

REVELATION

Seeing, Knowing and Serving Jesus Christ
Today at the Edge of History

Chapter 14:1-15:4

Text: Revelation 14:1-15:4 - The Lamb's People & The Harvest of the Lord

The Lamb and the 144,000

14 Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. ² And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. ³ And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. 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.



Dürer: The Adoration of the Lamb

The Three Angels

⁶ Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. ⁷ He said 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."

⁸ A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."

⁹ A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, ¹⁰ he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment rises 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." ¹² This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.

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."

The Harvest of the Earth

¹⁴ I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. ¹⁵ Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." ¹⁶ So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

¹⁷ Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. ¹⁸ Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe." ¹⁹ The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. ²⁰ They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.

Seven Angels With Seven Plagues

15 I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God's wrath is completed. ² And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God ³ and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb:

"Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.

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."

Read & Reflect - 14:1-15:4

First Reading/First Impression: If Beethoven had written a 10th Symphony inspired by these Revelation scenes, what might its subtitle have been? The Angelic Symphony The Horrible Symphony The Lamb's Symphony The New Song Symphony The Warning Symphony The Great Decision Symphony other _____

Second Reading/The Main Point:

What do you see as the most important *idea conveyed* in this section or the most important *sentence written* in it?

Search

A. The Lamb, His People and the New Song - 14:1-5

Who is "The Lamb?" How do you know?

How are the Lamb's People identified? (Where are they? What marks them? What do they have? What do they do? Where do they go?)

B. The Three Announcing Angels - 14:6-13

14:6-7: What does the first angel have? What does he tell people to do? Why?

14:8: What does the second angel say? (Who/What is "Babylon the Great"?) How does it relate to what the first angel said?

14:9-11: What does the third angel tell people *not* to do? Why? (How does this relate to the two previous announcements?)

14:12-13: In light of these things, what are God's people called to do? Why is even death not a good reason to swerve from this course?

C. The "Son of Man" with His Sickle - 14:14

Who is the one "like a son of man?" How do you know this? What does He have?

B'. The Three Harvesting Angels - 14:15-20

To whom does the fourth angel speak? What does he tell Him to do? Why? Who do you suppose is "harvested?"

Does the 5th angel say anything? To whom does the 6th angel speak? What does he say to do? Why? What happens then? Who do you think got "trampled," whose "blood flowed" so deep and wide?

A'. The Victorious People, the Lamb's Song & the 7 Last Angels - 15:1-4

How is this scene similar to 14:1-5?

To whom do the people sing? What do they say about Him?

Why do you think it is in this context of worship, where God's safe and secure people sing out "the Song of Moses... and the Song of the Lamb," that we are introduced to the "seven angels with the seven last plagues"?

Apply

If you boiled down the central message of these scenes into a single statement to be shared with the people you care about, what would that statement be?

Who are 3 people you know who need to hear & trust the truth of this statement? Write a prayer for these 3 by name.

"God's wrath in the Bible is something which men *choose* for themselves. Before hell is an experience inflicted by God, it is a state for which man himself opts, by retreating from the light which God shines in his heart to lead him to Himself... The basic choice was and is simple -- either respond to the summons "come unto me... take my yoke upon you, and learn of me" (Matthew 11:28ff), or not... The essence of God's action in wrath is to *give men what they choose*, in all its implications; nothing more, and equally nothing less... We need, therefore, to remember that the key to interpreting the many biblical passages, often highly figurative, which picture the divine King and Judge as active against men in wrath and vengeance, is to realize that what God is hereby doing is no more than to ratify and confirm judgments which those whom He "visits" have already passed on themselves by the course they have chosen to follow."

- J. I. Packer, Knowing God, p.138-139



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Summary... Here John's vision continues with the seven scenes which present the "drama behind the throne" beginning at 11:19. Scenes

four (14:1-5), five (14:6-13), six (14:14-20) and seven (15:1-4) continue the kaleidoscope of powerful images heightening the drama, stimulating the imagination and focusing on the essential issue facing humanity: Everyone worships and follows someone or something. Will you give yourself to Jesus Christ, the Lamb, and seek to follow Him (and thus "die" to the Dragon who lurks behind all of his cleverly deceiving "beasts")? Or will you choose to follow someone or something else (thus vainly trying to "live" in the way of the Red Dragon, a way that offers only death and destruction)? make no mistake, John's visions exclaim, the decision is real and the consequences are enormous and absolute.

The structure of this section presents encouraging visions of the Lamb's followers in soul-satisfying worship as "bookends" for the horrifying picture of the reality of God's fearsome wrath for those who reject Him. And at the center, "seated on the cloud" is Jesus, "one like the son of man," who is Himself the real issue for every human life!

