be resurrected.

"...standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and *holding* palms in their hands. 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*,’.... [Salvation of God means *they were saved*. They will stand before the throne of God.] ...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?’.... [he said to John, because this was a vision to John] ...Then I [John] said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’....” (vs 9-14). He didn’t know.

We understand the book of Revelation and John never understood it, except just a few things, because it wasn’t meant to be understood until the last days. Wasn’t meant to be understood until we get to a point where everything is a one-world this, and worldwide that, all nations, languages, and so forth. We see that coming to pass really quickly now.

“...And he said to me, ‘They are the ones who have come out of the Great Tribulation...’” (v 14). When does the Great Tribulation start? A lot of people like to hurry up God. It’s going to be coming. And did you hear of God’s justice on the one who claimed he was one of the two witnesses and that his wife was the second one? He made two fatal mistakes:

1. He forgot the two witnesses’ ministry is limited to 1,260 days. *It’s past that now.*
2. His other fatal mistake was he did not handle the money of God properly that was sent to him and he opened a Swiss bank account.

The IRS came and knocked on his door and said, ‘Dear sir, how did you get this \$380,000 in a Swiss bank account?’ And to use a *King James* terminology, ‘And whence did that come from?’ Never worry, God is always going to take care of things. That’s why in our relationship with God, we need to maintain that every day.

- Grow in grace and knowledge
- Grow in the love of God
- Grow in serving God
- Grow in all the fruits of the Holy Spirit

Because God has given us a tremendous amount and to whom much is given, much is required. We can never say, ‘Oh, well, we really attained this or that or the other thing.’ *No!* We’ve attained what we’ve attained, but what are we going to do today and what are we going to do tomorrow? Those things we need to keep in mind.

The Great Tribulation does not start until the middle of the 70th week of Daniel’s prophecy, three and a half years. These people have yet to be converted. Any minister stands up in the pulpit and says, ‘Oh, you’re part of the 144,000.’ There are some who say, ‘Well, God can only save 144,000.’ Really? What about the innumerable multitude? Couldn’t count that—right?

They like to use these things as little pockets of control for their own purposes. ‘Oh, you don’t want to leave this church, because you’ll be out of the 144,000.’ Well, the Jehovah Witnesses had a problem—didn’t they? They started out and they said there would be 144,000. Whoops! When they grew to more than 144,000, now what are you going to do? God’s Word doesn’t give us this to do.

“...‘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’” (v 14). Meaning, they were sent into captivity because of their sins and with all the things that took place. Especially the rolling back of the heavens like a scroll. That’s going to make a lot of people repent—right? You see that happen? *Yes!*

Every time there’s a natural disaster, like we had a small one down here with the wind blowing, some gusts up to 120 miles an hour. BOOM! All the electricity went out; so much for the modern conveniences. Albert said that he was reading the Bible with a lantern. So, you see how all of our advancements are very insecure when we come up against God.

Verse 15: “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 on 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 15-17). Showing that they’ll be in the Kingdom of God. That is repeated then in Rev. 20 and 21.

The Tribulation does not begin until three and half years into the last seven years. We’re not in the last seven years. Can’t be any of us, we’re already sealed. We have the Holy Spirit of God. This is given along in the time sequence of the three and a half years. Since we haven’t arrived at the Tribulation, it cannot be any of us. You cannot liken the trials that we go through to the Great Tribulation. That does not work.

This has to be in the time frame of the Great Tribulation. Now we’ve got the whole series on Daniel and Revelation (40 sermons)—we’ve gone through this in great detail.

How long will it take them to be sealed? Why should it take any period of time at all? It's done. We're not looking at an extended time frame here. This is an event that takes place right at the end of two years into the three and half year Great Tribulation. They are sealed and they represent the laborers of the eleventh hour.

Let's come back here to Matthew 20. Why can it not be of us? *Because if you go back and go through the seals*—which occur before this takes place, there's the martyrdom of the saints—*it cannot refer to any of us*. If we are alive when the Tribulation begins and the angels don't take us to a place of safety, you're going to lose your head. Martyrdom of the saints, that's the fifth seal.

