

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 20TH, 2019 // BOOK OF REVELATION

Revelation 14 is a symbolic vision that pictures the return of Christ as a harvest of grain (for believers) and a harvest of grapes (for unbelievers).

STANDING ON MT. ZION (14:1-3)

Chapter 13 showed the force of Satan via his 2 "beasts" and had the appearance that he had an upper hand, chapter 14 shows the power of God.

- The call to "the saints" was for "endurance and faith" (13:10)
- As bleak as chapter 13 is, chapter 14 pulls back the curtain to reveal the winning team and the justice and wrath of God.

John looks and sees the lamb on "Mount Zion" with the 144,000 "who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads".

- Mt. Zion is an actual hill in Jerusalem just outside of the walls of the old city, but Mt. Zion was also used in Heb. 12:22 to stand for the dwelling place of God (heaven).

Symbolically: A place of deliverance and victory **Literally:** The new Jerusalem coming to earth.

The 144,000: the hard to interpret group from chapter 7 appears again

- This could be the same group as chapter 7 (the remnant of Jewish evangelists promised to survive, or the protected Christians)
- Some think this is a separate group that were killed during the 7 years of tribulation
- Whoever this group is, here they stand in a glorified state with Jesus on Mt. Zion.

144,000 is a "round" number that is symbolic and not precise, but metaphorical for completion

- John hears this group standing with Jesus offering up a song of praise that he describes in very vivid detail and symbolic language.
- Like "the roar of many waters." (remember John was on an island)
- Like "loud thunder" -just like 6:1 and 19:6, this is the mighty praise of God's redeemed!

Like "harpists playing" reminds us that music is powerful and that music reinforces victory (imagine billions of musicians playing!)

- They sang a new song that "no one else could learn" (vs. 3)
- A special blessing that God will give this group is a song that the Lamb will teach them with which they can worship Him as no others ever can!
- Our personal testimony of redemption is unique.

"IT IS THESE WHO FOLLOW THE LAMB, WHEREVER HE GOES..." (14:4-5)

Verse 4 presents an interesting problem- it says that the 144,000 have not "defiled themselves with women", designating them as male.

- But it also says that they are "virgins" (parthenoi), which in every other NT usage can only refer to a woman who is sexually pure.
- Secondly, sex is never described as a "defiling" practice in the Bible, so them not being "defiled" by sexual relations doesn't quite make sense.

Most likely, John is using the language of sexual relations figuratively.

- Throughout all of the OT, Israel following other gods was described as adultery and sexual impurity (Hosea 1-3).
- Paul also uses the same kind of language of Christians as "virgins" for Christ in 2 Cor. 11:2, and further along in Revelation 17-18 the great enemy of God's people is a "prostitute".

Although they are described as "blameless virgins", they're also said to be "redeemed" (vs.4), which means they have been bought back or freed from slavery.

- The text doesn't mean that these people had never sinned or were perfect in life, but that because of God's grace through their faith in Christ the slain lamb, **they are viewed as His perfect, blameless, undefiled, pure virgins!** (Gal. 3:27)

MESSENGERS (14:6-13)

Angels delivering messages is nothing new in Revelation, but here God gets more direct.

- Three angels deliver three different messages warning about God's coming judgment.
- God goes to great lengths to get our attention so that we'll repent and turn to Him!
- Scripture says that humanity is "without excuse" (Rom. 2:1).

THE FIRST ANGEL (V6-7)

Proclaims an "eternal gospel"-this is more of a warning and proclamation that the time of judgment is near.

- At the time of judgment, everyone will acknowledge God, either willingly or by force.
- This is humanity's last chance to repent and turn to God willingly before He returns in judgment.

THE SECOND ANGEL (V8)

Continues the same proclamation of nearing judgment and mentions "Babylon the Great City" from chapter 11 (more on that in chap. 17-18)

- We see imagery contrasting the virgins in v4 with nations and people drunk on adulteries and sexual immorality, which brings God's wrath.
- There will be judgment for sin- God does not turn a blind eye to what He defines as sin.

THE THIRD ANGEL (VS. 9)

This angle pronounces eternal doom if to anyone who receives the mark of the beast

- They "drink from the wine of God's wrath" which means God's anger at full strength (wine was often diluted then), but this is "unmixed".
- Hell is real, and here we see a glimpse of how terrifying it will be ("fire, sulfur", "in the presence of the holy angels ...and the Lamb")

Hell is a place of eternal unrest (v11)- Imagine never getting to rest or sleep!

- John's warning in v12 essentially saying, "don't let this happen to you!" and encourages believers to continue to endure.
- Notice the contrast to the followers of God-we will have rest and peace for eternity
- v13 could be specific to martyrs, but really applies to all people who follow Christ.

THE HARVEST (14:14-16)

John sees a vision of two separate harvests- with the 1st as a harvest of grain.

- The grain harvest symbolizes the end judgment with special emphasis on the gathering of God's people to salvation.
- In the Gospels, Jesus had often symbolized His return using the language of a grain harvest (Parable of the Weeds, Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43), so this imagery is nothing new.

John sees a white cloud and someone "like a son of man" with a crown and a sharp sickle.

- A messenger angel delivers the command from God the Father to "put in your sickle and reap, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe".
- That the harvest is "ripe" represents the full number of people who are to be in heaven that have responded to the gospel.
- John sees Jesus swing the sickle and reap the earth.

Harvesting meant cutting the grain, gathering it into bundles, and putting the sheaves in a place of safekeeping.

- What seems to be described in this passage is a worldwide, instantaneous event in which believers in Jesus Christ are caught up in the air("harvested") and brought into the presence of God for eternity.
- This is what is referred to as the "rapture".

THE WINEPRESS (14:17-20)

The 2nd harvest John sees is a grape harvest that symbolizes the judgment of the wicked into eternal condemnation.

- The imagery of God's wrath being like a winepress is taken from several OT passages (Isaiah 63:3, Joel 3:13)
- In the 1st century, after grapes were harvested they'd be thrown into a vat a bit larger than a bathtub.

The grapes were then trampled by foot, and a hole in the vat led to a lower, smaller basin where the juice drained to be collected for fermentation.

- Grape harvests were typically 3 months after grain harvests, so we know that this judgment is sometime after believers have left the earth.
- v19 sets up the 7 bowls that will be God's wrath poured out on all people with the mark.

v20 is probably giving the setting the final battle of Good vs. Evil (chap. 19).

- John uses the gory, violent imagery of the winepress to symbolize people being trampled under the power of God during the last judgment.
- "Outside the city" may be vineyard imagery, others believe this is Megiddo, outside of the city Jerusalem (more in chapter 19).

John records that "blood flowed from the winepress"- this is an exceptionally violent image for those that had seen grape juice flowing from a vat.

- "As high as a horse's bridle(4 feet high)" and "1,600 stadia" (180 miles)- this river of blood that John sees is the language of vision, hyperbole, and nightmare (although, 180 miles is the approximate distance of modern Israel from north to south!)

HOW DOES IT END? GRAIN OR GRAPES?