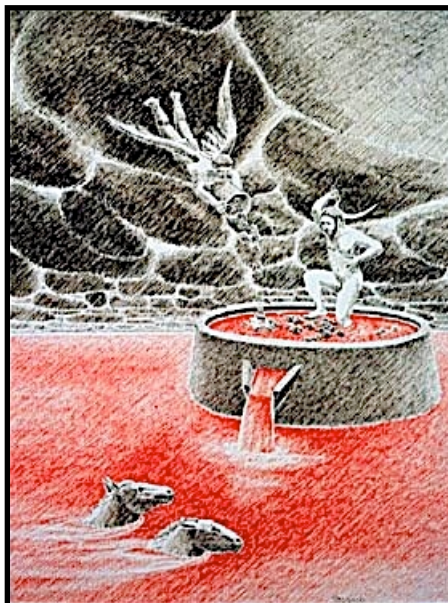
14:1-5 - "Mt. Zion"... originally this was the fortress of the pre-Israelite city of Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:7) that David captured and made his capital. The term came to be used synonymously with "Jerusalem." In Hebrews (12:22-24) and in Revelation it refers to the eternal dwelling place of God and His people (see Galatians 4:26)... "144,000"... a very large number,

beyond counting... "written on their foreheads"... a symbol of ownership... the Lamb's people do not belong to themselves any more but to Him... and also a symbol of destiny... *When Jesus Christ puts His name on us, His name is now at stake in our destiny. What becomes of us is now going to reflect on His name.* (Johnson, p. 271)... "did not defile themselves with women"... Those who see this as a literal call to a life of celibacy as the only way to please God have trouble with the rest of the bible which affirms and celebrates the goodness of marriage!... More likely it is a metaphor (marriage/sexual intimacy = faithfulness to God--see Jeremiah 2:23, 23; Exodus 34:1515; Ezekiel 23; Hosea 2:14-21)... God's people shun intimacy with false gods for they know they are "married" to only one divine "spouse"... "they follow the Lamb"...

They follow Jesus: He doesn't follow them... "firstfruits of God"... They are living offerings to God (see Romans 12:1). They are His sign to the world that it all belongs to Him! 14:6-13 - *ANGEL I: Glorify God!... "eternal gospel"...*

Good News about and from eternity... "Fear God... give Him glory... Worship Him..."... appropriate responses of creatures to their Creator (see Acts 14:15)... "the hour of judgment has come"... Why should we worship God? Because He is putting things right... And He has made Judgment Day our day of salvation rather than condemnation in

Jesus Christ... *ANGEL II: Evil is defeated!... "Babylon the Great"...* (see Daniel 4:30) the ancient decadent capital of the Persian empire represents Rome (see 1 Peter 5:13), center of resistance to God and His people in John's day, and it symbolizes every worldly religious-political system that exists and works in opposition to God... *ANGEL III: Idolaters will be punished!... "mark... forehead"...* not a literal mark but a symbol that one's thoughts and will are owned... "hand"... one's actions are owned... "Blessed are the dead"... because death is not the final reality.



John Steczynski: *The Winepress*

14:14 - "one like a son of man"... (see Daniel 7:14) = Jesus at the center... 14:15-20 - *ANGELS IV, V & VI: Time for reaping the harvest and pressing the wine of God's wrath!...* (see Joel 3:3)... Some see these as two different actions... Others see them as two sides of the same coin and both about salvation (Nowhere else is "reaping" used as a metaphor for judgment)... "grapes" = symbol for "Israel" (see Isaiah 5)... "outside the city"... this is where Jesus was crucified!... "blood flowed"... this is the blood of Jesus!... "1,600 stadia" = 180 miles, the distance across Palestine, from Tyre to Egypt = 4 x 4 x 10 x 10... the number of the created order and the number of human completeness (toes & fingers) = 40 x 40... the number for sinful disobedience (years in the wilderness)... *There is blood enough to cover the sins of all who repent!*

15:1-4 - Again the Lord has triumphed! His enemies are defeated! His people are delivered! They are safe and secure, worshipping Him, and it is in this context that we meet "the seven angels with the seven last plagues."

Literary Structure of 14:1-15:24

(another chiasm)

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|---|----------|
| A - Vision of the Redeemed | (14:1-5) |
| <i>A New Song!</i> | |
| B - 3 Angels | (6-13) |
| <i>Announcing!</i> | |
| C - The Son of Man Reaping | (14) |
| B' - 3 Angels | (15-20) |
| <i>Reaping What Was Announced</i> | |
| A' - Vision of the Redeemed | (15:1-4) |
| <i>Song of Moses & of The Lamb!</i> | |