Matthew 20:1; let's see a parable. "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. Again, after going out about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did likewise. And about the eleventh hour... [What is this, an hour before sundown?] ...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'" (vs 1-7).

Verse 9: "And when those who *were hired* about the eleventh hour came, they each received a silver coin.... [salvation is the same for everyone] ...But when the first ones came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a silver coin" (vs 9-10).

Here's how God handles being 'fair' with everybody. In His own way He is, but not as human beings think fairness. Why should they get the same? Verse 12: "Saying, 'These *who came* last have worked one hour, and you have made them equal to us...'" Are there grades to salvation? *Either you're saved or you're not*—right? Maybe there are grades of reward, but that's a different situation here.

Verse 13: "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*? 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 13-16).

The 144,000 of Revelation 7 were chosen from the children of Israel right at the beginning of the last three and half years. They represent, along with the great innumerable multitude, those that were hired at the eleventh hour.

The 144,000 of Revelation 14:

Is there a difference, and if so what is the difference? These also come before the throne of God. It's like the twenty-four elders. The question was asked concerning those at the eleventh hour. Everyone who receives eternal life, *receives eternal life*. There's not a greater eternal life or a lesser eternal life.

We know that with rewards there are greater rewards and lesser rewards, as you read Rev. 2 and 3, when you read Matt. 25 and Luke 19. The giving of the rewards come after receiving eternal life. But these came out of the Great Tribulation, so they answer the question of those who were hired at the eleventh hour.

Revelation 14:1: "And I looked, and I beheld *the* Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred *and* forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.... [A little bit different description—right? *Yes!*] ...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.... [a stringed instrument] ...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" (vs 1-3). *Not restricted to Israel*. Redeemed from the earth. Not in any specific timeframe of the last seven years.

Verse 4: "These are the ones who were not defiled with women... [What does that mean? What is a woman in prophecy, especially the one in Rev. 17?] ...for they are virgins; they are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They were purchased from among men *as* first fruits to God and to the Lamb; and no guile was found in their mouths; for they are blameless before the throne of God" (vs 4-5). Little bit different description. Doesn't fit into a timeframe. Who do they represent? Because they're going to be there.

Let's look at the description here, v 4: "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." What does it mean to be a spiritual virgin? That's what we're talking about—right?

Where do we get some information concerning this? Let's go to Rev. 2 and 3. The seven

churches tells us an awful lot about what's going on with the Churches of God. As God looks at the churches from heaven, down through time, beginning with what John did for the seven churches. These are personal letters to the Churches from Jesus Christ. They went to the seven literal Churches that were in Asia. But they also are prophetic projections of the Church down through time.

Do you think that God would give the prophecies of all these nations and everything going on down through time and never once mention about *His* Church? Here's where He mentions it. Now one person asked me: If there's one body, why are there seven churches? It's still one body, but there are seven churches because there are seven different things that happen within a Christian's life. There are seven eras that take place down through time. Also at the end, should there not be seven more churches, as God views it?

Don't look at a business corporation of an organization and it's called a church, as being one of the seven churches, because that's not how God looks at it. He looks at *every place* where His people are. And you can find every single one of these evident down through the history of the Church and in the contemporary history of the Church today. We'll summarize some of these things.

The Church at Ephesus:

Let's look at what happened to them. Let's see what Jesus said. We're going to look at the problems they had. They had their good points: they tested all doctrine; they tested the apostles—those who said they were apostles, but were not and found them liars. But here is something that they lost. What damages the standing of being a *spiritual virgin* before God? *Same thing in physical life—right? Not defiled with women!*

Here's what their problem was, Revelation 2:4: “Nevertheless, I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.” What is the first love? Not your excitement right after you're baptized. That's not your first love. *The first love is loving God with all your heart and mind and soul and being!* What happened to them? *They lost that!* They got all involved in physical activities and they sinned.

