***Redemption

RV181-01***

Our subject is "The Victorious Lamb." This is segment number six in Revelation 14:1-5.

**Atheists are Fools**

I watched a portion of the Phil Donahue Show this week. He was interviewing the atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair; her atheist son; and, her adopted granddaughter. The O'Hairs sat there on this public national television program viewed by millions of people, and proclaimed confidently, and without any indication of doubt, that there is no God. Their conversations, as I listened to the program, showed the truth of how God classifies all atheists. He calls them fools.

**Fools in the Bible**

Please turn to Psalm 14:1. Psalm 14:1 is one of those passages in which God expresses His divine viewpoint opinion of those who say He doesn't exist: "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" In the Hebrew Old Testament, there are three basic words for "fool." Here we have one of them. It is the word "nabal." "Nabal" is the kind of a fool who lacks spiritual perception. The word actually means "stupid" in spiritual matters. So, what this word describes is a fool who is an ignorant intellectual, one with a high IQ who arrives at that conclusions which are ignorant. "The fool has said in his heart." That's up in the head (the mind). "The fool has concluded with his mind, 'There is no God.'"

These three atheists have made that conclusion on the Donahue program. An atheist is separated from an understanding of God's real world, and how it works. The atheist is devoid of all divine viewpoint wisdom which is revealed in Scripture. The spiritual fool also, consequently, because there is no God, lives a correct life. For the rest of Psalm 14:1 says, "They are corrupt. They have committed abominable deeds. There is no one who does good." That last part is quoted by the apostle Paul in Romans to describe the characteristics of the human race. The human race who, if not saying outright, "There is no God," acts as if there is no God. So, they are de facto atheists, and they also end up in the same place that they do not do what is good. They live corrupt lives. They violate the moral laws of God. They have no fear of God because there is no accountability, because there's no one to account to.

Consequently, the "nabal" is a person who is stupid intellectually in terms of reality. He is vile in his conduct. He does abominable things which God hates, and he simply does not do anything that is divine good works.

Now turn to Proverbs 1:7. Here you have another word for "fool" that is used in the Old Testament? Psalm 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despised wisdom and instruction." This word for food looks like this in the Hebrew Bible. It's the word "eviyl." "Eviyl" is a fool who is arrogant and coarse and hard. He has a quality of self-confidence about spiritual things. He has thought them through. And in his arrogant contempt for the concept of the existence of God, He also rejects the true wisdom of God's revelation in the Bible. So, without God's moral principles and Scripture to guide him, the "eviyl" fool degenerates into a coarse animal-like conduct. This word for "fool" is a word that God uses to describe a really low-life type of person.

**Fools in Society**

Our society is full of fools like this, who live abominable lives, who are morally abominable. They are prominent in society; they're in athletics; they're in business; and, they're in government. They are upheld in certain circles as inspirational role models. But when you turn around and you look at it from God's perspective, divine viewpoint says, "This isn't an "eviyl." This is a fool who is a course, base type of character. This person has no fear of God. He does not respect God. Therefore, he can't even begin to have any smarts because it is this respect for God that is the beginning of real knowledge. Fools have no capacity. This kind of fool (an "eviyl" fool) has no capacity for learning anything about God. He despises wisdom and instruction. When you try to tell him something about God, he thumbs his nose at you, and you get the back of his hand, because you're a stupid person who believes crazy things.

There's a third word for "fool" which is found in Proverbs 1:32: "For the waywardness of the naive shall kill them, and the complacency of fools shall destroy them. Here's the third Hebrew word for "fool." This one looks like this in the Hebrew Bible. It's the word "kecil." "Kecil" is a word that denotes somebody who's got a dull, closed mind. Therefore, it is a person who rejects all Bible information, and he is viewed as being complacently ignorant. Do you see what the verse says – Proverbs 1::32? "The complacency a fools shall destroy them: "My mind is made up, so don't bother me with facts. This is the kind of person that is a "kecil" fool.

