

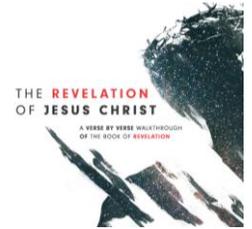
Title: Revelation, Part 22: The “Y’s” of Life

Speaker: Charles Stone

Passage: Rev. 14

Big Idea: Four Principles should Guide the ‘Little-y’s’ of Life.

Memory verse of the month: Rev 15:4 Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you for your righteous acts have been revealed.



In 2020 before covid hit with all the shutdowns, Sherryl and I went to Tobermory, which is a peninsula in northern Ontario and a tourist destination. It’s just beautiful there and probably most of you have been there. It was a great little get away.

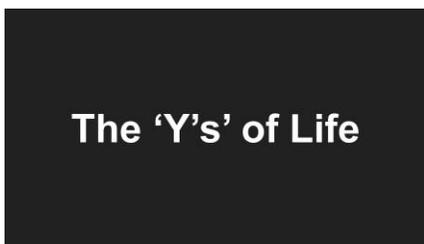
We decided to take one of the boats to Flowerpot Island. When we arrived at the island it was misting a bit that day but we decided to take hike the trails. The small boat harbor is at the trail heads. Everybody takes this trail with is designated as an easy trail. You end up at the lightkeepers cottage and the light station. To go back, you come to a fork in the trail, you either walk back the way you came (the easy trail) or you take this trail designated a difficult trail.

You have to choose one or the other.

We were in an adventurous mood and thought, it couldn’t be that difficult, so we took the difficult trail. Remember that was was misting that day and quite slippery. They should have said, this trail is only for ages 15-25 if you are in peak shape, a marathon runner and have a Peloton bike in your home. It had huge boulders, inclines like this, and a gazillion roots perfectly placed to make you trip. But obviously we made it and were proud that we actually did it.



Life is like that. We all come to forks in the road of life decisions that require going this way or that way. Some forks we choose have little consequence (do we each at Mandarin buffet or Heart sushi buffet).



Some carry great consequences like who will I marry.

Some carry eternal consequences, who will be my God.

I’ve titled my message today, [The ‘Y’s’ of Life](#), referring to choices we must make in this life, like we choose which trail to take. And the big Y of life, the ultimate choice is, will I follow Jesus or not follow him.

As we continue in Revelation today, John describes this ultimate Y in life, the consequences of those choices that play out in the end times and into eternity, and some principles that can guide us in daily life, what I call little-y’s of life.



So, here’s today’s big idea. [Four Principles should Guide the ‘Little-y’s’ of Life](#).

Thus far in our study of Revelation we’ve learned that it is a book meant to encourage Christians as things get more upside down in the world. The tides will turn against us as we get closer to the end times. Revelation also previews what the end times will be like before Jesus’ second coming.

We don't know the dates of Jesus' return, but Revelation gives us an idea of the kinds of things that will occur more and more toward the end. Yet, we shouldn't get discouraged because God is in control, he sustains us in hard times, and we know how things will come out. Jesus wins.

John, who wrote the book, had been given these visions about what the future holds and he wrote them down as the book of Revelation. He uses his favorite number, 7, often when is the number for completeness.

We've seen groups of sevens:

- 7 cities in what is now W Turkey that the book was originally written to,
- 7 seals that sealed this scroll that when Jesus broke each seal a portion of the scroll it was read which revealed more about the end times.
- Then John records visions of 7 angels with trumpets. When an angel sounded a trumpet, it revealed more detail about these difficulties to come on earth. The 7 seals, the 7 trumpets and
- another 7 coming up, 7 bowls, are like looking at something similar from different angles. These various sevens give different perspectives of some of the same events in the end times.
- Today is a bit of an interlude before we learn about this last group of 7, these 7 bowls.

Rev 14

Let's let this bible project animation set up the chapter. <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/revelation-12-22/>
(4.08-5)

I'm not going to cover every word for time's sake, but I will cover the high points.

Rev. 14:1 Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion,

This is a flash forward to Jesus' stance in His ultimate victory, the perfect lamb was slain for our sins. Jesus defeated death and will rule forever. Mt. Zion represents the strength and security and deliverance that belong to God's people and also to the center of God's eternal Kingdom.

and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.

I've explained this previously. What is the meaning for us? This seal in Revelation is not some physical marking on a human forehead but is spiritually symbolic of what a physical seal represents...authenticity, authority, ownership, protection, and the privileges that go with having such a seal.

The Scripture tells us that God spiritually seals his followers as His by giving us his Holy Spirit. And in this context of Revelation and the difficulties that will come, this reference to a seal pictures God's promise to spiritually protect believers during the last days.

