

## Revelation 14

This chapter has three distinct visions, each one beginning with “I looked” or “I saw” (verses 1, 6, 14). In the first vision (verses 1–5) the writer sees the redeemed with the Lamb on Mount Zion. This is a vision of the End and does not report any action leading to the End.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.

The Lamb stands in contrast to the two beasts of chapter 13. The Lamb is none other than Christ. John refers to Christ as the Lamb in Chapter 1.

Note he is standing on Mount Zion. This sight is awe inspiring to John as is indicated by the opening phrase: “I looked and lo.” (behold). As MacArthur points out: “This passage describes the return of Christ to the earthly Mount Zion. The whole point would be lost if Mount Zion refers to heaven.” (Rev. 12-22, p.71)

144,000 are undoubtedly the one’s mentioned in Chapter 7, verses 3-8. These are the Jewish evangelists who preach the gospel of Jesus Christ during the tribulation. Note that they have the Father;s name written in their foreheads. Obviously this stands in stark contrast to the “Mark of the Beast.” **Remember a mark signifies ownership.**

<sup>2</sup>And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

There appears to be two distinct voices identified here but details are not given as to the identity of each. Note John “heard a voice from heaven” and then he “heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.”

The first voice is likely that of God, while the second group is possibly the voices of the martyred saints. – KJV Bible Commentary. (Nelson Electronic Library)

<sup>3</sup>And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

The song they sang could only be known by the 144,000.

<sup>4</sup>These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being* the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

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<sup>1</sup> Bratcher, Robert G., and Howard Hatton. *A Handbook on the Revelation to John*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1993. Print. UBS Handbook Series.

Note the unwavering commitment to Christ. “They were not defiled by women; for they are virgins.”

What does this mean? Is John implying that marriage is wrong? Is he alluding to promiscuous behavior which these witnesses avoided? One needs to examine the next phrase of the verse to find clarification. “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” Although the word virgin is an exact translation of the Greek the context is speaking **about fidelity to Christ**. These witnesses were faithful. They did not yield to the temptation of taking the easy road. They remained loyal to Christ to the very end.

“The firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.”

These will be the “first fruits of the coming kingdom.” Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

<sup>6</sup>And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, <sup>7</sup>Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

### **Angel One**

“The everlasting gospel”

This angel carried Good News to the inhabitants of the earth. Those who have continually rejected God and refused to acknowledge and honor him are called upon to give glory to him and to Fear him. Judgment is about to be unleashed, still God is calling to humanity, just as he did Israel and Judah before disaster came.

<sup>8</sup>And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

### **Angel Two**

“Babylon is fallen”

Who is John referring to? Rome? A resurrected Rome in the end time? A world system that embraces anti-Christian attitudes?

The answer varies depending upon which interpretive perspective you adhere to.

“She made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” *Made all nations drink*: the causative form of the verb “to drink” does not mean that Babylon necessarily forced the nations to drink her wine, but that she gave it to them, shared it with them.<sup>2</sup>

“R. C. H. Lenski (*The Interpretation of St. John’s Revelation*, p. 432), after designating the first beast of chapter 13 as “antichristian power” and the second beast as “antichristian propaganda,” feels that “All those who do this constitute Babylon, *the antichristian world city or empire*, which is named ‘Babylon the Great’ after the Old Testament Babylon ... the great enemy of Israel, Jerusalem, Zion.” He elucidates further by way of summary (p. 434): ***“The preterists regard Babylon as a reference to pagan Rome alone; the historical interpreters as a reference to papal Rome; the futurists as a reference to the capital of the antichrist who is yet to come, either Rome or Jerusalem. Babylon ... is the entire antichristian empire throughout the whole New Testament Era.”***<sup>3</sup>

Much debate and argument is involved in attempting to answer this question. I think that Scott has some good insights. ““But what is before us now is the mystic Babylon, that huge system of spiritual adultery and corruption which holds sway over the whole prophetic scene. It is scarcely possible to conceive of a huge system of wickedness eagerly embraced by the nations once called Christian. It will nevertheless be so. Babylon here is the full development of the state of things under the Thyatiran condition of the Church (chap. 2:18–23)” (op. cit., p. 299).<sup>4</sup>

Babylon will be dealt with in Chapters 17-18 more extensively.