This person is also referred to in Proverbs 15:14, where we read, "The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on folly." Those who are really smart in our society feed upon doctrine. Those who are empty-headed fools have dull minds, and they are closed to the truth. They eat of folly instead. This is strong language. Nobody could stand up and talk like this without creating resentment. But I'm giving you the actual words from the Hebrew Bible that God himself uttered, so you know that this is God thinking. This is what God has to say.

The "kecil" fool is a thick-headed and stubborn character. This is the kind of person that we described as a silly fool. We use that term: "This is a silly old fool." This is a person who is stubborn; who is blinded; and, who will not be changed. I saw all three of these qualities of the fool demonstrated on the Donahue program. There was total lack of spiritual perception. There was an arrogance that was unbelievable. There was a closed-mind attitude to anything that God had to say, and that the Word of God brought into the subject.

The reason that these people think like the south end of a donkey going north is explained to us in Romans 1:21-22. This will help us to understand why the 144,000 witnesses who stand triumphantly with Jesus at the end of the tribulation are such splendid men, and who know the score. They are men who are in the know. In Romans 1:21-22, we have the explanation for what makes the O'Hair tick: "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, nor give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish hearts or minds were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools."

Madalyn O'Hair and her daughter Robin were quite vociferous and quite emotional about their beliefs, and their indignation against fundamentalist Christians who try to shove God down the throat of the nation, and who try to force the country to operate on their superstition of the existence of a God. The Word of God says that this is because their minds were darkened. And their minds were darkened because they reject all knowledge of God that is to be found in Scripture. They profess themselves to be wise, intelligent people, but they have become is fools.

Atheists are fools, God says because they do not honor God for who He is, and for what He has done for sinful humanity. Atheists are ignorant of spiritual truths because they reject the Bible as a source of God's word. Thus, atheists are totally blind to spiritual realities, and consequently, they are ignorant intellectuals in their beliefs about God, sin, heaven, and hell.

While Madeline O'Hair and her two grown children confidently declared the nonexistence of God, Phil Donahue, the Roman Catholic, was a little more reticent. He said that he didn't feel that he could go quite to the certainty with which they spoke because he just didn't know. So, he said that he was an agnostic. This comes from the Greek word "gnosis," which means "to know." The "A" in the Greek tells you not to know. It's a negative. So, he calls himself an agnostic – the Greek word for one who is not sure whether there is a God or not. And Donahue said, "I just can't say there's no God. I'm just not sure." Incidentally, the Latin name for "agnostic" is "ignoramus." Most agnostics prefer their Greek name when you address them. He prefers to be known as Mr. Agnostic Donahue rather than Mr. Ignoramus Donahue. However, the Latin is considerably clearer in the status in which he stands.

He's uncertain about the existence of God. He just doesn't know whether God is there or not, for the simple reason that he does not accept the Bible as the authoritative revelation of God. Proverbs 1:22 says, "How long, O naive ones, will you love simplicity, and scoffers delight themselves in scoffing, and fools hate knowledge? Because Donahue hates the knowledge of the Bible, he has become a fool. Along with the O'Hairs.

Donahue has written a book. It's called The Naked Ape. It's a book about man. His concept of man as a naked ape relates man to the animal level of the world, rather than to a creature who's been made in the image of God, in direct contrast to all the animals. The Bible makes it very clear. If Donahue took the Bible seriously, he could never call us naked apes. The ignorance about God on that Donahue program was enormous: in the host; in the guests; and, even in the audience. The fools were there by the truckload. They were all a bunch of spiritually blind, arrogant fools in their human viewpoint delusions about God. It was awesome to stand there, and realize what awaits those people in their destiny on the other side, when they come into God's presence, and suddenly they discover that He really is there.

