

Revelation Chapter 14

God's Victory and Judgment

The 144,000 were last seen in Revelation 7 v 1 to 8, 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, triumphant, worshipping, and standing firm with Jesus.

This chapter will answer two important questions raised by Revelation 13:

1. First, the 'beast' makes war against the saints and overcomes them (Revelation 13 v 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.'
2. The second question has to do with this Satanic dictator himself: 'What happens to the beast and his followers?' Revelation 14 will start to answer that question. But before the morning of God's final victory dawns, the long night of the human race will grow much darker. This chapter is just a prelude to the 'bowl judgments' that are coming in the next two chapters...

The Lamb and the 144,000 (Revelation 14 v 1 to 5)

- "They were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders" (v 3) – the twenty-four elders also sang a new song (Revelation 5 v 9, 10). What do these 'new' songs have in common?
- To what do the 144,000 Jewish believers owe their position and status?
- How would you describe the character and conduct of these 144,000 Jewish 'Christ-followers'?
- Why are they gathered on Mount Zion (v 1)?

'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 v 1, 2; Isaiah 24 v 23; Joel 2 v 32; Micah 4 v 7).

The messages of the three angels (Revelation 14 v 6 to 13)

- What is the essence of the "eternal gospel" (v 6)?
- To whom is this gospel proclaimed?
- How does it differ from the gospel summarised in Mark 1 v 14, 15 and 1 Corinthians 15 v 3 to 5? Or is it the same?
- According to the third angel, what are the dire consequences of receiving the mark of the beast? And how is God involved (v 10)?
- By contrast, what happens to the faithful 'tribulation saints' (v 12, 13)?

"Fear God and give him glory" (v 7) – this is what the angel tells the whole world to do. They can worship God willingly in this life, or be compelled to give him glory later – see Philippians 2 v 9 to 11.

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“He also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger” (v 10a) – the idea that God holds a cup of wrath, which he makes those under judgment drink, is expressed several times in the Bible (Psalm 75 v 8, Jeremiah 25 v 15). This was the ‘cup’ Jesus wanted to avoid if possible (Matthew 26 v 39). Jesus willingly took the cup of the Father’s anger that we deserved; but here, God’s enemies have no choice: the cup is forced upon them.

“In the presence of the holy angels and... the Lamb” (v 10b) – this verse teaches us that there’s a sense in which God is not absent from hell: he will be there in his holiness, and righteous judgment, and wrath against sin. Hell will not be devoid of the presence of God; but it will be devoid of his love and grace.

“That they may rest from their labours” (v 13) – the word ‘rest’ comes from the Greek word ἀναπαύω (*anapaúo*), which is the same word used in Matthew 11 v 28. We can only imagine what comfort this passage will give embattled, persecuted saints during the great tribulation. God wants to encourage his people to be steadfast in times of trial, focused on the blessed rest and reward that awaits them in eternity...

The harvest of the earth (Revelation 14 v 14 to 20)

John sees two pictures:

1. In the first picture (v 14 to 16) Jesus reaps the “harvest of the earth” with a sharp sickle, reminiscent of a grain harvest (see Matthew 13 v 36 to 43).
 2. In the second picture (v 17 to 20) an angel gathers clusters of ripe grapes which are trodden in the “winepress of the wrath of God”.
- What do these two pictures have in common, and what are the differences between them?

“1,600 stadia” (v 20) – what is the significance of this distance (about 300 km, or ‘1600 furlongs’)? One theory is that it is the distance from ‘Armageddon’ (= Megiddo, where the enemies of God are gathered for battle) and ‘Bozrah’ (= Petra, where the remnant of Jewish believers have fled for safety); and that Jesus as the ‘avenger of blood’ returns first to Bozrah to bring vengeance and judgment upon the enemies of Israel and God – see Isaiah 63 v 1 to 6, noting the reference to the ‘winepress’...

See map below (Missler, Koinonia House, 2005):

