

Love Community Baptist Church

Wednesday Night Virtual Bible Study

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Revelation – Chapter 14

CHAPTER 14

IMAGES OF GOD'S VICTORY AND THE BEAST'S DEFEAT

The fate of the 144,000.

(Revelation 14:1-3) The Lamb and the 144,000 on Mount Zion.

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

These 144,000 were last seen in Revelation 7, where they were identified as a group of Jewish believers who minister during the great tribulation and are given a seal of protection throughout that period. Since they stand on Mount Zion with the Lamb, it shows that they emerge victorious from the great tribulation. The beast of Revelation 13 certainly has not defeated the 144,000; here they are triumphant, worshipping, and standing firm with Jesus.

- Revelation 14 will answer two important questions raised by Revelation 13. The beast of Revelation 13 was terrifying and awesome; he even can make war against the saints and overcome them (Revelation 13:7). So it is fair to ask, "Is the beast completely victorious over all God's people?" The presence of the 144,000 on Mount Zion with the Lamb emphatically says "no." The second question has to do with this Satanic dictator himself: "What happens to the beast and his followers?" The rest of Revelation 14 will answer that question.
- In Revelation 7, the 144,000 are seen at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. In Revelation 14, it shows them in triumph at the end of the Great Tribulation.

They gathered on Mount Zion because Zion — the ancient name for the hills that make up Jerusalem — is the place where the Messiah gathers His redeemed and reigns over the earth (Psalm 48, Isaiah 24:23, Joel 2:32, Obadiah 17 and 21, Micah 4:1, 4:7).

- The 144,000 are like the young Jewish men who survived the fiery furnace in Daniel 3:19-25. They prove God's ability to preserve His people.

Having His Father's name written on their foreheads: The followers of Satan and the beast may have a mark on their hand or forehead (Revelation 13:16-17). But this mark is just a copy of the idea behind the identifying mark on the foreheads of each one of the 144,000, showing that they belong to the Father.

The voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder: This is the voice of God (Revelation 1:15 and 4:5). Perhaps God spoke here to proclaim His approval of these 144,000 faithful servants in the spirit of Matthew 25:21: Well done, good and faithful servant.

And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps: We remember that the elders of Revelation 5:8 have harps. Perhaps this is where their music is heard, to accompany the worshipful singing of the 144,000 as they sing a new song, unique to them.

And they sang as it were a new song before the throne: In Revelation 14:1, the 144,000 have their feet firmly planted on an earthly Mount Zion. Yet their praise takes them right to the presence of God, right before the throne. In our praise and worship, we really can transport ourselves and be heard in heavenly places.

(Revelation 14:4-5) The description of the 144,000.

These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Many take the virginity of the 144,000 as simply a symbol of their general purity (as in 2 Corinthians 11:2). Nevertheless, Paul recommended celibacy in distressing times (1 Corinthians 7:25-35), and Jesus spoke of woes upon those with children and families in that day (Matthew 24:19-21). It isn't hard to see that God would call these 144,000 to a literal celibacy for the kingdom's sake during the great tribulation.

- Commonly the term virgins is applied to women, not men. So does the use of virgins here mean that all the 144,000 are women? Not at all, according to the great Greek scholar A.T. Roberston: "Parthenos can be applied to men as well as women."

These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes: These 144,000 are of Jewish heritage (Revelation 7:4-8). Yet they are also clearly believers in Jesus, otherwise they would not stand with the Lamb, follow the Lamb wherever He goes, and could not be without fault before the throne of God.

- Each of the vast multitude saved during the Tribulation will be saved in exactly the same manner as anyone today: by grace, through a personal faith in Jesus Christ unto salvation. Even though the rapture of the church ends God's dealings with the church as such on the earth, it certainly does not change the way people come to salvation or become part of the larger family of God, which includes all the redeemed, before and after the church.
- Because they are described as firstfruits, many have thought that they themselves will be instrumental in God's plan for bringing in a great ingathering during the tribulation. Revelation 7:9 describes an innumerable company saved out of the Great Tribulation, and these 144,000 described as firstfruits, may be used to preach the gospel to those who will be saved in this period.

Proclamations from heaven.

(Revelation 14:6-7) An angel preaches the gospel.

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth — to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people — saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth: This other angel preaches the gospel, but also announces judgment (the hour of His judgment has come). Because the judgment of God is so evident on the earth in great tribulation, it is no wonder why the crowd of those saved through the great tribulation can't be numbered (Revelation 7:9-14).

The word gospel refers to the good news that Jesus Christ suffered death on the cross to obtain salvation for mankind and that He rose to life again, was exalted to the right hand of God in heaven, and awaits His return in majesty to consummate God's kingdom. The fact that this message is "everlasting" is significant.