One could tell by listening to their to their objections and criticisms of Christians, that none of these people understood the love of God as being governed by the holiness of God – God's absolute righteousness and perfect justice. They have the attitude: "Oh, if there was a God out there, why are children born with defects? People are blind. If there was a God out there, why would there be all these homeless people in the streets?" That line of reasoning is just a bunch of bilge. That is a line of reasoning that indeed represents a fool. That is the mentality of a fool.

What they don't understand is that this God of love is trying to resolve all the aches and pains and suffering that man brought upon himself when he interjected sin into the human race. But they don't understand that God must be true to His own integrity. He cannot violate His absolute righteousness. He cannot violate his perfect justice. He loves the lost sinner, and He saves him by grace. And He carries that believing sinner through the sufferings of this world which is contaminated by sin and ruled by Satan. He takes that person right into heaven, and transforms him into the perfect image of Christ.

But on the other hand, God must punish, with death and eternal judgment in hell, those who violate His moral laws, and who choose to reject His Savior Jesus Christ, who died to cover their moral guilt. It is important for you young people not to be bowled over by those who pretend to be great intellectuals and highly educated people who have a contempt for the things that the Bible reveals as wisdom. It is so easy for you to sit in a class where you have a teacher who is now an authority, and who is educated and experienced, and who has contempt for the Word of God.

Let me give you a few verses so that you will have God's thinking toward these people for your response. Don't be intimidated. Don't be frightened. Don't back off. Stand your ground. I'm telling you, you are right, and they are wrong; as in Noah's day, he was right, and the rest of the world was wrong.

1 Corinthians 1:19-21: "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise (people of this world). And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside. Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For sense, in the wisdom of God, the world, through its wisdom, did not come to know God. God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." All the intellectualizing of the Donahue and the O'Hairs is not going to take them into heaven. God was pleased to take people into heaven on the message of the gospel which those people sit there and call foolishness.

Take a look at 1 Corinthians 3:18-20: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become foolish, that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world (that's human viewpoint, folks) is foolishness before God. For it is written, 'He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness." (And again) the Lord knows the reasonings of the wise that they are useless." When a famed professor like Carl Sagan will stand up and look you in the eye on public television, and tell you that, "In the beginning was the cosmos, and the cosmos has evolved, and there never was anything but the cosmos," he is declaring his atheism, and he is revealing that he is a fool, and he is portraying the foolishness that God speaks of.

Proverbs 12:15 says, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel."

Proverbs 14:16: "A wise man is cautious, and turns away from evil, but a fool is arrogant and careless." Do you think that you can relate that to the AIDS epidemic? He thinks that he can't be hurt.

Proverbs 28:26: "He who trusts his own heart is a fool, but he who walks wisely will be delivered." He who trusts his own heart" means "he who trusts his own human viewpoint reasoning is a fool, but the one who walks wisely is the one who operates on biblical concepts."

Proverbs 26:4-5: "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. Answer a fool as his folly deserves, lest he be wise in his own eyes.

Proverbs 26:11 is the one I love. Here is the epitome of the concept of the fool from God's point of view: "Like a dog that returns to its vomit is a fool who repeats his folly." Have you ever seen a dog throw up, and then check out to see if there was something good that he missed the first time, so he eats it again? The dog returns to his own regurgitation. A fool who comes up with this regurgitation of his mental human viewpoint, and then he eats it, and digests it, and smiles at how sweet it is, when God says, "You're a silly old fool." And God's perspective is right, and man's is wrong. The fool returns to his disgusting ways and thinks that he is acting wisely.

God has revealed Himself and his laws through nature, through Scripture and through the Lord Jesus Christ, so the fool is without excuse. The O-Hairs and the Donahues of our day will regret what they have said, and the influence that they've had on millions of people, because they are fools. Had you been there to listen to it, you would not have been deceived, because your minds are oriented to God's thinking. But all those folks out there who are oriented to Satan thinking just ate it up. All the dogs went back to the mental regurgitation of the O'Hairs and Donahues, and they just loved it.