I believe this 144,000 refers to the complete church, all the believers who will be in heaven because 144,000 is 12x12 which indicated completeness. So, this number symbolized the sealing of all true followers of Jesus rather than a literal number who will be in heaven as Jehovah's witnesses teach.

² ... a sound from heaven

He hears rushing waters, and thunder, and harp sounds evoking both God's power and strength and the calm he brings us.

³ And they sang a new song

In heaven there will be great singing and worship to the Lord. This newness refers to the new life that Jesus brings that those who have experienced this new life can now sing about because they have been made new, been redeemed.

I'm going to jump to v 6 and come back to vss 4-5 later.

6 Then I saw another angel ...

This angel announces to the whole world that there is still hope and time to repent. People still have time to fear God, give him the respect due him by repentance and faith.

One of the signs that the end has come is that the whole world, all nations and races and languages and people will have an opportunity to have heard the gospel

Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

8 A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, ...

This angel announces what will happen to those who reject Christ.

Babylon symbolically represents the anti-Christian worldview, governments, and religious systems that all will absolutely and ultimately collapse and fall. These world systems have led people astray by their immorality, idolatry, and rebellion.

He also may be referring to the downfall of Rome that persecuted the Christians.

Unfortunately, many are and will be so preoccupied with other things that they don't heed these warnings. Then another angel appears in this vision to further explain the judgement against those who reject God.

9 A third angel...If anyone worships the beast...He will be tormented ... for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name."

He says the reason some will experience God's eternal judgement is because they worship the beast, that is, they have accepted the anti-Christian world's view of things and rejected God as a result. Their destination will be a real place the bible calls hell.

He says that there will be no rest for those in hell but rest for those in heaven. Hell is pictured here as a place of no rest, the horrible smell of sulfur, desolation, a place of eternal torment. Hell is most definitely not the most desired topic to discuss around coffee. But one scholar said this about what the great apologist CS Lewis said about hell.

C. S. Lewis acknowledges that hell is a detestable doctrine that he would willingly remove from Christianity if it were in his power. But, as he goes on to point out, the question is not whether it is detestable but whether it is true. We must recognize that the reality of hell has the full support of Scripture and of our Lord's own teaching. Indeed, it has always been held by Christians and has the support of reason.

Hell is a sobering reality.

12 This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.

This is the last of seven times "patient endurance" occurs in Revelation. So, it's pretty important. Why? Because we need to be reminded that our troubles are only temporary. If we keep our eyes on Him in these turbulent times, we will remain faithful to Jesus.

He next interjects an important thought for us to remember about death. Another topic not very popular around coffee is the subject of death.

13 Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

Labor here means to labor to the point of weariness and even pain. It means diligent and difficult work here on earth. And after this life, we are promised heaven. Heaven is not a place where we won't work and do stuff but it will be a

place where will work joyously but with no pain, whether physical or emotional or relational. It will be joyful, restful work serving and worshipping Jesus. He's implying a special kind of blessing upon those who die for their faith.

What does *their deeds follow them* mean? A few weeks ago we talked about rewards and that our works done here on earth, while they don't gain salvation, do show our love for God and will result in God's rewards. Our deeds will follow us in that we will receive great rewards in heaven for our good deeds done on earth.

Next we see more angels in the vision.



One was seated on a cloud and had a sickle in his hand. Sickles are used to harvest produce like grain and fruit.

A second angel appears and tells the first to harvest the grain.

A third appears foretelling the final judgment and harvests.

The grain harvest represents Jesus calling his followers to Himself. And the grape harvest represents those who have rejected God and will spend eternity apart from him. The wine grapes represent humanity's intoxication with evil.



In the last verse of this chapter the devastation in the end times is so great that there will literally be a bloodbath of humanity due to its evil.

I want to give a visual that captures the core of this passage and how we can apply it. It's based on the title and I call it the Big Y, a fork in the road that represents an ultimate choice everybody makes that has eternal implications.

Here is the Big Y.

Every person decides if they will or won't follow Jesus. It is the ultimate most important choice a person must make, me as god of my life or Jesus as God of my life. Joshua, the great OT hero said this.

Joshua 24 ¹⁵ But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

Above this line represents eternity and below this line represents life on earth.



John pictures the eternal result of whom we choose to lead our lives and follow with two images, grain and grapes. Two angels were pictured with a sickle and gathering two different kinds of produce.



The **grain** refers to those who have taken this path, chosen Jesus, which will lead to an eternal destination in heaven, **eternal joy**, an eternity with God with perfect joy, meaningful relationships with others in heaven, with Jesus forever, and devoid of all pain, suffering, and disappointment.

The **grapes**, however, refer to those who have taken this path, rejecting Jesus which leads to an eternal destination in hell, a destination of **eternal judgment** devoid of God, relationship, love, happiness, an eternity of regret of what might have been.