The vision in Revelation 14 in which the angel proclaims the everlasting gospel is a prediction of something that will happen in the tribulation. Before the seven final judgments—the seven bowls of Revelation 15–16—God will give all of mankind one last opportunity to turn from their sin and trust in Christ to receive His gift of eternal life. The angel broadcasts the everlasting gospel to the whole earth, "to every nation, tribe, language and people" (Revelation 14:6). No one is left out. The angel calls out in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (verse 7). After proclaiming the everlasting gospel through an angel, God will finish His work of judgment upon a sinful world.

This is what the angel will tell the whole world to do. They can do this and give glory to God and worship Him willingly in this life, or be compelled to give glory to Him later.

- It is certain that one day all will give glory to God. Philippians 2:9-11 says, Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God.

To every nation, tribe, tongue, and people: This can be a valid fulfillment of Jesus' promise in Matthew 24:14 that the gospel would be preached to all the world before His second coming. But this can never be a valid excuse for neglecting the urgency of missions. God has not given the responsibility for spreading the Gospel to angels, but unto His people.

- However, this is the only place in the New Testament where we see angels preaching the Gospel. In God's sublime wisdom, He has chosen to give that responsibility to people alone, apart from the rarest of exceptions.

(Revelation 14:8) An angel announces Babylon's fall.

And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

More on Babylon will come in Revelation 17. For now, it is enough to see it representing mankind in organized rebellion against God.

Because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication: When we are told that Babylon has led all nations into fornication, the main idea is spiritual fornication — the worship of other gods. However, we are never surprised to see spiritual fornication accompanied with literal immorality.

(Revelation 14:9-11) A third angel warns of coming judgment.

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand: This reminds us that there is a connection between worshipping the beast and his image and receiving his

mark on his forehead or on his hand. No one will casually or accidentally take the mark. The connection between worshipping the beast and taking the mark will be clear enough.

- Although, receiving the mark may seem innocent enough to those who dwell on the earth. In their eyes it may not seem like much more than a mere pledge of allegiance and devotion to the Antichrist and his government. It was the same way in the first few centuries of Christianity, when to burn a pinch of incense to an image of Caesar, and to pledge "Caesar is Lord" was regarded as an innocent act of civic duty to the ancient pagans.

He himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation: Those who worship the Antichrist will be forced to drink the wine of the wrath of God. This cup of God's wrath is like undiluted wine, mixed with spices to make it still stronger (full strength).

- The idea that God holds a cup of wrath, which He makes those under judgment drink is expressed more than thirteen times in the Bible (Psalm 75:8 and Jeremiah 25:15 are examples). This is the idea behind the cup that Jesus wanted to avoid if it were possible (Matthew 26:39). Jesus willingly took the cup of the Father's wrath that we deserved; here, the enemies of Jesus have no choice — the cup is forced upon them.

The wine of the wrath of God... the cup of His indignation: The wine in the cup is associated with wrath (the ancient Greek word thymos), which describes a passionate anger. The cup itself is associated with indignation (the ancient Greek word orge) which is anger from a settled disposition.

- The ancient Greek word orge is the common word for God's anger in the New Testament. The ancient word thymos is used only 11 times, and 10 of the 11 are in Revelation. Usually, God's anger towards sinners does not flash against them; it is simply His settled opposition against sin and unrighteousness. But in the Book of Revelation, which so clearly describes God's ultimate judgment, the term for passionate anger is used much more often.

He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night: This passage teaches several important truths about hell and the eternal destiny of the damned.

- In the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb: This shows that God is not absent from hell. He is present in all His holiness and righteous judgment. Those who are in hell will wish God were absent, but He will not be. It is wrong to say that hell will be devoid of the presence of God; but it will be without any sense of His love. The presence of Jesus will be there, but only the presence of His holy justice and wrath against sin.
- The smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night: Those who worship the Antichrist and receive his mark will endure this wrath and indignation for eternity in hell. Here, the fact of eternal torment is plainly stated; forever and ever means "forever and ever." If the only consequences for sin are in this life, or if the only penalty for sin is temporary, then clever sinners have won out over God. Walvoord says of the phrase forever and ever: "Literally 'into the ages of ages,' the strongest expression of eternity of which the Greek is capable."

(Revelation 14:12-13) The blessedness of the saints, even in the Great Tribulation.

Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

We see the strong contrast between the rest of the saints and the continual torment of the wicked (Revelation 14:11). The rest comes through patient endurance and faithfulness to God and His Word (here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus).