When it came to the 144,000 Jewish witnesses that we read of in Revelation 14:1, they definitely are men who are not fools. They fear God; they respect Him; and, they have subjected themselves to Him. Therefore, we are told that they obeyed God laws for human sexuality. They practiced sex within marriage. They are occupied, furthermore, with Christ, so they follow Him in happy obedience. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They will execute their calling in the tribulation to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God, with their eyes on the Lord, and not on themselves. They will put their mission first for God in the tribulation. People who take the Word of God seriously, and believers get their eyes off themselves and on the Lord, are going to take their mission seriously. And it gets put first on the refrigerator door. It gets marked first off on the calendar for the day's activities that are to come.

**Redemption**

The next part of Revelation 14:4 says, "These have been purchased from among men." These noble 144,000 men are that because God has purchased them from among men.

**Paid For**

The word "purchase" looks like this in the Greek Bible: "agorazo." "Agorazo" means "to buy in the marketplace." The picture we have here in the Word of God, and elsewhere, is that the unsaved person is viewed as being pinned inside of a slave market of sin. Ephesians 2:2 gives us that concept: "In which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." You were enslaved to Satan. You were in his slave market. You were, therefore, under the authority of Satan.

This is indicated to us in Romans 7:14: "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold into bondage to sin." You were in bondage to Satan, and thus in bondage to the sin nature.

Furthermore, you were, therefore, under the sentence of eternal death. Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This verse in Revelation 14 tells us that Jesus Christ purchased the freedom of the 144,000 on the cross to liberate them from Satan's slave market of sin. This word, "agorazo," is in the aorist tense. It refers to the point in time when Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty of death for the sins of mankind.

In Revelation 5:9, we read, "And they sang a new song (a song of praise to Jesus Christ), saying, 'You are worthy to take the book, and to break its seals, for You were slain, and did purchase for God, with Your blood, men from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.'" These people were praising Jesus Christ for that point in time when He died for them. This is in the passive voice, which tells us that they did not purchase themselves. Someone had to do it for them, and that was the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who are so purchased from the slavery of sin, by the sacrifice on the cross of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God, should now use their bodies in a moral way which glorifies God. That is the principle that the apostle Paul stresses in 1 Corinthians 6:20, where he says, "For you have been bought with a price (the price of the death of Christ on the cross). Therefore, glorify God in your bodies."

1 Corinthians 7:23: "You were bought with a price. Do not become slaves of men." It is a sorry sight to see a Christian who has been freed from the enslavement to the sin nature, and from Satan, to go back and to live like a child of Satan again. This is a very precious word: "agorazo" – to be purchased out of the slave market of sin.

When I was a student at Dallas Seminary, I used to work for the school as a carpenter. And we had a black student who worked with us. As we would be nailing things together, he would rhythmically chant as the hammer: "Agorazo, agorazo, agorazo." This guy was euphoric that God had taken him from his background, and brought him out of the slave market of sin. He knew what this Greek word really meant.

**To Buy out of the Marketplace**

However, it does not tell us all the story. There are two other words which are used in New Testament for "redemption," which is what we're talking about. To be born out of the slave market of sin is to be redeemed from that enslavement. There is another word that adds to what God has done in this redemption, and what He has done for these 144,000 witnesses, which is the basis for their devotion to the Lord. That is the Greek word "exagorazo." It is the same as the other word, except that it adds this preposition "ex."

This word is used, for example, in Galatians 3:13: "Christ 'exagorazo' (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. This word means not only "to redeem," but "to buy out of the marketplace." The price is paid, and your new master takes you by the hand, and you walk out of that marketplace. It stresses the fact that the redemption of Jesus Christ removes you permanently as a slave of the sin nature. This believer can never again then be enslaved by Satan. He can never again be returned to that marketplace. He cannot lose his salvation, and be stuck back in. The sons of God can never again be enslaved to Satan.