What does He tell them to do? Verse 5: “Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent... [they sinned] ...for if *you do* not, I will come to you quickly; and I will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent.” We can say those in Ephesus became less than virgins.

The Church at Smyrna:

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... [Immovable, did not waiver. What were they 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 sin! They did not lose their spiritual virginity.

Church at Pergamos:

Whoa, big time sins—right? *Yes!*. Doctrine of the Nicolaitans. They patterned the church hierarchy after the Nicolaitans with a rigid hierarchy. We've covered a lot of that with church government. There were those who taught them to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit spiritual fornication (v 14). Stop and think for a minute. What happens:

- when a Church of God begins to give up on the Sabbath?
- when a Church of God ignores the instructions of God concerning its structure and the ministry?
- when the Church of God goes to Satan's system and inculcates that into their church behavior?

Have they committed spiritual fornication, defiled with the religions of this world that are called women? *Yes, indeed!*

Church at Thyatira:

The church at Thyatira really helped zero in on it, v 20: “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.” Did they lose their spiritual virginity? *Yes, indeed.*

What we're doing, we're looking at God's Church down through history and asking: Which ones are the virgins? *and* Which ones are not? Ultimately, God has to make the decision, because He knows the heart. We're not trying to judge anyone, we're just trying to figure out who are those that did not defile themselves with women. God knows. He doesn't tell us who.

Look at what happened here, v 21: “And I gave her time to repent of her fornication, but she did not repent. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into Great Tribulation, unless they repent of their works. And I will kill her children with death...” (vs 21-23). Isn't that interesting? You need to think on that statement for a bit. If you kill someone, are they dead? Can you kill someone and not be dead? What is this

telling us? There are some who committed the unpardonable sin, because kill them with death. "...and all the churches shall know that I am He Who searches *the* reins and hearts; and I will give to each of you according to your works" (v 23).

Church of Sardis:

They're so dead that it's almost like a corpse with pulse. God told them to repent, too (Rev. 3:3).

Church of Philadelphia:

What do we find here? Well, we find some interesting things—don't we? Revelation 3:10: "Because you have kept the word of My patience, 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 10-11).

Why were they commended? *Because they kept the Word of God!* 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, and have kept My Word... [always obeyed God] ...and have not denied My name." The way people deny the name of God is to do things that God says not to do in His name.

Let's read the reward that He says they're going to get, v 12: "The one who overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God... [Rev. 14.] ...and he shall not go out any more; and I will write upon him the name of My God... [What did it say? They had the name of the Father on their foreheads.] ...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 one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (vs 12-13).

The Church at Laodicea:

They became lukewarm, got all involved in the world, all wrapped up in riches and wealth. And so they had to repent (v 19).

Out of the seven churches, you have two that are not told to repent *because they remained faithful*. Didn't mean that they didn't have sins that they needed to repent of in their lives, but it meant that they did not go out and defile their relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ by becoming involved in the religions of this world.

I'm going to take a few more minutes, but I'm going to ring the bell first [speculation]: This we don't know for sure. Let's come back to Revelation 19:7: "'Let us be glad and shout with joy; and let us give glory to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.' And it

was granted to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, pure and bright; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. And he said to me, 'Write: Blessed *are* those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb'... [I want you to notice a very clear distinction. He doesn't say, 'Blessed are those who are called to be the bride.'] ...**Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb**'" (vs 7-9).

Everyone who is converted, are they all going to be the bride of Christ? *We don't know!* There has to be a difference between the 144,000 of Rev. 7 and Rev. 14. We saw the description that was different. Those of Revelation 14^[transcriber's correction] were those out of the twelve tribes of Israel. We know that. Here it says that these are those who were redeemed from the earth. That's a whole different story—isn't it?

