

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 2ND–3RD, 2024 // REVELATION

## STANDING ON MT. ZION (REVELATION 14:1–3)

### RECAP:

- Chapters 1–3: **The 7 Churches**; Chapters 4–5: **The Throne Room of God**; Chapter 6: **First 6 Seals**; Chapter 7: **The 144,000 "Sealed" People**; Chapter 8: **The 7th Seal and the First 4 Trumpets**; Chapter 9: **The 5th and 6th Trumpets**; Chapter 10: **The Mighty Angel and Little Scroll**; Chapter 11: **The Two Witnesses and 7th Trumpet**—INTERLUDE OF SYMBOLIC VISIONS— Chapter 12: **The Woman and the Dragon**; Chapter 13: **The 1st Beast (the Antichrist) and 2nd Beast (the False Prophet)**; Chapter 14: **The Great Harvest and Winepress**

Chapter 13 showed the force of Satan via his 2 "beasts." It may seem at first that Satan has the upper hand, but Chapter 14 shows the power and victory of God.

- The call to "the saints" was for "endurance and faithfulness" (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).
- Literally—with Jesus on Earth in the new Jerusalem. Symbolically—in heaven with Jesus.

The 144,000: the mysterious 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 of people who were killed during the 7 years of tribulation.
- Whoever this group is, here they stand in a glorified state with Jesus on Mt. Zion.

John hears this group standing with Jesus offering up a song of praise that he describes in very vivid detail and with symbolic language.

- Like "the sound of cascading waters" (remember John was on an island).
- Like "loud thunder," just like in 6:1 and 19:6, this is the mighty praise of God's redeemed!
- Like "harpists playing" reminds us that music is powerful and reinforces victory.

They sang a new song that no one else could learn (v. 3).

- A special blessing God will give this group is a song that the Lamb will teach them. With this, they can worship Him as no others ever can!
- Our personal testimony of redemption is unique.
- What God wants to hear from us is sincere thanksgiving and praise from the heart for the unique, special redemption He's given to us.

## FOLLOWING THE LAMB (REVELATION 14:4–5)

V. 4 presents an interesting problem. It says the 144,000 have not "defiled themselves with women," designating them as male.

- But it also says 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 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" (v. 4), which means they have been bought back or freed from slavery.

- The text does not mean 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!

## "THE ONES WHO FOLLOW THE LAMB WHEREVER HE GOES..." (V. 4B)

Those marked by God and standing with Jesus as victorious overcomers are those who lived the life of discipleship. They followed Jesus wherever He went.

- Jesus calls all of us to follow Him—to live as He lived and give our lives for His mission.
- We follow Jesus by taking up a cross!

## "FIRSTFRUITS FOR GOD AND THE LAMB..." (V. 4C)

A "firstfruit" refers to the first portion of a harvest dedicated to God.

- If these 144,000 are the same Jewish evangelists we read about in Chapter 7, "firstfruits" could mean that they are the beginning of an even greater harvest of Jewish souls (Romans 11).
- If they are those martyred during the tribulation, they are the "firstfruits" of God's people who will all soon join Jesus in heaven.

## "NO LIE WAS FOUND IN THEIR MOUTHS; THEY ARE BLAMELESS..." (V. 5)

If we've been redeemed and we're following Jesus, seeking to live our lives as He would live our lives if He were us, then we will be truth tellers. We won't speak lies or falsehoods.

- Our lives will also be characterized as "blameless." This doesn't mean we'll be perfect, but we'll fear God and live righteously.

## MESSENGERS (REVELATION 14:6–13)

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

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

## THE FIRST ANGEL (VS. 6–7)

Proclaims an "eternal gospel," a warning and proclamation to all of the earth that the time of judgment is near and they must turn to God and receive Christ.

- 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 (V. 8)

Continues the proclamation of nearing judgment and mentions "Babylon the Great City" from Chapter 11 (more on that in Chs. 17–18).

- We see imagery contrasting the virgins in v. 4 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 toward what He defines as sin.

## THE THIRD ANGEL (VS. 9–12)

This angel pronounces eternal doom to anyone who receives the mark of the beast.

- They'll "drink 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 and sulfur in the sight of the holy angels and...the Lamb").

Hell is a place of eternal unrest (v. 11). Imagine never getting to rest or sleep!

- John's warning in v.12 essentially says, "don't let this happen to you!" and encourages Believers to continue to endure.
- Notice the contrast to the afterlife of God's followers; we will have rest and peace for eternity.
- V. 13 could be specific to martyrs, but really applies to all people who follow Christ.

## THE HARVEST (REVELATION 14:14–20)

John concludes this interlude with two visions: one of a harvest of grain (vs. 14–16) and the other a harvest of grapes (vs. 17–20).

- The actual fulfillment of these visions doesn't occur until Chapters 19–20.
- These visions are meant to show us the reality of how human history comes to a close—God's people are taken to be with Him forever, and the wicked face the judgment of God.

## A HARVEST OF GRAIN (VS. 14–16)

The grain harvest symbolizes the end judgment with special emphasis on the gathering of God's people to salvation.

- In the Gospels, Jesus often symbolized His return using the language of a grain harvest (Parable of the Weeds, Matt. 13:24–43), so this imagery is nothing new.

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

- A messenger angel delivers the command from God the Father to "use your sickle and reap, for the... harvest of the earth is ripe."
- That the harvest is "ripe" represents the full number of people who are to be in heaven who 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.

- This could be a prophetic description of the rapture of the church (mid-tribulation and pre-wrath rapture theory).
- Or this could just be a symbolic depiction of the final judgment at the end of the tribulation, where God will gather His people at the end of time.

## A HARVEST OF GRAPES (VS. 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 were 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 this judgment is sometime after Believers have left the Earth.
- V. 19 sets up the 7 bowls that will be God's wrath poured out on all people with the mark.

V. 20 seems to provide the setting for the final battle of good vs. evil (Ch. 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, but others believe this is Megiddo, outside the city of Jerusalem (more in Chapter 19).

John records that blood flowed out of the winepress. This is an exceptionally violent image for those who have ever seen grape juice flowing from a vat.

- "Up to the horses' bridles" (4 feet high) and for about "180 miles." This river of blood John sees is the language of vision, hyperbole, and nightmare (although, 180 miles is the approximate distance of modern Israel from north to south).

## GOD REDEEMS HIS PEOPLE, PURIFIES HIS PEOPLE, AND CALLS THEM TO FOLLOW JESUS IN A LIFE OF DISCIPLESHIP.

- Christians are not people who have never sinned or done anything wrong, they are people who have been forgiven and redeemed by Jesus (v. 3).
- Jesus forgives, cleanses, and washes us (v. 4).
- The call of Christianity is a call to discipleship! A disciple is someone who follows Jesus, is being changed by Jesus, and is on mission with Jesus (vs. 4–5).

## THE ETHERAL GOSPEL (1 COR. 15:2).

- The gospel is an eternal truth (v. 6).
- It calls us to honor and revere God in every aspect of our life (v. 7).
- It calls us to reject idolatry and the allure of Babylon (v. 8).
- It prepares us for divine accountability (vs. 9–11).
- It enables us to stand firm in our faith, despite hardship and challenges (vs. 12–13).

## A MATTER OF HEAVEN AND HELL (VS. 14–20).

- The message and call of Jesus is an urgent one that requires our full attention and total life commitment if we really believe it.
- The reason we call it "getting saved" when someone becomes a Christian is because that's exactly what happens—someone's eternal destiny changes when they trust Christ.
- Are we living as if this is true?