Now, a Christian may on occasion choose to be carnal, and to act in evil ways, which in effect, in practical experience, does enslave him to Satan. But when he confesses, he's right back out. Satan has no permanent claim. "Exagorazo" is a magnificent word that adds to the simple "agorazo" – being bought out.

**To Set Free**

However, there's a third word that has to do with redemption that gives us another picture, and that is the Greek word "lutroo." "Lutroo" means "to set free." It's one thing for somebody to walk into the marketplace and lay down the money to redeem you. It is another thing for that person to take you and to lead you outside the perimeter, through the gate, out of the marketplace. It is something else now for him to hand you a certificate and say, "You're free. You're no longer slave. You don't belong to me. You are free. Your volition is now totally your own. You may do with your life as you choose."

This word is to be found in Titus 2:14: "Who gave Himself for us (Jesus) that He might redeem ('lutroo,' this time) us from every lawless deed, and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good deeds." This stresses the fact that you as believers are set free from having to be a slave of sin. You don't have to be a dirty, low-down cuss anymore. You can now live as a member of the royal family of God. You can now rise to your aristocratic position. You're no longer common dirt.

A lot of Christians never learn that because of the simple fact that they don't have preachers who give them the understanding of what it means to have liberty in Christ under grace. This word "lutroo" tells us that God has redeemed us, and He has redeemed us to make us free, so that we would purify ourselves. The Christian is a free man who now can choose to enslave himself to his new master, Jesus Christ. The Christian may foolishly choose to enslave himself again to Satan. That's the carnal Christian, but what a pity that is.

What is real freedom for a human being? Real freedom for a human being is when he is born again spiritually, and he is filled with the Spirit in temporal fellowship. He then has God directing his life, and he walks in righteousness so that the result is total joy and happiness. It is not necessarily smooth-sailing, but it is happiness. That's real freedom.

The mechanics of this three stages of redemption: to be paid for; to be taken out of the market; and, to be given your certificate of personal freedom – that's what redemption is all about.

**The Mechanics of Redemption**

The mechanics of that is to be found in 1 Peter 1:18-19. Here's how it's done: "Knowing that you are not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers." Tell that to the Roman Catholic Church. Tell that to the TV evangelists. You didn't buy your salvation through a human agency or through a religious agency. But how was this executed? With the precious blood: "As with a Lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ." As in the tradition of the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament, where the animal had to be perfect and unblemished, because it represented the sinless Christ.

So, the pleasant effects of our redemption are that our sins have been forgiven, and we have been declared absolutely righteous in God's sight. Our sins have been forgiven, and we have had absolute righteousness imputed to us. That's our present condition. Ephesians 1:7: "In Him we have redemption through His blood; the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace." The future of our redemption is the resurrection of the body brought back to life, totally free of sin, never to die again.

Romans 8:23: "Not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit; even we ourselves grown within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." All of us know what it is to grown with physical pain. All of us know what it is to groan with those ailments. All of us know what it is sometimes to find ourselves up to the line of a physical problem where only God can come in and save you. But He says, "The time is going to come, because I have redeemed you, that you are going to have that body brought to life, and it's going to be transformed into total perfection." You won't believe what God is getting ready to do for you. But if you believe the Word of God, if somebody has explained it to you, at least have a chance to know.

**The Firstfruits**

The last part of Revelation 14:4 says that this purchase, this redemption of these 144,000 men, was: "The firstfruits to God and to the Lamb." These men were the firstfruits from among men. This is the Greek word "anthropos," which is the general word for "humanity." The 144,000, early on in the tribulation period are among the first that God brings to salvation from the mass of lost humanity. They, like all the rest of us, don't move toward our God. They don't take one step toward God until He reaches up and picks off the blinders on the spiritual eyes, and they see who Jesus Christ really is; they see their desperate need for absolute righteousness; and, they believe. Early on in the tribulation, these 144,000 elect of God are called into salvation out of the lost mass of humanity. When they are called, they now belong to God the Father and to Jesus Christ as His redeemed ones, and they are declared to be the firstfruits of the resurrection. They are a sample of the firstfruits of what is coming of the resurrection of God.