I said I'm come back to a couple of verses because here we find these principles.

⁴ These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves **pure**. They **follow** the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as **firstfruits** to God and the Lamb. ⁵ **No lie** was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

This passage also shows us 4 principles that should guide the **little y's of life** what you do between now and eternity. At the end of each of these principles I have added, "to the very end" because v13 said **Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on**.

To die in the Lord means that you are faithful to the very end.

Four principles should guide the little Y's of life.

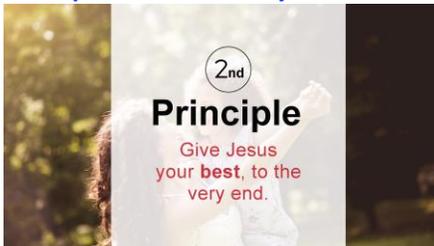
Principle 1: Follow the Lamb, to the very end.



In verse 4 he records the simple statement: *They follow the Lamb*. For some believers, following the Lamb to the end means martyrdom. This phrase is probably the simplest definition of a Christian, one who follows the Lamb, Jesus. At the core of our hearts should be this simple response when someone asks us what's most important in our life, it should be, "I follow Jesus."

These next three give some specifics to following the Lamb.

Principle 2: Give Jesus your best, to the very end.



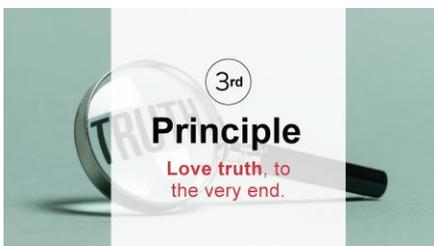
He uses the word first fruits. This is not a common idea or word in our culture but it was in theirs. In the OT times, when farmers would harvest their crops, the first part went to the temple for the costs to run the temple and income for the priests and Levites to live on since they did not have land to grow crops for income. That world was primarily an agriculturally based economy. The priests and Levites needed to focus on temple work.

Firstfruits indicated that the entire crop was fully dedicated to God and firstfruits was the first and best of their crops. Firstfruits of the crop was considered holy. It was dedicated to God and not to be used for ordinary secular uses.

That's probably a good practice for how we should do our giving and tithing, that we give to God the first of our income which reminds us that everything else is really His as well. This reminds us that Jesus should get our best, not our leftovers.

On a different level, in the universal Church believers are seen as a kind of firstfruits. They belong to God and because of that they should live blameless, truth filled and truth directed lives, which brings us to the next two principles.

Principle 3: Love truth, to the very end.



In verse v5 he wrote that, *No lie was found in their mouths, they are blameless*.

This is a common teaching in Scripture, blameless living, not perfect, but with a disposition toward holy and blameless living.

The Psalmist said, 'Happy are those in whose spirit there is no deceit' (blameless) (Psalm 32:2).

Isaiah prophesied about Jesus that 'there was no deceit in his mouth' (Isaiah 53:9).

Zephaniah said of God's people: 'Nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths' (Zephaniah 3:13).

Peter applied these OT ideas to Jesus: 'no deceit was found in his mouth' (1 Peter 2:22)¹

In other words our love for and commitment to God's truth should drive our behavior, so that even our speech portrays a blameless, truth loving life. We don't lie. We don't tell white lies. We don't fudge the truth. We don't fabricate stuff to make us look better. Our speech is wholesome. We don't use our words to hurt others. And of course we love God's word. Paul reinforces this in this verse.

Ephesians 1:4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Principle 4: Live a non-compromising life, to the very end.



John wrote about sexually pure lives in v 4 and purity is an important component of a non-compromising life. A non-compromising life certainly include what we do with our bodies, but it goes beyond that. The faithful follower of Jesus will not become intimate with the world's systems, buying in to it.

From memory, see if you can fill in these blanks

4 Principles

- 1 Follow the Lamb.
- 2 Give Jesus your best.
- 3 Love truth.
- 4 Live a non-compromising life.

I have a little assignment. Rank these four in life in the order of strength, which is your strongest and which is your weakest. Whatever your weakest is, take 15 minutes this week to pray about it and create a mini-action plan, 1-2 things you could do to strengthen area.

Remember our trail experience on Flowerpot island. Well, taking the difficult trail wasn't easy, it was hard. But at the end, the satisfaction was great. We did it.

When you follow the Lamb, give Jesus your best, love truth, and live a non-compromising life, it won't be easy. But the satisfaction in your heart that you did the right thing and the payoff waiting for us in heaven, is matchless.



¹ Barclay, W. (2004). *Revelation of John* (Vol. 2, pp. 122–123). Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press.