<sup>9</sup>And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

### Angel Three

The judgment pronounced upon those who receive the “Mark of the Beast” and worship it. These are not separate events rather to accept the mark is an act of allegiance, even if taken out of a sense of desperation.

<sup>10</sup>The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone

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<sup>2</sup> Bratcher, Robert G., and Howard Hatton. *A Handbook on the Revelation to John*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1993. Print. UBS Handbook Series.

<sup>3</sup>Jerry Falwell, executive editor; Edward E. Hinson and Michael Kroll Woodrow, general editors, *KJV Bible commentary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1994.

<sup>4</sup>Jerry Falwell, executive editor; Edward E. Hinson and Michael Kroll Woodrow, general editors, *KJV Bible commentary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1994.

in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: <sup>11</sup>And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

### **The Nature of their Judgment**

- Tormented with fire and brimstone.
- In the presence of the holy angels
- In the presence of the Lamb.
- Forever and ever. (Thus the idea of annihilation is unfounded.)
- Eternal Restlessness. (Cf. Luke 16:23-ff).

“The wrath of God” = The fury of God.

“Without mixture”= God’s fury will be experienced in its fullness; there will be no diluting or watering it down. There will be no plea bargains.

“Torment”= torture, suffering. Such a gruesome portrayal of what hell is going to be like nullifies the idea of those who proclaim that they are going to party. The torturous experience will be unending—“forever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night.”

<sup>12</sup>Here is the patience of the saints: here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

John once again reminds believers that they will need to trust in God.

<sup>13</sup>And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

Death is seldom desired. In most circumstances death is dreaded and avoided as long as is possible, but during this time, death may offer welcome relief from physical, mental and emotional suffering. “That they may rest from their labors.”

### **Judgment of the earth (Scene 1) Vv. 14-16**

This vision is also of the End, not of events preceding the End. God’s final judgment of humanity is in places portrayed as a harvest (Joel 3:13; Matt 13:30, 39–43).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>14</sup>And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

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<sup>5</sup> Bratcher, Robert G., and Howard Hatton. *A Handbook on the Revelation to John*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1993. Print. UBS Handbook Series.

Who can this be and what does the image of a sharp sickle portray? See Daniel 7:13.

“A golden crown.” Speaks of Christ’s royal right to judge.

“A sharp sickle” is nothing less than an image of judgment. Just as a sharp sickle was used to cut wheat, so the sickle here represents the sharp and piercing judgment that is to come

<sup>15</sup>And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. <sup>16</sup>And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

**“The harvest of the earth is ripe.”**

The earth is ripe for judgment. “Another angel” is different from the other three already mentioned. Since only God knows the time, the Messiah is instructed to put forth the sickle of judgment. No longer will the hand of mercy stay justice. Humanity has had countless opportunities to repent and turn to God, instead they continued in their defiant rebellion. Some have suggested that since there are two sickles mentioned in this text that one refers to God gathering his people and the other to God’s judgment upon sinful man. The text does not support this idea. It is clear that the entire text is concerned with God’s judgment upon sinful humanity.

### **Judgment of the earth. (Scene 2) Vv. 17-20**

**“The vine of the earth.”**

<sup>17</sup>And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. <sup>18</sup>And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

The command to thrust in the sickle and gather the clusters is an image of the gathering to judgment.

This is the background for the famous “Battle Hymn of the Republic”.

“Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord....where the grapes of wrath are stored...”

<sup>19</sup>And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

“And cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.” This is in reference to the last war on earth. Often we hear the phrase: “Battle of Armageddon” but as the Greek language would indicate it will be an all out war. *Polemos (Grk) = war*.

<sup>20</sup>And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs.

“Without the city.” This is in reference to Jerusalem. The blood came out of the winepress in this war and it will be approximately four (4) feet deep and will run for approximately 200 miles in length.

“Armageddon is not an isolated battle, but part of a larger picture of encounters in different parts of the land. The name of the war is called Armageddon, because the terrain there is better suited for warfare than anywhere else in the land. However, the climax of the War of Armageddon is at Jerusalem (cf. Zech 14:1–5, 12–15) with the visible appearing of the Lord Jesus.” <sup>6</sup>

Respectfully,

Dr. Bill R. Scott, pastor  
Columbia Baptist Church  
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<sup>6</sup>Jerry Falwell, executive editor; Edward E. Hinson and Michael Kroll Woodrow, general editors, *KJV Bible commentary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1994.