**The Feast of Firstfruits**

For you to understand the concept of firstfruits, this refers to one of the feasts and sacrifices that was practiced under the Mosaic Law. It's a very fascinating one. You'll find it in Leviticus 23:9-11. ... The feast of the firstfruits was given to the Jewish people as a portrayal of the resurrection of Jesus Christ: "Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, 'Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you enter the land which I am going to give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.''"

A Jewish farmer could not touch his field, when it came to harvest time, until he had done this. He could not take anything from that field. This was the law of God. He had to walk up to that field; take his scythe; cut through a sheaf of the grain; tie it together; and, then go to the priest with it. To do what verse?

Leviticus 23:11: "He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord for you to be accepted. On the day after the Sabbath, the priest shall wave it." The day after the Sabbath was on a Sunday. Isn't that interesting? What this sheaf of grain represented was the firstfruits of the field. It was the first that was to come from a larger group, and it was a sample of what was to come. Christ is the first human being to be raised permanently from the dead with a glorified body. And this firstfruits ceremony portrayed Christ as our firstfruits, because what happened to Him is a sample of what is going to happen to millions of people out in the field of believers who will follow Him, and when they are raised, they will be like Him. He was the sample of humanity such as we shall be. He was just the first of millions who were to follow after Him.

This is a beautiful picture. I think that this is a beautiful concept to present at a funeral, when people wonder what has happened, and are saddened at a low point in their life, to realize that the loved one has gone on, but he is part of the firstfruits. He is going to be in the tradition of the firstfruits of Christ, and he will be raised again.

Well, the priest would take that sheaf of grain on that Sunday morning, and he would wave it before God at the brazen altar. This represented Jesus Christ as the firstfruits, which is what 1 Corinthians 15:23 refers to when it says, "But each to be raised in his own order. Christ, the firstfruits; after that, those who are Christ's at His coming." He is the first man to be raised permanently. He is the firstfruits. The rest of us are going to come and have the same experience, and end up with the same kind of body that He had. That is our destiny.

So, the sheath represented a greater harvest to follow of the same kind. Many believers would follow Jesus Christ in His resurrection.

So, these men that we look at with such admiration have been called to redemption by God. But they're only the beginning. They're the first fruits of all the rest of us who will share in that. That's the meaning behind the word firstfruits – going back to that Old Testament ceremony representing the resurrection of Christ; and, what happened to Him will happen to us. That's why we say we know we can go to heaven because there's already a man up there.

**Honest**

Then verse 5 says something very amazing: These men did not lie. They were not "pseudo." That is the word for falsehoods – telling a lie: "No lie was found in their mouths." Nothing else was discovered when they spoke. These 144,000 witnesses of God speak the truth as they speak to tribulation society. They are leaders. They are religious leaders, but they are not common in the tradition of so many religious leaders today who are playing upon the emotions, and the greed, and the credulity of people. The men who maintain sexual integrity are also, by nature, honest in what they say. The sexually impure live a lie. Therefore, they very easily speak a lie. These men have fear of God, and for that reason, they do not bear false witness.

In Ephesians 4:25, the apostle Paul said, "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you with his neighbor. For we are members one of another." This is the principle at the Word of God imposes upon us. The fact is that after sexual purity, truthfulness is the most important mark of a believer. After all is said and done, if you want to identify Christians, and if you want to look at them the way the world looks at us, after sexual integrity, the most important mark of a believer is that you tell the truth. This certainly reflects what was true of the character of our Lord Jesus Christ. In 1 Peter 2:22, we read, "Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth" (speaking about the Lord).