Who is Christ going to marry? *A virgin*—correct? Does this mean that the 144,000 of Revelation 14^[transcribers correction] are those who are the actual bride of Christ? We have to put it in God's judgment what He's going to do. Why does it specify that these are virgins? Why did it not specify that the 144,000 of Rev. 7 were virgins? It didn't do it—did it? *No!* What does it mean to be a spiritual virgin before God? *It means that from the time that you were called and baptized and received the Holy Spirit of God that you were always faithful, regardless of what happened!*

Where do we find out of the seven churches that to be the case? *Smyrna and Philadelphia!* God knows our hearts and minds and attitudes, and so He is the only One to make this judgment. We can only view this and say that this may be the case.

I'll take a few more minutes, and let's come back here to Matthew 22. This occurred to me quite a few years ago when I did a wedding, and it was a beautiful wedding, it was a tremendous wedding. Everyone was inspired; I was inspired; it was quite a thing, and then they had a big wedding feast.

The parents of the bride and groom invited everyone who attended the wedding, since they were guests, to come over and 'we'll all have a meal and a dance together.' I'm sitting there watching this go on and the idea came into my head. This is just a thinking study. We don't know for sure, so we're not trying to judge anyone and say, 'You belong to this group and you belong to that group and you belong to the other group, so therefore, we're more righteous than you and therefore, you're going to have to go through great trouble because we are better than you.' Uh huh, did you just disqualify yourself if you do that? Doesn't that remind you a little bit about the workers who came on first? *Yes!*

Now Matthew 22:2: “The Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a man who *was* a king, who made a wedding feast for his son.... [God the Father and Christ. We can agree to that?] ...And sent his servants to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast... [These are guests—right? *Yes*, they’re not part of the marriage ceremony—are they? *No!*] ...but they refused to come. Afterwards he sent out other servants, saying... [the same thing; everything is ready] ...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...” (vs 2-5).

Verse 6: “And the rest, after seizing his servants, insulted and killed *them*. Now, when the king heard *it*, he became angry; and he sent his armies *and* destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.... [Is that a parable speaking of Jerusalem? *Yes, indeed!*] ...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’” (vs 6-9). *Doesn’t say to be a bride.*

Verse 10: “And after going out into the highways, those servants brought together everyone that they found, both good and evil; and the wedding feast was filled with guests.” Here’s where the parable breaks down, because no one is going to be resurrected unless they have repented of their sins and unless that God resurrects them. But here He’s telling us a story of the difference between the guests and the bride and groom.

Verse 11: “And when the king came in to see the guests, *he* noticed a man there who was not dressed in *proper* attire for *the* wedding feast... [What is the proper attire? *The linen, bright and clean!*] ...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).

Could it be that not all the Church is going to be the bride? We have indications of it here—don’t we? We have indications of it in Rev. 14. Could it be that the 144,000 of the earth, God has selected down through time, because from the point of their being baptized and receiving the Holy Spirit they were:

- faithful to God
- loving God
- not losing their first love
- not becoming dead

- not becoming involved in other religions and try and amalgamate the religions of the world with the Truth of God

Could it be that down through time God has specially selected those 144,000, and He has made the choice and we don’t know who they are? We’re not going to stand up and pull up our lapel and say, ‘Oh, that’s got to be us.’ *NO! God is the One Who’s going to make the decision.*

But I don’t think it’s possible that the whole Church down through all time is going to be the bride of Christ. If that’s so, where are the guests? And if that is so, why does it say, ‘Blessed are those who are called to the wedding supper of the Lamb and the bride’? Does that not tell us there is a difference? *Yes, it does!*

How it will all work out, I know you may have questions, but they’re probably going to be questions that we can’t answer.

Scriptural References:

- 1) John 1:1
- 2) 2-John 12
- 3) Revelation 7:1-5, 9-17
- 4) Matthew 20:1-7, 9-16
- 5) Revelation 14:1-5, 4
- 6) Revelation 2:4-5, 9-10, 20-23
- 7) Revelation 3:10-11, 8, 12-13
- 8) Revelation 19:7-9
- 9) Matthew 22:2-14

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Ephesians 1:13
- Zechariah 12
- Revelation 20, 21
- Matthew 25
- Luke 19
- Revelation 17; 2:14; 3:3, 19

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