- We can only imagine what courage and comfort this passage will give embattled, persecuted saints during the Great Tribulation. Clearly, God wants to encourage His people to be steadfast in times of trial, focused on what blessed rest and reward awaits them in eternity.
- Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord: "These are the only glorious dead... they die in the cause of God, they die under the smile and approbation of God, and they die to live and reign with God for ever and ever." (Clarke)

Their works follow them: The patient endurance and work of these saints is remembered in heaven. Our work for Jesus and His Kingdom goes with us into heaven, giving dignity and significance to all work here below.

We do not believe the "saints" with the patience or perseverance in the tribulation are the church. Earlier in the book of Revelation, John describes the activities of the churches, and it is notable that they are part of the "things which are" (Revelation 1:19, KJV), and they are described and exhorted specifically in chapters 2—3. In Revelation 4:1, John opens by saying, "After these things," and the church is not mentioned again until we see them returning with Christ in Revelation 19:14. This is consistent with the idea that the event often referred to as the rapture will take place before the beginning of the Day of the Lord (see John 14:2–3; 1 Corinthians 15:50–52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17; 2 Thessalonians 2:2–3).

With the church era complete before Revelation 4:1, and the Day of the Lord described after that, it is evident that the saints commended for their patience in Revelation 14:12 are saved during the tribulation. During that period of time, people who believe in Jesus will have a very difficult time. The world will be governed by the Antichrist, who will demand worship and severely persecute anyone who believes in Jesus (Revelation 13). Perhaps because of the extreme difficulty, there is a special blessing promised to those who believe in Jesus during that time, and they will receive rest from their labors when they die (Revelation 14:13). It seems that this is what John refers to as the patience, steadfastness, or perseverance of the saints (Revelation 14:12). The faith of these tribulation-era believers in Jesus Christ will cost them dearly while they are on the earth, and their end will most likely be martyrdom.

The earth's harvest.

(Revelation 14:14-16) Time for Jesus to bring in the harvest.

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

Some find it difficult to see Jesus as the One gathering the harvest here. They have a hard time with Jesus responding to another angel who came out of the temple. But it is unlikely that anyone called the Son of Man, and wearing a golden crown is anyone but Jesus.

- Having on His head a golden crown: "How different it will be to see him with a crown of gold upon his head from what it was to see him wearing that terrible crown of thorns which the cruel soldiers plaited, and thrust upon his brow! The word used here does not usually refer to the diadem of power, but to the crown won in conflict; and it is very remarkable that it should be said that, when Christ comes to judge the world, he will wear the garland of victory, the crown which he has won in the great battle which he has fought. How significant of his final triumph will that crown of gold be about those brows that were once covered with bloody sweat when he was fighting the battle for our salvation!" (Spurgeon)

For the harvest of the earth is ripe: This ancient Greek word for ripe has a negative sense, "to become dry or withered." The idea is of something that is over-ripe. This means that God will judge the earth only when it is over-ripe for judgment. He doesn't rush into judgment.

(Revelation 14:17-20) The winepress of God.

Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

Another angel who came out from the altar, who had power over fire: "These allusions seem to indicate that the angel is acting in response to the prayers of the saints for divine judgment on wickedness."
(Walvoord)

The great winepress of the wrath of God: This vivid picture of judgment was the inspiration for The Battle Hymn of the Republic.

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,
He is trampling out the vineyard where the grapes of wrath are stored,
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword,
His truth is marching on!

Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe: The image of the Second Coming of Jesus as a harvest is also communicated in Matthew 13:24-30 and 13:36-43, with the parable of the wheat and the tares. The implication is that true believers will not be separated from those who merely go to church until the final harvest.

Fully ripe "pictures grapes fully grown in the prime almost bursting with juice..." The spurting of the grape juice from under the bare feet of those treading the grapes in the winepress is compared to the spurting of blood and speaks of the awful human carnage." (Walvoord)

Blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs: This probably describes blood splattering up to the horses' bridles, a picture of tremendous carnage in the battle of Armageddon described in Revelation 16:16 and 19:11-19. It is not likely a description of a river of blood running the length of the Promised Land and as high as a horse's bridle is. This would be an almost incomprehensible river of blood.

- In ancient times, a battle area extending one thousand six hundred furlongs (approximately 200 miles) was beyond all known conflict — but not in modern warfare. "The area covered, 1,600 furlongs, is approximately 200 miles, and specifies that the area within a 200-mile radius from Jerusalem will be gathered at the time of the second coming of Christ." (Walvoord)

But this vivid, powerful description shows how complete the judgment of God is. Revelation 14 is the perfect answer to Revelation 13. At the end of Revelation 13, it almost seemed like Satan and the Antichrist might win. But Revelation 14 shows who is really triumphant, powerful, and in control: God, His Messiah, and His people; not Satan, his messiah (the Antichrist) and his followers.