**Blameless**

These men, furthermore, who tell the truth, are said to be blameless. That is the Greek word "amomos." You have to understand that word so that you don't go astray. The Greek "amomos" does not mean sinless. This word means that they maintained their temporal fellowship with God. This means that they act on 1 John 1:9, and when they do evil, they admit it. They fear God, so they live by His moral code and His direction. And when they don't, they confess their sins. They take experiential sanctification seriously.

The antichrist will proclaim the lies of Satan in the tribulation. He will claim deity, and the false prophet will back him up. Countering that will be the truthful message of 144,000 who will contradict this claim of the antichrist, and they were proclaim the truth of God (Romans 1:25).

The book of Zephaniah probably speaks referring to these 144,000, looking forward to these men as speaking with their integrity. Zephaniah 3:13 looks forward and says, "The remnant of Israel (probably referring to these 144,000, because of the context at that point in time) will do no wrong and tell no lies, nor will a deceitful tongue can be found in their mouths, for they shall feed and lie down with no one to make them tremble." The 144,000 are immortal. The antichrist can't kill them. He can't touch them. When they lie down, they can sit down to a supper meal, and they're not frightened. And when they lie down to sleep, they're not afraid all night. They're going to wake up in good form. They're under the canopy of God's protection, but they make no bones about telling the truth about what's going on in that world. This will be the only source of true knowledge to people living in that day – what these men in their integrity say.

So, they're a marvelous body of men in a vile, immoral, and deceitful society. They will not compromise with false defilement; they will not compromise with false doctrine, and they will not defile their personal purity. They are wholly obedient to doctrine, and they're an example of true, stout-hearted men like their Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah 53:9 speaks of our Lord Jesus as: "A stout-heart whose grave was assigned with wicked men. Yet he was with rich men in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth." He was buried in a rich man's tomb.

**Truthfulness**

The divine law of truthfulness, and it is a divine law, was first presented in Exodus 20:16 as part of the Ten Commandments. That forbad telling a falsehood. It forbids telling a falsehood about someone. It includes telling the truth in a court of law as one who speaks before God, who punishes liars.

An article recently in the paper spoke about Madalyn O'Hair's daughter Robin having won a court suit – a reversal of what a county judge had done in South Texas in putting her in prison and keeping her in jail for about six hours, because she was in a court of law, and refused to take an oath to tell the truth: "So help her God." The oath must be based on some authority greater than sinful humanity. Otherwise, we don't know that you are seriously telling us the truth.

In Galatians 1:20, the apostle Paul, in proclaiming the doctrines of grace salvation says, "I tell you before God that I am telling you the truth." Paul is swearing to us on the basis of the presence of God, who listens in, that he is not lying. Perjury based on an oath before God is a very serious offense, and it was condemned in Leviticus 19:12. It undermines all justice.

This word of not telling the truth also implies not slandering people with falsehoods in daily life. This same principle is enunciated for us as Christians in the New Testament. We don't have to get our "Don't lie" principal from the Ten Commandments. In Ephesians 4:25, Paul says, "Therefore, laying aside, speak truth, each of you, to his neighbor. For we are members one of another."

**Lying**

Colossians 3:9 adds to this: "Do not lie to one another since you laid aside the old self (the sin nature) with its evil practices." Christians are one body in Christ, so in effect, telling a lie is lying to yourself. Lying hurts the family of God, and we are to avoid it. Telling a lie is part of the lifestyle of one who is under the domination of the old sin nature.

In Proverbs 6:16-17, we have seven things that God hates above all else, and lying is included – of the things that God hates most for people to do.

Proverbs 10:18 summarizes it very effectively because it says, "A liar is a fool."

Psalm 101:5 soberly tells us that God destroys liars. The old expression says, "Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we choose to deceive." Indeed it is a tangled web. God destroys, both now and in eternity, those who lie. It is so easy to do, and so hard to avoid. It is something that a Christian has to stay on top of. When you do, you'll be in the tradition of the finest believers that the world has ever seen or will see, such as in the 144,000. People of integrity is what the people of God should be.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1993

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